

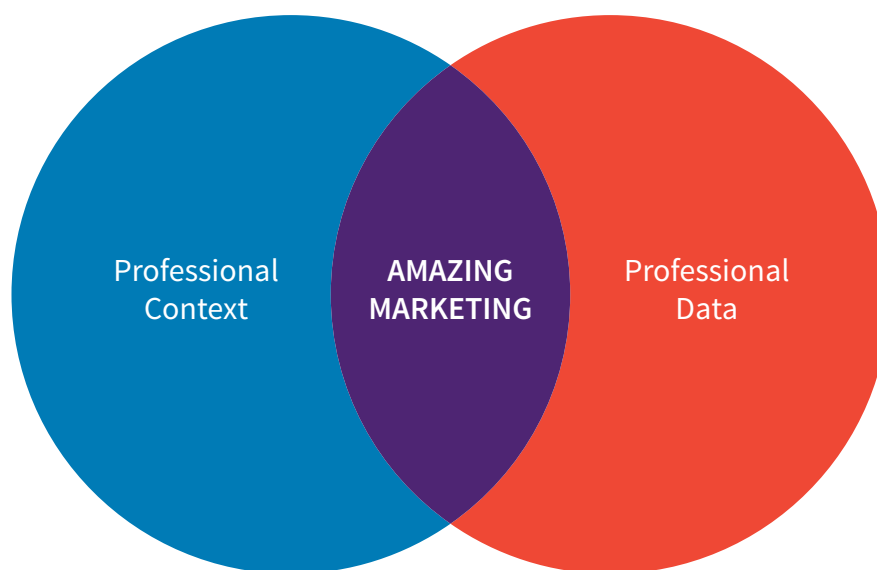
Content Marketing on LinkedIn: Strategies for Associations

In planning out a content marketing strategy for your association, it's useful to start by aligning all content and marketing against organizational objectives. Broadly, associations have four key organizational goals:

- 1. Advocacy**
- 2. Thought leadership**
- 3. Membership recruitment, engagement and retention**
- 4. The all-encompassing bucket – non-dues revenue (which, depending on the organization, can include conferences, books, training, ad sales, etc.).**

Aligning with these goals helps to answer the question ‘what does this content or campaign support?’

LinkedIn is a uniquely powerful platform, unmatched in its ability to help associations connect with the professional audiences that matter most. When you combine the mindset in which members come to LinkedIn (professional) and our first-party data (also professional), amazing marketing happens.



A word about association marketing in general: **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**. Ok, so three words, but this simple phrase is the best advice.

Part of what makes associations so interesting (and challenging) to work with is that they're all so different. Take, for example, the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Society of Civil Engineers and the National Federation of Independent Business. They represent manufacturers, civil engineers and small business owners, respectively, and as you can imagine, the members of these associations are unique in how and when they consume information, and what type of information they seek out.

At the end of the day, the better you know your audience and design your communications and marketing programs in ways that tap into what makes them curious and motivates them, the more successful you'll be as a marketer.

However, there is one thing that all these audiences – plus the policymakers and influencers who associations need to engage – have in common: they're on LinkedIn in search of information about what's happening in their industry, what's happening in the world that affects their industry and how they can advance their career.

Below, we break down each of the different association goals and objectives, and share some ideas for how associations can better leverage LinkedIn, from a paid as well as an organic standpoint.

Advocacy

One of the most important functions associations serve is to advocate on behalf of their members and their industry at the national, state and local level. Blake Lawit eloquently argued in a [February post](#) why LinkedIn is the perfect place for substantive policy discussions: "...the political is professional. Many of today's most important policy issues – immigration, education, trade, and more – directly affect us in our work lives. We should be able to speak out on these issues in professional spaces online and in the workplace."

Within the context of advocacy, there are three ways in which associations are using LinkedIn.

Executive Commentary & Personal Branding

Using LinkedIn's long-form publishing platform is a great way for association staff and board leadership to get an advocacy message out. A couple of stand-out examples:

- [NAM's Jay Timmons](#) on what the Carrier deal meant for manufacturers
- [NEI's Maria Korsnick](#) on how nuclear fits into emerging energy technologies

It's perfectly acceptable to republish blog posts, op-eds and articles (we recommend including a note of where they were originally published) – given the feed-based nature of our platform and how our members consume information, this is the best way to get it in front of them.

When members publish a long-form post, it has the chance to be seen organically in their feed by the connections and followers, and when that long-form post is shared as a company update, it then can be seen organically by company page followers. The extension, and what really smart associations are doing, is using paid promotion to push this content to audiences you're not reaching organically – think opinion leaders who are making and influencing the policies and regulations that affect your industry. Using first-party professional data about who members are and what they do at work, LinkedIn is unmatched in our capability to get these messages in front of these audiences.

