

# A Strategic Blueprint for Member Engagement

In the evolving landscape of professional congress organisation, the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO) stands out for its dedication to enhancing the meetings industry and the event experience. At the heart of IAPCO's success is its commitment to building a thriving community of engaged members. Here is what **Jimema Ruiz**, IAPCO's new council member and Chief of Staff at BTC Americas, recommends.

By offering educational events, networking opportunities, a wealth of educational resources, and congresses, IAPCO aims to not only enrich its members' professional lives but also to ensure the association's growth and ongoing relevance. Achieving this requires innovative strategies for attracting new members and retaining existing ones. Incorporating real-life examples, this article explores effective approaches to elevate membership engagement within professional associations.

## **Community-centric environment**

At the core of successful member engagement strategies is the creation of a community-centric environment. Members are drawn to networks where they feel genuinely valued and understood, a sentiment that fosters loyalty and encourages active participation.

Organisations like the American Marketing Association have excelled in creating specialised interest groups, allowing members to forge meaningful connections with peers

sharing similar challenges and issues... an solutions. This strategy not only strengthens community bonds but also demonstrates the power of understanding and addressing the diverse needs of your membership.

Embracing these needs is fundamental to effective communication. Tailoring messages and resources to meet the distinct preferences of various member segments significantly boosts engagement. The Project Management Institute, known for its personalised learning resources, serves as an exemplary model in this regard. By focusing on the specific challenges, opportunities, and interests of their membership, associations can craft communications that resonate deeply, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and engagement.

## **Unique benefits**

Adding to this, the competitive landscape of professional associations today demands that unique benefits and value-added services be a part of the membership package. Offering exclusive industry insights, discounts

on educational programs, and access to networking events with key industry figures can greatly enhance the attractiveness of membership.

In this context, the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) provides its members with access to a vast digital library, exclusive webinars, and reduced rates for conferences, effectively demonstrating how offering specialised resources can significantly enhance the membership experience. This approach not only enriches members' professional development but also reinforces the association's commitment to providing tangible value, thereby reinforcing the membership proposition.

And then there is the role of technology in redefining member engagement, which cannot be overstated and which has been accelerating over the past few years.

The integration of AI into association membership strategies specifically offers unparalleled opportunities for personalisation, significantly enhancing member engagement and satisfaction. AI can analyse member

data, preferences, and engagement history to tailor communications, event recommendations, and professional development opportunities to individual needs. For example, the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) utilises AI to customise its members' experience on its digital platforms. Based on members' interactions, publication downloads, and event participation, IEEE's AI system can recommend highly relevant articles, upcoming webinars, and networking opportunities that align with each member's specific interests and career goals. This level of personalisation ensures that members receive information and opportunities that are most beneficial to them, thereby increasing engagement and perceived value of the membership.

### **Experiences elevated**

Elevating the event experience itself is another critical component. Incorporating dynamic agendas, securing engaging speakers, and integrating interactive elements enhance the value of events. The move towards Hybrid Event Models by organisations, including TED Conferences, illustrates the potential of combining in-person and virtual participation to expand reach and engagement, offering tailored experiences that cater to the varied preferences of a diverse membership.

Lastly, valuing and acting upon member feedback is essential for continuous improvement and adaptation. Regularly soliciting insights through surveys and evaluations offers a clear picture of member preferences, satisfaction levels, and areas for improvement. This feedback loop not only signals an association's commitment to its members but also paves the way for innovations that can further enrich the membership experience. The approach taken by the Consumer Technology Association in using attendee feedback to shape future CES® events is a prime example of how listening to your community can drive positive change.

In the long run, associations that are continuously striving to meet and exceed the expectations of their members will forge stronger relationships, ensuring their relevance and success in the fast-evolving landscape of business events.

IAPCO is a not-for-profit membership association, registered in Switzerland. IAPCO members are Professional Congress Organisers (companies, not individuals) who have qualified for membership under the detailed application process by demonstrating that they consistently deliver PCO services to their clients and partners at high-quality standards.

