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Financial/Legal

Making dollars and sense, advertising for law firms and financial institutions are both highly regulated, and cutting through the clutter to earn market trust for long-standing issues and life-changing decisions challenges our agency to develop out of the box marketing strategies.

We hope you enjoy this content and evok's commitment to the financial and legal industries. If you would ever like to be a guest writer or suggest blogs for us to write, please contact us at info@evokad.com.



WHAT MAKES A GREAT MOBILE BANKING APP?

Launching an App Your Customers will Love and Love to Use

A recent study marked a steep surge in mobile banking and having access to digital banking tools made customers much more likely to recommend a bank to others. Their findings also noted mobile functionality will become a major factor in attracting and retaining customers, encouraging banks to invest in useful features like electronic deposits.

But what else goes into creating a mobile app your customers will want to make a part of their daily lives? Keep reading for four key insights from our financial marketing and app development teams.

Clean Up the Interface

While mobile devices do have certain limitations, especially when compared to their desktop counterparts, a smaller screen size doesn't mean design has to take a back seat. In fact, creating a positive user experience (UX) through your app's interface is arguably more important than any other platform, as your customers expect to find the answers they're looking for fast and with as few taps as possible. Here are a few factors to consider:

- Watch your text size and optimize it to be easily legible on smaller screens.
- Take a second look at your buttons and calls to action. Are they large enough to tap on with your finger? Or would it be difficult for users to hit such a small target?
- Is your app bogged down by large imagery? While your website may be a good spot to showcase photography, your app should be all about speed, convenience and ease of use. Strip it down to the basics.

Make It Helpful

Going back to UX for a moment, think about what your customers are using your app for. Research says the most common action in mobile banking continues to be checking account balances or recent transactions with transferring money between accounts following closely behind.

Knowing this, your app should offer a seamless path to those actions. For example, should "make a transfer," be housed right on your app's homepage or included as a sub-navigation item? If you're working to focus on your customers' needs, having instant access to this feature on the homepage might be your answer.

Prioritize Security

A jaw-dropping 83 percent of mobile apps across the banking, financial and retail industries have a vulnerable backend. Before taking any steps to optimize design or usability, focus on building multi-layered security measures into your mobile application. Work with your development team to ensure your users' credentials are safe. You can even activate biometric verification—Touch ID on the Apple family of products—to protect your customers' information and help them feel secure in trusting your bank or credit union.

Focus on Performance

Even a flawlessly designed, UX-focused mobile banking application wouldn't be successful if performance isn't stellar. Slow load times, crashing and constant error messages are the perfect recipe for unhappy mobile customers. In fact, if your app doesn't load within six seconds, you'll see a marked drop in users.

Fortunately, these shortcomings are preventable with a bit of elbow grease. With every new version of your app, build in-depth testing of its performance into your schedule.

Looking for more insights on marketing for financial institutions? Find out if you should be focusing on paid or organic search and how technology has changed the way baby boomers bank.



3 FREE (OR ALMOST FREE) WAYS TO GENERATE ONLINE LEADS FOR YOUR LAW FIRM

Using Online Tactics to Drive Offline Business

Three out of four people looking for a lawyer use online resources at some point in the process. Holding answers to every question any of us could ever ask, the Internet is a resource we can no longer live without. That also makes it the ideal place to seek new business for your law firm.

While lead-generating online ad campaigns can be extremely successful in driving new business to your law firm, not every part of your digital marketing strategy must come with a hefty price tag. The three tactics we've outlined in this post can be implemented at a minimal cost with the potential for business-boosting results.

Step Up Your Content

Content marketing costs 62 percent less than traditional marketing and generates three times the amount of leads. Whether you're starting from scratch or already have a few blog posts under your belt, to truly harness the power of content marketing to generate law firm leads, first we need to go back to basics.

Content can be a blog post, video, webinar, podcast, ebook, etc.—anything your brand creates, publishes or distributes that is of value to a targeted online audience. The key word in that definition is “valuable.”

It's important to understand that simply hitting publish on a blog post won't make a significant impact on lead generation. Finding success through content marketing means understanding who your audience is and the type of content your audience is looking for.

Start by conducting a bit of research. What are your competitors doing? What are potential clients searching for on Google? How can you provide those answers?

The content you create makes your site a trusted source potential leads can turn to, and the more and better quality content you're producing, the better your chances of ranking higher in search results.

Make SEO a Focus

Search engines, like Google, determine the quality of your content by rating factors like its relevance, length, usefulness, credibility, consistency, freshness and more. The process of optimizing your content to check off search engines' requirements and appear higher in results is called search engine optimization (SEO).

Although you probably already knew that definition, understanding how content and SEO work together helps streamline your digital marketing strategy. One piece of your strategy is not complete without the other, nor will it yield the results you're looking for.

