Association Metrics

Using Data Analytics to Increase Member Engagement

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These days It seems that every membership organization is trying to increase engagement among its members, and there are about as many opinions of how to accomplish this goal as there are membership organizations.

The purpose of this paper is to show how data analytics can be used to identify which member segments are more (or less) engaged, and which experiences provided by the organization have different levels of engagement. Additionally, these analytics can be used to establish current engagement baselines and provide a road map for developing strategies and tactics to increase engagement. An example is used throughout this paper.

Survey Data

The primary tool for gathering information used in the analytics is the traditional member survey. But what makes the survey especially useful for measuring and managing member engagement is the scales that are used. By modifying traditional rating scales, organizations can gather data in a format that allows the researcher to drill down and gather additional member engagement data.

Historically, a typical scale used for rating the overall quality of member benefits and experiences (e.g. continuing education, annual convention, websites, etc.) might look something like this:

1. Excellent
2. Very good
3. Good
4. Fair
5. Poor
6. Don't know

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When crosstabbing the Top 2 ratings (excellent and very good) for an organization's social media by type of membership, the output might look like Exhibit 1 below. In this example, a significantly larger percentage of respondents who have Membership Type C, gave the overall quality of their organization's social media a Top 2 rating compared to those who have a Type B membership.

While the Top 2 rating can be calculated for respondents who have experience with this organization's social media, there is no information available from those who answered "don't know". Perhaps they selected "don't know" because they did not want to commit to one of the five rating choices, or perhaps they did not have experience with the organization's social media. The typical rating scale does not capture sufficient information to make that determination.

Exhibit 1

	Total	Membership Type A (A)	Membership Type B (B)	Membership Type C (C)
Social Media				
Sample Size	1,310	99	169	1,042
Top 2				
Count	681	49	**75**	**557**
Column %	52%	49%	**44%**	**53%**
				B

Modified Rating Scale

By making a slight modification to the rating scale by removing the "don't know" choice, adding two new choices, and leaving the bona fide rating choices intact, the new rating scale looks like this:

1. Excellent
2. Very good
3. Good
4. Fair
5. Poor
6. Did not use, but was aware of
7. Was not aware of

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This modified scale now allows a clear distinction between those who have used the offering from those who have not. It also allows the researcher to separate the nonusers who were aware of the offering from the nonusers who were unaware of the offering prior to taking the survey. (The survey itself has now made them aware.)

By grouping all respondents who gave a bona fide rating response of excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor into a "users" category, the output shown in Exhibit 2 below can be generated.

In this example, a significantly larger percentage of respondents who have Membership Type A have used the organization's social media, with only 2% of this segment unaware of the social media prior to taking the survey.

The largest percentage of respondents who were aware of the organization's social media opportunities but chose not to use them, have a Type B membership. Most Type B respondents (94%) were aware of the availability of social media, but only 48% chose to participate.

The largest percentage of respondents who were unaware of the social media prior to taking the survey were from Membership Type C (16%).

Exhibit 2

	Total	Membership Type A (A)	Membership Type B (B)	Membership Type C (C)
Social Media				
Sample Size	2,751	141	349	2,261
Have used				
Count	1,310	**99**	**169**	**1,042**
Column %	48%	**70%**	**48%**	**46%**
		BC		
Don't use but am aware of				
Count	1,052	**39**	**160**	**853**
Column %	38%	**28%**	**46%**	**38%**
			AC	**A**
Was not aware of				
Count	389	**3**	**20**	**366**
Column %	14%	**2%**	**6%**	**16%**
				AB

The awareness and usage crosstab output in Exhibit 2 allows the organization to have a clear understanding of which member segments have disproportionate levels of nonuse or a lack of awareness of offerings provided by the organization.

This analysis (1) establishes a baseline for current usage and awareness rates among each major member segment, (2) provides insight into which strategy should be used going forward for each member segment (e.g. addressing nonuse or addressing the lack of awareness), and (3) helps to establish priorities (e.g. based on the size of each segment, or importance of the segment to the organization). For example, Membership Type C is much larger than the other two segments.

Did Not Use, But Was Aware Of

Individuals who select "did not use but was aware of" from the survey are individuals who have made a conscious decision not to use the particular benefit/experience offered by the organization. For these individuals, (1) the offering may not fit their needs, (2) it may be a sign that members don't find enough value in the offering for the amount time and money they have to invest to use the benefit/experience, (3) perhaps they are getting the experience elsewhere, or (4) the benefit/experience was not designed for their member segment. (It is common to find that older members do not use an organization's Job Board, but are aware of it.)

There are a variety of reasons why members may not take advantage of a particular offering, and it is usually advisable to conduct some additional exploratory research to uncover the dominant reasons before making changes to the offerings.

Was Not Aware Of

Dealing with members who are not aware of your offerings requires a different strategy than dealing with members who consciously choose not to use your benefits. When we find a high level of unawareness among a member segment, we usually suggest promoting that benefit or experience in order to drive up the awareness, which should lead to a higher usage rate, particularly if there is a low level of "do not use, but am aware of" members.

Strategy

In the social media example used in this paper, a recommended strategy would be to promote social media to Type C members in order to raise awareness for the following reasons:

1. Membership Type C is the largest member segment, comprised of 82% of all members;
2. Membership Type C has the largest percentage (and largest number of individuals) who are unaware of the organization's social media presence;
3. Only 38% of Type C members who are aware of the organization's social media chose not to use it (compared to 46% of Type B members);
4. Membership Type C users of the organization's social media gave the highest overall quality ratings for social media (53% Top 2).

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A secondary strategy would be to conduct a follow up study with Type B members to determine why they choose not to use the organization's social media. While the high percentage (46%) of nonusers who are aware of social media make it a worthwhile project, the relatively small size of the segment prevents it from being the top priority.

Summary

Social media provided by an organization was the only example used in this paper. However, we have successfully analyzed the usage and awareness of all types of offerings, such as member benefits, continuing education, annual conference attendance, committee volunteerism, foundation donations, certifications, professional development, websites, advocacy, etc.

The member characteristics that can be used in the segmentation analytics can be any individual or institutional variable available from the membership database or from survey questions, such as age, formal education, years a member of the organization, years in the profession, certifications held, geographic region, committee service, job title, size of the organization, member loyalty, etc.

This type of analysis works with any type of member – individuals or organizations.

One of the main benefits of this type of analysis is the ability to gather the engagement data without having to ask additional survey questions. Each time the member survey is conducted, the engagement analytics can be gathered and updated.

Knowing which members are choosing not to use a particular benefit, and which members are not using a benefit because they are unaware of it, can be more valuable to increasing engagement than simply knowing who is using and who is not. It enables management to use the correct strategy for each member segment to maximize member engagement.

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