



### **CJAM's top 10 marketing tips for 2016 for membership organisations**

We understand that a membership organisation's key goals are to engage with members, improve member retention, generate new membership enquiries and ultimately generate income to optimise their services. Through years of working with membership organisations of all shapes and sizes, we also know that time and resources are limited, which is where we can step in with cost-effective marketing ideas to motivate and inspire your core audiences. Increasingly, membership organisations are keen to encourage interaction among members. We can also help with both traditional and online marketing tactics to stimulate discussion and help members realise the value in their investment.

1. **Understand your audiences** – It's important to get under the skin of your existing and prospective members and understand what makes them tick. Take every opportunity to gauge their feedback on a) what they want from a membership organisation and b) how valuable they find the events and initiatives you run. Use simple, user-friendly online member satisfaction surveys with multiple choice questions and an option to give further comments. Prepare the survey in advance of your event and always follow up as soon as possible afterwards, while the experience is still fresh, ideally the same day. Consider taking iPads to events to allow members to complete the surveys on site.
2. **Optimise your website** – Maximising the potential of your website is paramount in a business world where the majority of professionals now search for information online. In order to stand out from the crowd and make yourself heard, there are a number of tactics you can employ to enhance the search engine optimisation of your site. These

include using finely honed keywords, adding fresh, regular content and generating links to your website from relevant sites. All this of course assumes that you have an effective, high impact website in the first place. If you'd like to ensure your website is visually striking and delivers an optimal user experience, we can advise on anything from creating a blog to a full website redesign.

3. **Create informative, compelling communications** – Reach out to your members with high impact communications and interesting, relevant content that delivers value and retains their interest. We suggest a regular e-newsletter as a must, together with direct communications to encourage participation in specific events and frequent tips and advice via social media. In addition to digital activity, all brochures and printed materials created by the membership organisation should be dynamic, visually striking and help members to achieve their commercial aims. Sharing all press releases with members is a good way to help them see how active you are as an organisation in promoting their interests.
  
4. **Stimulate discussion** – Today's membership organisations cannot afford to ignore the power of social media. With ever-growing social media networks providing an important gateway to interactive discussion, savvy organisations should use their LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook (and increasingly, Pinterest!) sites to best effect by issuing daily tips and advice, as well as circulating relevant news items and inviting members to discuss particular topics. Discussions could take place either via a LinkedIn group or Facebook page. Alternatively, you could even consider setting up your own online forum. We also recommend the use of webinars to reach and engage members.
  
5. **Build an innovative suite of products and services** – Membership organisations thrive on the products and services they offer to their members. In order to help members extract the most value from their membership fee, it's important to continually innovate – listen to your members, understand their challenges and develop a series of services that respond to their needs and help them meet their goals. Consider a tiered package of services for members who have bought different levels of membership. We can help with brainstorming ideas, conducting member surveys and developing appealing new products and services.

6. **Extend your reach to encompass new markets** – It's important to bear in mind that the products and services you develop may also be applicable to other markets, and armed with this knowledge, you are well placed to investigate and target new audiences, or even create a new membership package.
7. **Develop your brand** – A brand is a company's face to the world. Developing and maintaining the optimum brand image is fundamental to achieving a positive relationship with members, and ultimately defines how an organisation is perceived by all its stakeholders. It's vital that your brand communicates the organisation's principles, characteristics and vision. These 'brand values' should also be clearly reflected across your products, services and initiatives. Members need to be able to feel proud of the organisation's brand in order to fully support it and actively use your logo on their websites and marketing collateral. Membership organisations should also consider creating brand identity guidelines that outline how the brand should be used across print and digital communications.
8. **Hold targeted, high value events** – As the pace of work intensifies and the hectic business lifestyle shows no sign of abating, we all know that encouraging attendance at events can be a challenge. This is why it's important to organise events that deliver real value to members. Ensure that events are widely publicised and that any speakers address topical news and key concerns experienced by the majority of members. A high impact event held once or twice a year will deliver far greater value than regular, lower profile events. Membership organisations should also consider holding regional events, as appropriate.
9. **Cultivate positive media relationships** – Traditionally, many membership organisations have been cautious about conversing with the media, apprehensive as to how their news and views will be conveyed to the outside world. The truth is that journalists, as any other professionals, value timely, relevant and useful information. Taking the time to fully understand their requirements and identify the editorial opportunities that exist within key publications pays dividends in terms of securing compelling media coverage. If you don't have the time to dedicate to this, CJAM's experienced team of PR professionals can cultivate these important media relationships and generate positive, pro-active media coverage on your behalf. Regular, insightful media activity helps the outside world to understand the value delivered by the organisation to the industry within which it operates.

**10. Deliver memorable entertainment** – After a year of hard work and frenetic business activity, members like nothing better than an end of year celebration with colleagues and associates to unwind and enjoy themselves. Delivering memorable balls, parties and dinners is vital to any membership organisation. It helps members build their all important industry networks and provides the membership organisation with an opportunity to sparkle and really show its members how much their continued membership is valued. At CJAM, we have many years' experience of delivering some of the best attended member events in the UK – from 70s nights to high profile awards dinners.