For law firms, the goal of SEO is to serve your content to those who are searching for it. These are your firm's potential new clients, and they may be searching phrases like "best DUI lawyer in Orlando," or "how much does it cost to hire a lawyer."

To earn your audience's clicks and potentially land in their consideration set, you must create content that answers those queries and individually optimize every piece you hit publish on. That means ensuring the proper use of keywords, giving your images descriptive file names and alt text fields, and adding reference links. And, these quick updates are just the start, there are countless other ways to optimize your content for search engines.

Understand the Impact of Online Reviews

Public-facing client feedback has never been as important as it is today. A reported 92 percent of consumers read online reviews, and 40 percent of people will form an opinion of your business after reading just one to three reviews.

Today, online reviews are part of the buyer's journey. So much so that customer reviews have become social proof your business is credible and legitimate, incorporating a human aspect into search engine algorithms. In other words, reviews can impact your SEO.

And, it's not all about the positive reviews. Negative reviews often give businesses an air of authenticity and confirms for consumers that their reviews are not paid testimonials. In fact, 52 percent of buyers trust a product more if it has a few negative reviews.

So, how can your law firm leverage online reviews to generate new leads? First, be sure your firm has a presence you own on top user feedback sites like Yelp, Google My Business and Facebook. Make sure you're linking out to these platforms from your firm's website to simplify the process and encourage more clients to leave reviews of your business.

Next, you'll want to generate honest reviews from your past clients. Typically, only those who had a negative experience will leave an online review without being prompted. To change the status quo, follow up with past clients and ask them to share their experience online. Not only will their feedback help your digital strategy, you might learn a thing or two about how your clients view your firm.



ORGANIC SEARCH VS. PAID SEARCH: WHERE SHOULD CREDIT UNIONS FOCUS?

The Most Effective Way to Build Your Online Presence

Say potential credit union members are looking for local auto loan options. With more than 3.5 billion searches every single day, it's a safe bet to say they're turning to Google for answers.

The search engine giant presents those answers in two distinct ways: organic search results and paid search results. Search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising determine where and how your credit union appears in those results.

So, when it comes to attracting new members and selling credit union services, which method is more effective and where should you focus your efforts?

Organic Search Results

When a person asks Google for information on a specific topic, the search engine serves up what it thinks are the most appropriate, relevant pages. These organic results appear just below any ads (more on those in a bit) and are ranked based on the quality and content of the page.

Because results appearing on the first page of Google receive 92% of all search traffic, and that traffic drops by 95% on the second page, ranking in the top 10 organic search results is a goal shared by nearly every business and brand in existence. But, getting there takes time and effort, and that means having a strong, consistent search engine optimization strategy in place and in action.

Paid Search Results

Paid search results are the ads you see at the very top of the first page following a search query account. In other words, these brands have paid to appear above pages that have organically earned their rank. And, because the ads' design mimics the look and feel of organic results, many users do not realize these are paid positions.

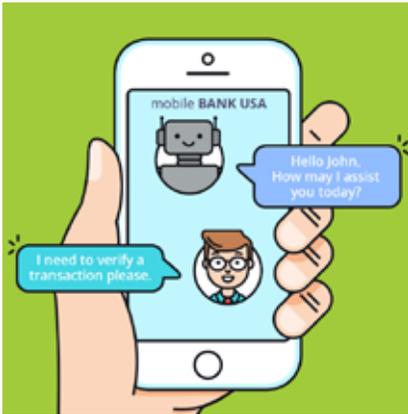
With competition for Google's top organic rankings growing up by the millisecond, paid search has picked up popularity for its ability to deliver accelerated results. Instead of spending months perfecting and implementing a robust SEO strategy, brands can simply pay to be seen on the front page of results. How big of an investment that is depends on the keywords your ads target—the more popular and competitive the search term, the more each click will cost.

Organic vs. Paid Search: Which is Better for Credit Unions?

The challenges faced in the digital marketing world rarely ever have clear-cut solutions. When choosing between SEO and PPC to increase your credit union's online visibility, often the best choice is not to choose at all.

Taking a holistic approach to your credit union's web presence means putting in the time to ensure your website is rich in content and valuable information for potential members, as well as supplementing your SEO efforts with a targeted PPC advertising strategy. By focusing on both organic and paid search, you can benefit from the fast-acting nature of paid campaigns while driving long-term results through optimized content.

If you're ready to leverage the membership-driving power of search engine marketing, get started today with a free SEO audit and find out how you rank.



MOBILE-FIRST ATTITUDES ARE CHANGING THE WAY WE BANK

Ever Changing Attitudes Towards Mobile Banking

When was the last time you spoke to a bank teller or pulled up to a drive-thru ATM with the same regularity you would to go grocery shopping or commute to work? Exactly.

