



Strategies for **Overcoming the Value Gap**
Impacting Member Retention

Section 1

Tackle the problem



A yawning 'Value Gap' has opened between members' perception of the benefits they get from their Membership Organisation, and the benefits and opportunities actually provided to them.

This 'Value Gap' threatens to swallow the hard-won membership base of even the most established membership organisation. It can also significantly limit the success of its member acquisition efforts.

1/4

of existing members said they would not renew their membership because of a lack of perceived value.

40%

of membership organisations reported an increase in the perceived value they bring to their members.

How to fill the 'Value gap'

The most crucial, overlooked tool for demonstrating and communicating true value to members is the organisation's website.

Every membership organisation's website must explain what it means to belong to that community and where the benefits lie. Sadly, senior management are often unaware of the full potential of their organisation's website to drive member acquisition and member retention.

The ramifications of this 'value gap' in terms of member acquisition and member retention are huge, especially in the hyper-competitive world of membership organisations.

63%

of members think their membership fee is appropriate.

81%

of membership organisations believe their fee delivers good value to members.

The value spectrum

Value is more than membership perks. it's a multi-faceted concept.



Membership organisations need to clearly articulate what their vision for the world is, which will benefit their members.



Then, membership organisations must clearly communicate how they will act on behalf of their members to achieve that vision.



Finally, membership organisations need to demonstrate a clear return on Investment (ROI) for the membership fee applied. This will include benefits and related opportunities accessed through membership, in addition to linking back to that core vision and purpose.

Doing this will satisfy the growing demand for authenticity, purpose and impact – **all forms of value** – that member organisations must provide to keep members fully engaged.

Although

84%

of members feel satisfied with their membership.

only

55%

feel a connection with their membership organisation.

This clear message will help form that all-important emotional connection with audiences – crucial for **member acquisition** and **member retention**.

Research shows those with an emotional connection to an organisation are deeply loyal, showing a massive increase in lifetime value to the organisation. They will also recommend that organisation at far higher rates: 75% referral for with an emotional connection, versus 45%.⁵

306%

**Higher
Lifetime
Value**

By developing an emotional connection with your membership through purpose led-value positioning.

Your website's role in the value perception

Membership organisation websites are falling if they don't convey the value – not the cost or even the benefits, but value – of being a member... all in a matter of seconds.

Websites that clearly communicate the Return on Investment (ROI), put benefits for the website visitor at the heart of the user experience and appeal to emotional drivers, are what will immediately address the 'Value Gap'.

This is most effectively achieved by engaging a Digital Partner that will create a solid information architecture to ensure the optimum hierarchy and structure of the site to allow for user pull rather than brand push. This must be robustly grounded in data by testing member journeys to make every website visit count.

By carefully selecting a Digital Partner who uses marketing communication approaches such as the **revolutionary StoryBrand framework**, which applies storytelling to digital and sales-based communications, you ensure your membership organisation's core message – and value proposition – is clearly conveyed.

Basing the website on a true understanding of where the value lies in your organisation, your Digital Partner can build a website that really 'speaks' to members and resonates with them to generate the emotional spark needed to keep them engaged.

Equally, strategies such as reminding members about membership benefits via their dashboards or SEO optimised content means organisations never make the mistake of presuming members know the value of membership.

Tackling the 'Value Gap' might seem daunting but with the right website structure, design and functionality, that gap can be not only minimised but **membership organisations who adopt this approach can gain competitive advantage.**



Section 2

Craft the value experience

Too many membership organisations simply don't appreciate the power of their website to influence **member acquisition** and **retention**.

The design, functionality, structure and content of any membership organisation's website has a central role in influencing the actions and perceptions of prospective members, existing members and other important stakeholders.

Design features, such as customisable dashboards, allow members to dictate which content they see while robust sign-up processes allow individuals to select how often they want to be contacted with relevant news.

Enabling members to craft personal profiles that peers can access, or creating a moderated space where members can share knowledge, often promotes higher engagement on the Membership Organisation's website.

Planning and Strategy workshops conducted by your Digital Partner in the early stages of any work helps Membership Organisations understand which digital features will most resonate with a specific membership group – and therefore which features to add customizable components to.

Sue Roochove, Head of Client Services at Granite 5, says:

“Communication is key for member organisations to prosper and demands from members to be able to communicate with each other should be acknowledged.”

“We have seen from our previous client work that where members have a strong affinity and direct engagement with one another, their engagement on the membership organisation's digital platform increases.”

“It becomes a self-reinforcing cycle of engagement.”



Sue Roochove says:

“Making members feel important and loved is absolutely crucial – and cannot be underestimated, even with a loyal membership base”

“Making it easy and accessible to fill in short surveys, inviting members to events, inviting members to events or encouraging them to participate in focus groups, all helps to develop camaraderie between your organisation and its members.”

58%

of Alumni members do not renew their membership because of perceived lack of engagement with the organisation.

Engage members, nurture relationships

Simply by making members feel a sense of belonging, that their membership means something to the organisation, makes them feel valued and helps to close the ‘Value gap’.

Regular dialogue with members can inspire new initiatives and this collaborative process often means these ideas have instant support.

