

## An Association's Journey from Annual Membership Decline to 38.7% Membership Growth and 18.7% Retention Improvement in One Year

An association hindered by a limited marketing budget and inexperience in digital advertising turned to initiate-it for support, amidst a sea of troubles. This association had seen **decreasing levels of retention and slowing growth for several years, netting a drop in total membership.**

With their client's support, initiate-it resolved to correct the existing: underwhelming marketing presence, unsophisticated social media and email messaging, and lack of baseline metrics, initiate-it prioritized "stopping the bleeding" of membership decline and establishing a sustainable path toward growth.

The ability to impact these areas through strategic planning and reliance on digital advertising allowed this association to reverse their negative trends and post **38.7% membership growth** in year one, while also **improving retention rates by 18.7%.**

### 1 Establish Measurable Benchmarks and KPIs of Success

Not unique to this client, as it affects many associations without a dedicated or strategic marketing team, but before coming to initiate-it this association was unaware of the cause of their struggles. They knew they had declining membership but could not pinpoint when or where the trouble began. For this reason, it was important for initiate-it to first survey the landscape and determine exactly where they stood, so they could gauge the effectiveness of their advertising efforts. This and the appreciation that a Band-Aid was not what their client needed, but rather a permanent fix, led to an approach of a two-campaign strategy during the highest member-engagement seasons of the year. The first would serve as an opportunity to learn, with the second meant to capitalize on insight gained during the prior flight.

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### 2 Positively Impact Membership Acquisition

The paid media run for this client is intended to almost exclusively augment membership acquisition, as new prospects must be approached through advertising. During the first campaign run, programmatic display, Facebook, and LinkedIn were heavily tested to determine the effectiveness of each. While collectively, the first media run **increased membership acquisition by 10.6%** compared to the year prior, the results told a better story and allowed initiate-it to run an even more impactful second campaign. Unsatisfied with the initial gains, search marketing was added into the media mix and supercharged the progress. At the conclusion of the second campaign, search yielded the most impressive results, producing a tremendous **22.8% conversion rate**, easily outpacing the other channels.

### **3 Reverse the Negative Membership Retention**

If the efforts to improve membership acquisition can be viewed through the results of the two campaigns, membership retention is much more of a constant play. Due to the availability of owned assets, such as social media channels and the current member database, without increasing the media budget, initiate-it was able to create content that resonated with association members, by highlighting the benefits of becoming and staying a member, the impressive atmosphere and culture, and the low barriers to entry of joining. This approach, coupled with a creative/brand overhaul, allowed members to start to see the association in a new light, leading to increased digital engagement, additional event attendance, and almost immediate retention improvement.

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**If you are a member of an association  
that is facing similar challenges, and are interested in learning  
if this approach could be prosperous for you,  
contact us today and let's talk.**

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