It's no secret that many banks and credit unions are acknowledging the power of mobile banking and the effect it has on younger, emerging customer bases. From app-based check deposits to chatbots that help you make financial decisions from the comfort of your own couch, the future is essentially now, and it's time for your credit union to catch up.

Here are some ways in which your financial institution can get with the times without stretching your current team too thin.

Look For Opportunities to Be Human

Fact: Mobile is a lifestyle. We spend a great deal of our waking hours staring deep into the abyssal glow of our touchscreens, so it never hurts to include human-based touch points within your digital infrastructure. Not only does it bring the customer-service experience back down to earth, it also gives your credit union a more personalized touch.

These humanized moments, so to speak, can be anything from a live chat session with an actual human, or even series of live stream sessions that members can tune in to and learn more about the financial services you offer.

Don't Let Your Size Hold You Back

When it comes to achieving a successful approach to customer service, the last thing you want to do is let your company's smaller size become a crutch for doing fantastic work. Believe it or not, most of the service teams you think are killing it with 30-50 people are usually no more than 6-10 people strong.

Simply put: Agility is important. Adopt a "do more with less" attitude by streamlining many of the processes that you know take up too much bandwidth. Automating other processes that you know will never deviate from set parameters, too, will free up your team to create more creative, impactful ways to treat customers.

Harness the Power of Digital Marketing

With nearly 1/5 of global ad spend shared between Google and Facebook, there should be no reason why you're not taking advantage of digital and social media advertising, especially during such a mobile-centric time.

A comprehensive yet adaptable digital marketing strategy will help you run circles around the bigger guys by allowing you to be focused and timely while keeping a sharp eye on emerging trends and best practices.

Ultimately, it could be argued that smaller operations are at more of an advantage because they're able to be more agile than their larger competitors, but it never hurts to ask for a little outside help every now and again.

If your financial institution could use some guidance from a team of knowledgeable marketing experts, call 407-585-8231, or email us at info@evokad.com.



CREDIT UNIONS: GET INTO THE MINDS OF MILLENNIALS TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS

For an industry that accounts for nearly a quarter of financial services spending by underbanked consumers, check cashing and payday loan companies have cornered the market on providing financially sound advice and products to those who traditionally haven't had access to the right resources.

With this in mind, here are a few important approaches that larger banks and credit unions can mimic to improve their own service offerings.

Stop Marketing to Millennials, Start Helping Them Instead

What many financial institutions need to understand about millennials is that they've been brought up in a time that's very different from that of their parents. Opportunities for financial stability have shifted away from blue-collar industries to more tech-focused, white-collar jobs.

This has put a considerable wage gap in place for both Generation X and millennials. Compound that with the thousands of dollars of student-loan debt that many millennials have to deal with, and the conversation about finances can get a little tense.

Keeping millennial financial challenges in mind when creating customer-facing messaging will go a long way toward establishing meaningful relationships with a generation that has taken its fair share of bumps and bruises to the wallet.

Keep It Social and Share in the Success

Social media and networking has been essential in not only creating communities of like-minded customers for banks to interact with, but it's also created a reliable and relatable space for customers to learn important financial tips and tricks from one another.

This is crucial in creating an environment that promotes social sharing while giving financial institutions the opportunity to learn more about customer pain points and what makes them tick.

Get Real About Acquisition and Retention

It's universally accepted that acquisition is key to driving brand equity and overall growth, but it's not enough to get new customers in the door. You have to be able to give them a seat at the table and make them feel welcomed.

Create content and offer services that help members transition through the different stages of their lives. For example, move from offering debt consolidation programs for a recent college grad to simplified auto loans to help them commute to their first full-time job.

Being there every step of the way can greatly improve the strained relationship that many millennials have with traditional banks.

Banks have a very long way to go toward rebuilding trust with millennials, but consider these tips a few small steps in the right direction when creating a rapport with your members in the future.



HOW HAS TECHNOLOGY CHANGED HOW BABY BOOMERS BANK?

For a generation that's responsible for setting the foundation for much of what we both love and oathe about life, it's confusing as to why more people are focusing on baby boomers when it comes to digital banking.

The stereotype of boomers being technophobic is a flimsy one at best, so it's about high time we turn the conversation slightly away from millennials and focus on how the boomers bank in a highly technological environment.

Convenience is Key

Like any other generation living in today's digital age, baby boomers value convenience. They're loyal to their brick-and-mortar branches and stay with the banks that they grew up using, but the ease of simply depositing a check into their account through a mobile app is too good to pass up. More than half of all boomers use mobile check deposit, saving trips to their physical banks and meetings with tellers.