Organisations need to know their members’ motivations for joining, and indeed for remaining, members. Failure here means losing them, especially given members’ demands that their organisations change with them as they progress through their careers.

Chief Marketing Officers and Business Development leads will also benefit from the wealth of information derived from greater member data, including the knowledge to segment members by behavior and other demographics, enabling the creation of ‘sticky’ marketing content that resonates.

Membership Organisations typically hold vast amounts of data about existing and lapsed members. This provides rich pickings for analyzing the motivations and need of the membership base.

However, too often this data is misinterpreted or fragmented throughout the organisation. A Digital Partner can help sort the wheat from the chaff to deliver actionable, data-led insights that drive your Membership Organisation’s 58% digital strategy.

4 Years+

Engaged members are retained for four years longer than non-engaged members.

Organisations must also harness technology and use data, including from Google Analytics, to understand their members' behaviour even more deeply.

Analysing who engages with which parts of the member organisation's website, and how, informs the right content and design strategies for optimum engagement.

James Warmington Smith, Granite 5's SEO Specialist says:

"Having different approaches for content that engages existing members and which attracts potential new members is vital."

"Understanding the business objectives of each piece of content is crucial as you might only get one or two opportunities to send something to a recipient before they start deleting your emails or unsubscribe."

Engaged members spend

22%

more with their membership organisations.



Section 3

Automation unlocks organisation resource

Conversing with members in a personal way is a resource-intensive task for member organisations.

Many might know the processes they need in place but being able to dedicate the right amount of staff for the required time is seldom possible.

Automated email campaigns, informed by the high quality data secured when members first join, can be tailored to each individual. The content can match their interests and distribution can be timed to suit their preferences.

This prevents members being bombarded by irrelevant content, boosting engagement and **increasing their perception** of value from their membership.

Other examples ripe for automation are renewal deadlines and CPD deadlines (for evidence submission, exam registrations, etc).

An automated system also reliably measures engagement and ensures internally-set member communication deadlines aren't missed, all with fewer staff resources.

Full control

Personalisation goes beyond customised dashboards and content though.

Members need to be able to easily control their relationship with an organisation, including how often and what topics they are contacted about.

This means implementing an online system whereby members can join whenever they want and be reminded to renew. Given 16% of members – which rises to 27% of millennials – simply forgot to renew, an automatic reminder could be used to reinforce the ROI of membership or engage them on forthcoming development within the organisation.

An automated system that allows members to join whenever they wish and select how they want to pay the membership fee removes the pressure staff face with manual systems.

51% Engagement plan boost

Having a membership engagement plan boosted membership renewals for 51% of membership organisations.

Membership organisations should also establish an automated communications framework for events so members attending feel valued.

Creating templates for booking confirmations, itineraries and travel information means updates can be sent at scheduled times.

Having coordinated, pre-prepared events communications plan means attendees are kept informed and also reduces the likelihood of members having to contact staff for information.

Building an online system where staff can easily submit formal documents and automatically upload them to an identifiable location on the website is crucial. This ensures staff can easily complete this task and that updates are posted online in a timely manner.

Creating such a space, where members can easily search for the documents they need, enables them to maintain their desired level of oversight.

Section 4

Take action

To provide a seamless online experience to members, it is crucial to select a digital partner who employs user interface (UI) and user experience (UX) best practice into their website design.

By relying on research-based behavioural science that has identified how readers scan a website, a digital partner like Granite 5 can ensure the most important content, features or buttons are always in prime position to drive desired action.

With dozens of successful projects completed, a digital partner like Granite 5 also possesses practical experience and legacy project data that stops member organisations creating websites that put users off.

Keep it simple

Intuitive navigation buttons and calls-to-action positioned 'above the fold' (the part of the webpage seen without needing to scroll down further) provide clarity to users.

This gives website visitors (potential and existing members) the perception of the organisation as reliable, trustworthy and willing to engage.

Every process on a member organisation's website needs to be straightforward. This especially applies to membership sign-up forms, which should be concise while also gleaning important information.

To improve click-through and conversion rates, membership organisations' website visitors need multiple opportunities to navigate the website or to perform a task.

47%

say their membership organisation's content is not currently personalised to them.

Personalised features on a membership organisation or dashboard do not need to be overly complicated: Simple features, such as welcoming a member by chosen name when they log in build rapport. More complex member profile personalisation features encourage a long relationship.

Member acquisition can be incentivised by showcasing exclusive-to-member benefits and exclusive web content on web pages publicly visible.

Section 5

About Granite5



Based near Cambridge Granite 5 is 25+ year old web design & digital marketing agency. We focus on creating results-focused websites, web apps and digital campaigns.

Not only does Granite 5 plan, design and build the digital solutions, we also ensure your asset continues to work to its maximum potential post go live – with best in class hosting and digital marketing.

We guide consumer, b2b and non-profit brands to advance their digital marketing, customer experience and online conversions. Providing a range of digital services including CRM integration, SEO, PPC, website design and development.

We have a pragmatic and proven approaches alongside a real can-do attitude. 'Anything is possible in digital', and that's why we love what we can do.

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