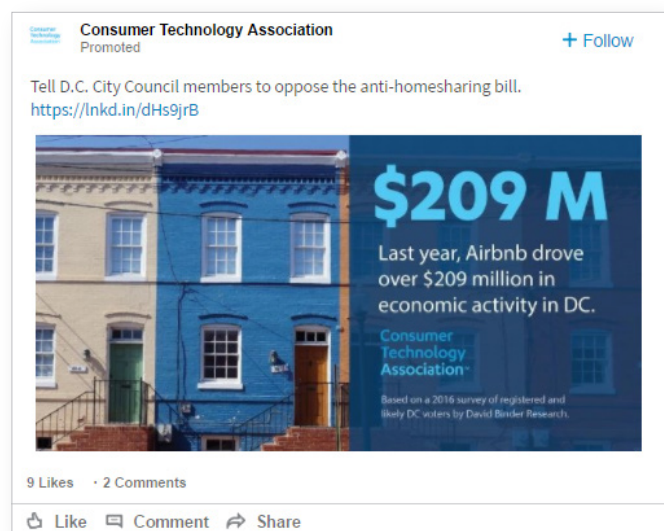
Grassroots Recruitment

Identifying members within a particular industry or job function and putting your call to action front and center in the LinkedIn feed where they're already spending their time is an efficient model for finding and engaging your potential advocates. For example, we partnered with the American Wind Energy Association to successfully triple attendance for their 2017 Lobby Day.

Using a combination of Sponsored Content and Sponsored InMail, AWEA built a campaign targeting employees of their member companies and urging them to come to Washington to explain to the new administration and Congress the economic impact of the industry and the importance of continued federal support.

Media Campaigns

When an issue heats up, getting your advocacy message in front of the people who make and influence policy and regulations is the top priority. LinkedIn uses first-party member data to target individuals by their employer – meaning we can efficiently, and with unmatched accuracy, target staff of all three branches of government, government administrators and others who influence policy such as think tanks, the media and government relations professionals. As the **most-widely used social platform by D.C. insiders**, LinkedIn is an important part of any media plan for associations and coalitions as they advocate for policies ranging from healthcare reform to swipe fees to business taxes (see also Nick DeSarno's piece: [Issue Advertising in the Age of Trump](#)). Of course it's not all about the feds – targeting can be adjusted to focus on state and local issues like infrastructure, the sharing economy and tax policy as well (see the example above from the Consumer Technology Association).



Thought Leadership

Tied closely to advocacy, associations have the mandate of advancing the industry or the profession and providing subject matter expertise. With member data in hand, associations are often uniquely positioned to comment on the industry they represent and many – from the Portland Cement Association to the National Association of Realtors to PhRMA – have incredibly sophisticated research and economic analysis operations in-house.

Sharing industry research and analysis will often generate exceedingly high levels of engagement among followers of the Company Page. Today, effective communications plans can't afford to rely exclusively on organic distribution and earned media. Using paid distribution ensures the research (really, the association's perspective) is reaching important stakeholder audiences, including association members, policymakers and the media.

Paid distribution – through Direct Sponsored Content and Sponsored InMail – also allows for customization of the messaging for each target audience, as both PhRMA and the American Society of Clinical Oncologists do in their campaigns.

Membership Recruitment, Engagement and Retention

For most associations, membership (and membership dues) are the lifeblood of the organization and still the #1 source of revenue. However, over the last few decades and for numerous reasons, the challenges of recruiting and retaining members – and communicating member benefits – have grown (check out [Marketing General's Membership Marketing Benchmarking Annual Report](#) for some great data). With the multi-layered targeting and custom audiences (company, email match and website retargeting) available on LinkedIn, associations can reach a subset of members (or prospective members) – for instance young professionals within the industry – with messaging that's customized to appeal to where they are in their careers and the membership benefits that will most appeal to their needs.

One of the most exciting applications for membership is the opportunity for trade associations to connect directly with their member company employees. For many trade associations, it can be particularly challenging to reach and engage their members' employees. Often, they rely on one or a few points of contact

PhRMA Promoted

A new report looks at the economic impact of the biopharmaceutical sector in CA, including more than 851,000 jobs and \$65.6 billion in compensation.
<http://onphr.ma/1sEBp6r>

California

From Hope To Cures.org

FROM HOPE TO cures

California | From Hope to Cures
onphr.ma

9 Likes · 2 Comments

Like Comment Share

ASCO Promoted

American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)

+ Follow

The U.S. cancer care delivery system is rapidly transforming to better meet the needs of patients with cancer. ...see more

THE STATE OF CANCER CARE IN AMERICA 2017

ASCO

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within the member company to communicate the value the association provides. By using company match targeting and layering other parameters – such as job function or company size – associations can directly communicate membership benefits and the value the association provides to their company, industry and their own professional development.