Online and mobile banking also provide a convenient, instantaneous way of notifying a bank's customers of when trouble is brewing. Ninety percent of those polled in a Bank of America survey from 2016, regardless of generation, said they receive mobile banking alerts on potentially fraudulent purchases indicative of identity theft, low balances and more crisis-preventing messages. Though baby boomers still rely on in-person bank visits, they're not a generation to discount the immense value of mobile banking.

Facing Their Future

By 2021, nearly half of all Americans will be 50 and older. That demographic will control 70% of the U.S.'s disposable income by the same year. That's a lot of money going to our nation's banks, and it's crucial to look to the future of this generation's banking habits.

More and more boomers are changing to be reliant on mobile banking instead of using it as a supplement to their trips to their brick-and-mortar banks. As soon as the next three years, total mobile banking reliance among baby boomers will rise from 8.7% to 13.6%—a proportion that's only going to grow from there.

Bottom line: baby boomers are back and banking more than ever before. Mobile reliance across this generation and their upcoming dominance of the country's sum disposable income means that banks must be ready to cater to more than just millennials through their online and mobile outlets.



BANKS MUST BECOME 'CUSTOMER FIRST' TO BE SUCCESSFUL

Americans no longer walk into their local bank to make a deposit or a withdrawal, which means they don't get to have a relationship with their bankers. Consumers are banking online and can even apply for loans without meeting with their bankers. So how does the banking industry keep these consumers engaged and offer great customer service when their face-to-face interaction is less than ever before? Should banks put technology first or customers first? With all of the fantastic advancements in today's technology, are banks now unable to offer great customer service?

Consumers are still looking for a bank that understands their needs and caters to them through great customer service. Studies show that the more you engage your customer, the more they spend and the more loyal they will be to your bank. Engaged customers also have a greater variety of accounts from checking to car loans to mortgages. So, banks need to find creative ways to have a more positive customer experience through digital channels, or risk losing revenue and customers.

It is first very important to give your consumers a choice in the channel and device that works best for them, as most people will choose what is most convenient for their lifestyle. If you limit your offerings, they will find another institution that offers them the convenience they desire. A customer-first approach is a must, as consumers expect perfect service in every channel they choose.

Marketing to Strengthen Customer Engagement

The most important thing a bank can do is have a mobile-friendly website due to most Americans being attached to their smartphones. This is a must in a banks' marketing efforts. Mobile apps and mobile-targeted campaigns would also be beneficial in improving your customers' experience and convenience.

Insight marketing is very important in improving the confidence your customers have in your brand because they feel their bank really understands their needs. Customers expect their bank to anticipate their needs and only want to receive communication relevant to those needs. Banks can do this by tracking purchases and spending habits through social media accounts.

Your bank can know if a user is thinking of expanding their business to other locations and contact them to apply for a loan. This kind of customer service would wow your customers and keep them loyal to your brand. The consumer knows the value of their personal information, and they expect their financial institution to know them, look out for them, and reward them at all steps of their purchasing journey.

Continue to find new ways to improve customers' financial well-being. When banks focus on this, customer confidence increases. Although augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) seem like something for the future, many are beginning to use this marketing tool in social media videos and improving users' experiences. Whatever your marketing budget, remember that your customer service should be first, no matter how great the technology.



CREDIT UNIONS: WHAT THEY MEAN TO MILLENNIALS

Millennials are the largest generation in history, and with so many in this young adult age range, the banking industry is taking notice of what this group is looking for when choosing a financial institution. The stigma that has followed this generation is that they are confident, coddled, open-minded, ambitious, entrepreneurial, naive, intelligent and technology-focused to a fault. But, that is just a stigma.

The wants, needs and what they feel is important are all very different with the millennial generation versus past generations. And, to better capture them as a credit union member, credit unions must take the time to truly understand the generation before attempting to target them.

First, the millennial generation, for the most part, are not buying homes or cars, and are also holding off having families; they generally have a great deal of school loan debt and are more interested in happiness and community service than a fat pay check. They shy away from “corporate America” and favor “community.” Credit Unions meet the needs of this generation due to having the same ideals as millennials—they are not-for-profit organizations that operate as a cooperative, community-centric model which resonates with young people who want to make the world a better place. And, now that banks, as an institution, have a tarnished reputation after the 2008 financial crisis, it is an ideal time to attract millennials and persuade them to switch to a credit union from a bank.

What Millennials are Learning about Credit Unions

Many young professionals have thought of a credit union as a members-only organization that is not easy to join; however, credit union memberships have evolved. Although some credit unions organize around special interest groups such as teachers, military or link to specific companies—most likely because that’s how they were originally chartered—most open their membership to all people within a specific geographic range of work, residence or worship. For most community credit unions, simply opening a savings or checking account is the membership threshold.

