****

**THE GOAL OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP**

This is the first question that any association needs to ask: what is the goal of our membership? What purpose does it serve? Is membership an end to itself, or the means to something else? If someone asked you, “Why do we need more members?”, what would your answer be—just to have them? Would you be better off having more members, and why? What goal does your membership serve?

Maybe you want to increase your membership for market penetration. Maybe your members serve as the voice of your industry. Or maybe you need membership revenue to support other goals such as strategic programs and legislative action. Membership should be a means of accomplishing greater things for the collective; if you haven’t clarified what those things are, then it will be hard to pinpoint the right path for growing your membership.

**THE VALUE OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP**

Once you’ve established what you are getting out of your membership, you must understand what they are getting from your organization. What value does your membership offer? Why would your members give their money to you instead of another association?

This begins with understanding your current and prospective members. Why did they view membership with your organization as a worthwhile investment? What are their needs, their wants, and their challenges? And can you anticipate what those needs and wants will be five years down the road, or ten? Establish a two-way line of communication with your members so you can understand what they want from their membership, and how you can best serve them.