Like banks, credit unions accept deposits, make loans and provide a wide array of other financial services. But as member-owned and cooperative institutions, credit unions provide a safe place to save and borrow at reasonable rates. Credit union members are more likely to trust their financial institution over a bank, as they realize that as a not-for-profit organization, the credit union exists to serve its members, not shareholders.

Benefits of a Credit Union for Millennials

1. With their large student loan debt, millennials are looking for ways to save money, and the fee associated with a checking account at a credit union is often significantly lower than at a “big bank.”
2. Credit unions are often the only way a young person can obtain credit.
3. Customer service at a credit union is usually considered better, as they are there to serve their members, and the members are the owners.
4. Credit unions typically have robust corporate social responsibility programs, helping the community, which is appealing to the millennial generation.
5. Credit unions also offer their members financial education to help them make the best decisions with their money. Many millennials do not have a lot of money to invest, and most local credit unions offer assistance with creating financial strategies for those with as little as \$500—they have an eye on the futures of their members.

What Credit Unions Should Know

1. Even though credit unions are a great fit for millennials, only 20% use credit unions for their main financial institution, mostly due to their lack of understanding that credit unions are an option, so education and marketing efforts are critical.
2. Millennials are a tolerant generation and are willing to take risks; money does not drive them, happiness does.
3. Millennials like to support community and locally owned businesses, but they are also very tied to technology and mobile convenience.
4. Customer service and financial education are very important to millennials.
5. Make them feel like they are important and part of the organization, no matter what money they have to invest, and they will be loyal.



DIGITAL TRENDS CREDIT UNIONS SHOULD EMBRACE

Managing finances as an individual is no easy task, especially in a changing economy with more fast-paced lifestyles than ever. How is a small credit union going to navigate these waters? With solid targeted marketing and strategy behind a user-friendly online and mobile applications, land is on the horizon.

Different Digital for Different Folks

Closing the generational gap between native and non-native digital users is as easy as using effective search engine marketing and strong social media content to drive different types of customers towards a bank. Using targeted marketing can help you reach a wide range of demographics more easily, including those concerned about savings, monitoring spending, managing debts, or keeping their money secure even in a virtual space.

Successfully targeting your campaigns with personalized content towards different consumers is as easy as understanding different spending styles. For non-native digital users and skeptics, emphasizing security and offering instant account protection or card cancelling with one click is a solid marketing strategy.

For native users and those looking to switch from big banks to a smaller credit union, offering quick onboarding to a new website or app can help an on-the-go type feel like they barely lifted a finger. If this sounds like a tall order for a small credit union, content marketing strategy can be a boon to fleshing out social media pages, getting word of new features to current and past customers. Targeted marketing to past customers can be a huge benefit if the bank is adding a user-friendly app and increase conversions.

Digital banking through a home browser is one of the easiest ways a customer can access their daily finances, and offering quick updates on account balances and activity via an easy user interface can make all the difference. A change of address, money transfers, and digital statements should all be easy to view and edit for a positive user experience. Personalized products with online capabilities like customizable font sizes for older customers, credit limits and savings goals set by the user can make a consumer feel positively about their finances and about the credit union as a whole.

An App for the Bottom Line

For on-the-go lifestyles, launching a mobile app with a mobile social media campaign can back up a credit union's dedication to creating less of an emphasis on the product, and more of a user experience. Integrating a mobile app strategy can allow feedback from customers, and minimize paperwork and management of accounts, increasing a credit union's overall profits. A mobile app can open the door to some recent trends in peer-to-peer payments and transfers between friends and family, and can allow customers to save time instead of visiting a branch or digging through paperwork. Updates to available funds in real time can help users manage their money better, and so can advise pop-ups and links to visit support pages or call a bank location for customer service backup.

Digital trends in app marketing, content marketing, and solid strategy behind effective branding and tools that meet your customers' needs—these solutions are all you need to maintain members' happiness and engagement.

Receive the latest industry insights from the evok team in your inbox by signing up for the evoker, our monthly newsletter or contact us to explore ways we can partner.



HOW TO STRATEGICALLY PLAN FOR MORE EFFECTIVE ASSOCIATION MARKETING

While associations have proven to be a mainstay in the business and brand community, they face many obstacles that other companies and brands do not. While some may view budget limitations and membership fluctuation as a hindrance, evok sees the opportunity for creative and strategic solutions. With results-focused planning for past, present and future membership, along with smart and efficient messaging and budget planning, associations of every type and size can create stronger and more beneficial marketing efforts.

While sociopolitical change, economic climates and cultural shifts have caused concern for associations, particularly voluntary organizations, smart planning and the ability to be nimble and react to these outside forces will allow associations to not only survive, but thrive. Moving into 2014, associations should be equipped with a proactive and more effective marketing strategy, made up of the following four important elements, in order to stay ahead of the changing market trends and make the most of their best assets.

Internal Member Marketing: Make Better Use of the Low-Hanging Fruit

Low-hanging fruit is a metaphor commonly used, primarily in the sales and marketing industry, when describing a target (audience, product, service) that is easily reachable. Identifying the low-hanging fruit is a key component of a strong association marketing effort. Reaching an audience who is already familiar with the brand message and has shown a willingness to participate in the association allows for more opportunity for conversation and less need for brand development and education. It's simple—don't overlook what's right under your nose.

In this case, the low hanging fruit within an association is the current membership base. Offering individuals or companies the chance to become part of the organization via a membership program, and then offering these members unique value propositions, creates a loyal and mutually beneficial foundation for success.

During a discussion on the top ten most important factors contributing to brand equity, a panel representing the Association of National Advertising found that brand advocacy came in at number three with 81 percent of survey respondents believing it to be the most important factor of brand equity. What a current membership group has to say speaks volumes.

A major goal of any marketing strategy is to create loyal brand ambassadors. When the membership base is strong and they feel they're receiving value from their involvement within a group, brand advocates are naturally born from the relationship. Who better to educate their peers, recruit new members and inform the public with passion and conviction than those who chose to dedicate their time and resources to the group? When investing in current members, think of it as educating and equipping an army to go forth with a brand message. Missing the opportunity to speak to a current and active membership base, the most willing audience possible, and ask them to take a desired action is skipping over the most valuable and budget-friendly asset possible.

Welcome Back Lapsed Members

Membership reinstatement is a crucial component of the membership lifecycle. Studies show that members whose relationships with an association lapse in coverage are much more likely to re-join the same organization than pursue new associations. With that in mind, it's surprising (and alarming) to find that only 32 percent of membership-based associations continue to contact members once their relationships have lapsed.

Some may wonder, what's the proper way to approach someone who has chosen to no longer be part of the association? First, do the proper research to investigate the reasons why they have chosen to end the relationship. Exit interviews can act as a valuable resource in identifying any problems or roadblocks that may exist within the membership program or service offering. Further, it allows the association to determine which members have simply lapsed in coverage, versus those who have actively made a decision to end their association membership. This solid insight into members' expectations of the organization offers the ability to win back those who have left, while also strengthening current member relationships before losing their participation for any trending reasons found in the exit interview process. Making timely incentives, deals and benefits readily available can also help welcome back previous members.

Perhaps the most important message to remember when reaching out to lapsed members is to not give up on re-establishing the relationship and value propositions that led them to connect in the first place. Membership marketing is all about exclusivity and it is important to ensure all lapsed members know their relationship is valued. Successful membership marketing validates, incentivizes, and rewards loyalty. Many associations have failed to re-engage. Consistent messaging with an ongoing effort to engage is the best way to restore relationships.

The following are great tools for welcoming back lapsed members:

- Email, E-Newsletter, E-Blast
- Phone Surveys
- Incentive-driven benefits
- Free Conferences and Networking Events
- Social Media Marketing

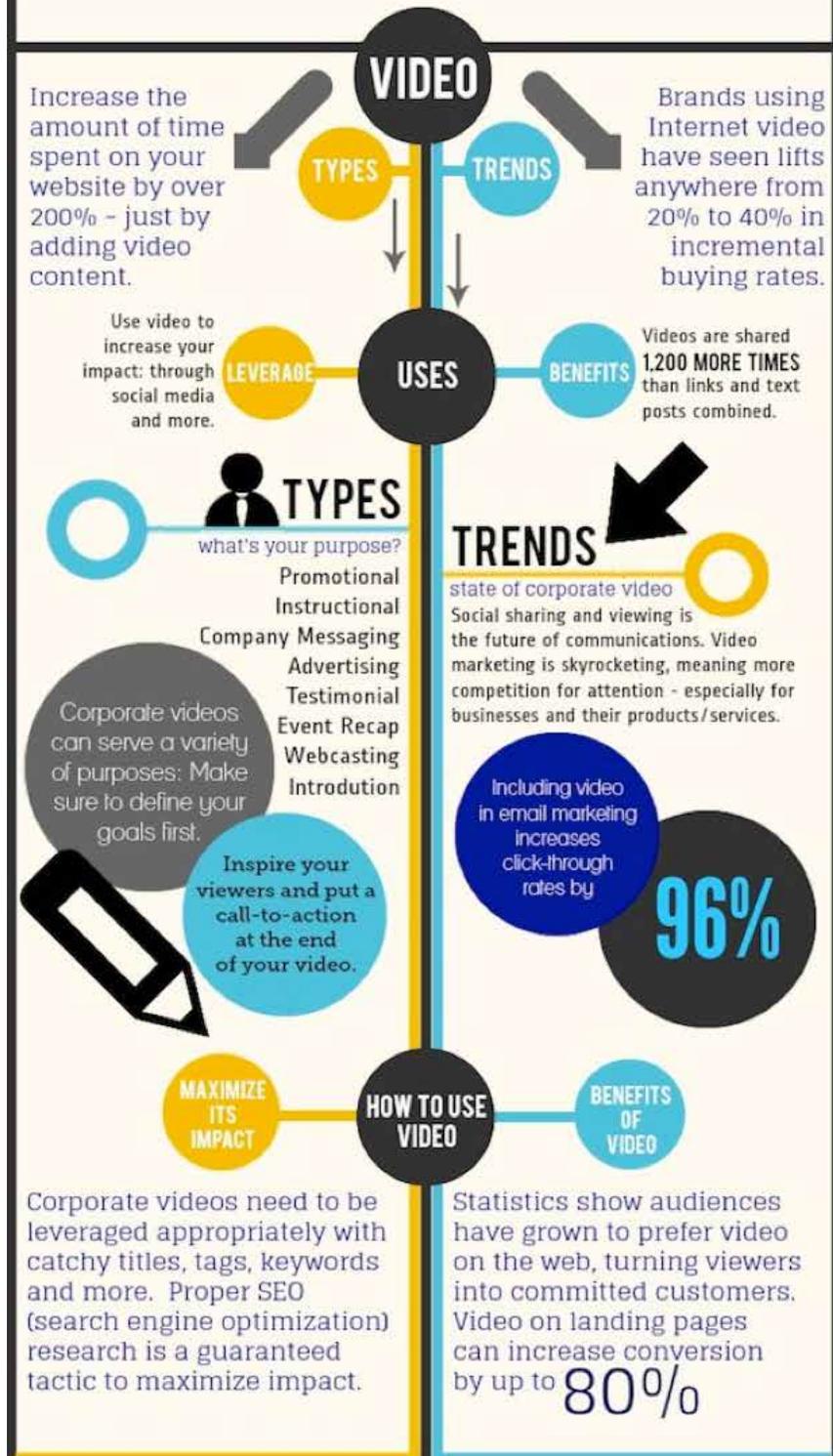
Utilize Current Trends in Brand Storytelling

According to 2014 content marketing trends, emotional storytelling can be an association's key to success. Based on humanistic traits, selling a message, idea or even product with emotion not only motivates people to make decisions, but it also inspires them to take action. Cognitive queues, environmental situations, and emotional triggers are all key elements in the decision-making process, and can all be used for more effective association marketing strategies.

A great example is of an association that draws on emotional triggers in the ASPCA. The association effectively plays on emotional triggers to accomplish their goal of driving individuals to take action by adopting a pet, volunteering at a local shelter or offering monetary support. If a viewer feels some kind of grief or inspiration after watching the organization's touching commercial, the ASPCA effectively utilized human emotion to accomplish internal association goals for success.

Shifting to how media is consumed, with the majority of 18-34 year olds now spending 50% more time watching online video than television, new brand storytelling trends are turning to the digital content landscape. Storytelling is of the utmost importance for all forms of media, as it paints a picture for the audience and answers the question, "why should I give my attention and time to understanding this association?" When your message fails to resonate with the viewer or make any emotional connection, it's guaranteed that nobody will share on Facebook, watch on YouTube or provide any of the virility required for success in the digital age. Consider the videos and ads that are shared constantly within your own Facebook newsfeed and discussed by friends. Most of these evoke an emotion—happiness, concern, amusement or even making the viewer laugh or cry.

CREATING EFFECTIVE CONTENT FOR YOUR BUSINESS WITH CORPORATE VIDEO



The following key trends in emotional storytelling will allow associations to better craft effective marketing messages for the digital space:

Content

Getting the right message in front of the right audience. 56 percent of 18-24 year olds say their main source of news is the web, according to the Reuters Institute Digital Report. The Internet is where consumers will continue to turn for information and answers. When users feel they can do their own research and access articles from more than one source, they're more likely to trust the information.

Now more than ever, users demand transparency and accountability from companies they choose to support. They're going to research what a group or association is all about, so offer a message they can emotionally connect with. Make the story share-worthy by giving the audience a reason to connect on a real, human level. Offering this element gives a brand clear personality and shows a face behind the logo.

Mobile Video

37 percent of consumer media takes place on mobile devices, and this figure is only expected to continually increase in 2014 and beyond.

Short form video is a major media trend, especially among young adults. Seeing as how YouTube is the most popular site among users ages 2-24, it's no surprise that the attention span for video is short. When utilizing mobile video, make the emotional connection quickly and with impact, and then follow up with reinforcement in order to make the most of the viewer's time.

Produce mobile video content quickly to maintain relevancy. As technology continues to give users increased speed and accessibility to the most up to date information, the demand for immediate content surrounding the day's hottest topics will only continue to increase.

Social Media

It's extremely important for associations to take advantage of social media marketing opportunities. For many non-profit associations, social media marketing has been the catalyst to their success in these tough economic times.

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's Center for Marketing Research states that the 200 largest non-profits are outperforming both Fortune 500 and the Inc. 500 companies in terms of social network usage. Associations may also consider creating private online communities, as they can offer a safe and exclusive space for members to voice concerns and offer new ways of improving participation.

Carefully consider how news events, tragedies and sensitive subjects are addressed on social media. While it may seem that being one of the first to address a situation can provide an emotional touch point with the market, ensure the messaging doesn't come off as self-serving.

Continue to incorporate emotional touch points within social media messaging. Social media provides an opportunity unlike any other to build rapport with a community, ask questions and learn from the audience. Through social media, take the time to get to know your audience and allow the opportunity to showcase the association mission and vision. If a connection is made on a personal level, social media followers are more likely to become an ambassador.

Strategically Manage an Association's Budget

In today's economic climate, associations, most specifically non-profit organizations or those with tighter budgets, are finding it difficult to gain the necessary funding to survive. Many find themselves locked in competition for government grants, donations, and other means of funding.

To better utilize available marketing dollars within a strict annual budget, associations that face this challenge should consider the following five tips:

Build a Website with Easy Maintenance

With the existence of robust content management systems like WordPress, an association can acquire a website that can be maintained with regularity and ease. WordPress offers many pre-baked templates for website design that offer varying levels of behavior and functionality to suit any need for a non-profit or association aiming to cut web presence costs. As far as maintenance, a user with basic computing skills and knowledge of word processing can manage the website's content via WordPress's streamlined behind-the-scenes manager.

It's still ideal that a website be designed to best express a business or association's crucial information, but that design can be built with WordPress or a similar CMS as the foundational platform. In terms of cost-cutting, organizations could save potentially hundreds if not thousands of dollars by maintaining a website internally, versus outsourcing change orders each time new content is available. This also lends itself to the long-lasting capability of that website versus one that needs to be restructured and redesigned every year or two when web standards change or content shifts.

Schedule Social Media Updates

In terms of social marketing, the biggest problem for associations is finding the time to manage their various social media network content, and we all know time is our most valuable and sometimes most costly resource. The most efficient way around this is to write multiple posts ahead of time and use tools like Hootsuite to schedule these posts for staggered publishing over time. Facebook also offers a method for page administrators to schedule posts.

Send Bulk Emails

The use of mail clients like Microsoft Outlook for mass emails is no longer efficient after about 50 names on an email list. It's recommended that non-profits or other groups with time and/or budget constraints employ web-based email marketing tools such as MailChimp, Constant Contact, or VerticalResponse to aid in crafting effective e-mail newsletters and mass emails. These tools offer vast libraries of design templates as well as merge tag capability for personalized and professional looking content delivery. These tools can also be used to schedule mass emails.

These services are generally very reasonably priced, in some cases offering free use up to a certain number of recipients on a mailing list, and depending on the service, may also integrate with website CMS platforms such as WordPress for even more efficient use of web resources and time management.

Quickly Find Relevant Content

One of the struggles many associations encounter in maintaining online communications is what to write/post/email about. The time it takes to research and craft this information with regularity can become rather costly and lead to inconsistent and infrequent content publishing. Tools such as Topsy are wonderful for alleviating this. Topsy is a full-scale index of the published social web, analyzing hundreds of billions of tweets, blogs, and webpages from across the expanse of the Internet. It can aid users and content creators in quickly discerning the top posts, allowing content to be consistently relevant and interesting.

Migrate to Cloud Communications

The maintaining of physical fax machines/fax servers and landline phones are significant and unnecessary costs since cloud services have come into existence. Move faxing protocols to a cloud-based fax service and receive fax-by-email anywhere that there's an Internet connection or even to a mobile device. Gone are the costs surrounding fax lines, ink, maintenance, and repairs.

Moving a landline phone service to a cloud service can cut costs and add features to an existing phone configuration that may not have been included within an outdated analog landline plan. A good cloud-based phone service will cost significantly less than a traditional business phone plan and can include professionally recorded greetings, toll-free numbers, and advanced call routing as well as phone menus with multiple extensions. Many also offer features like voicemail-to-email, a tremendous asset for internal operations.

These elements can be easily implemented and managed to streamline and improve association marketing strategies. By making the most of a membership base, understanding and adopting future-forward communication trends and allocating a marketing budget with strategy and smarter spending, associations possess the opportunity to position themselves as market leaders and continue on a path to success.