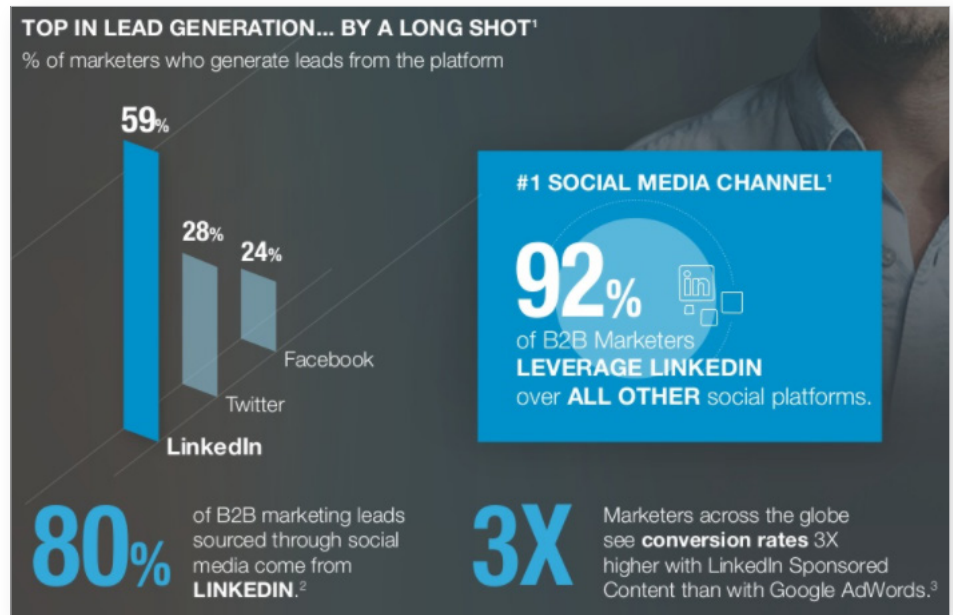
Finally, LinkedIn is the natural place for associations to brag about the great things their members are doing. It's a great strategy to show members some love as well as showcase to stakeholder audiences the great work your members are doing. Plus, when sharing a short form update or commenting on a members' posts or updates, you don't even have to create new content.

Non-Dues Revenue

The things that associations sell aside from membership – conferences and continuing education, research, books, etc. – are for many, making up an increasingly large portion of their revenue and are a key part of their revenue diversification strategy. More closely mirroring the objectives of corporate B2B marketers, these more transactional needs contribute critical operating revenue.

Check out [The Case for B2B Marketing on LinkedIn](#) to see the results other B2B marketers have had on the platform.

From the viewpoint of the target audience, they're seeing the opportunities for professional development and advancement in precisely the right context. And from an association marketer's standpoint, marketing through LinkedIn provides the opportunity to target against professional data in a way no other channel can offer and to understand the business demographics of what's driving revenue. Often, niche offerings, like a course in crane lift operations promoted by the American Society of Civil Engineers, perform incredibly well.



ASCE American Society of Civil Engineers
Promoted + Follow

Gain a comprehensive understanding of the codes and standards that apply to crane and rigging safety. <https://goo.gl/c6DPiO>



12-Week Online Course: Fundamentals Of Crane Lift Plan Preparation
[goo.gl](https://goo.gl/c6DPiO)

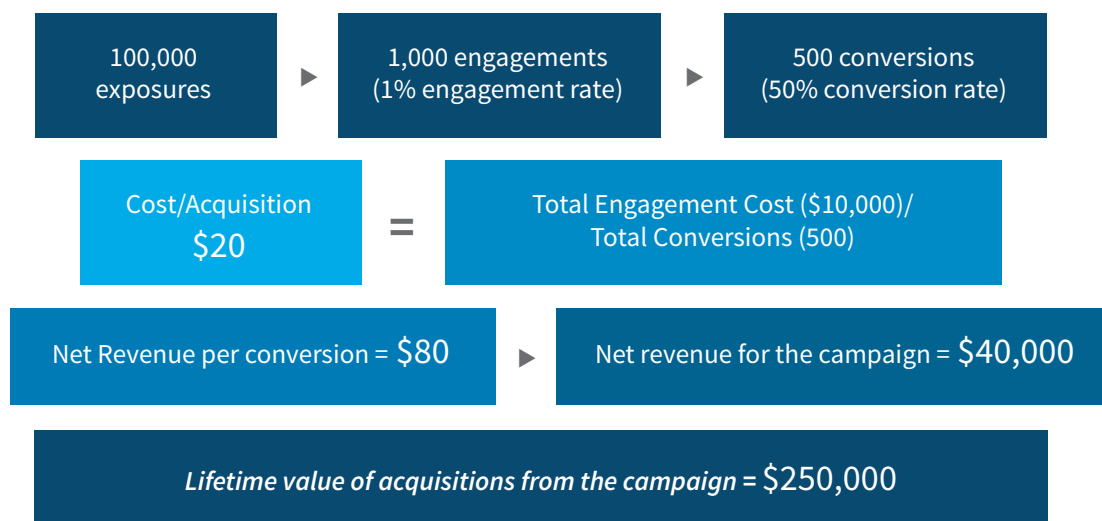
9 Likes · 2 Comments

However, many associations are challenged by a lack of history and sophistication in ROI measurement processes – benchmarks their corporate peers have spent years, if not decades, refining. We encourage associations to embrace the opportunity to enhance data collection and start to think about and track the following five metrics:

- Expected engagement rate (from an exposure, the rate at which people engage with the content)
- Expected conversion rate (the rate at which a click or offline engagement converts to an acquisition)
- Cost per acquisition (the ultimate purchase)
- Net revenue generated per conversion
- Lifetime value of a conversion

For example (and keeping the numbers round and simple)...

Let's say you spend \$10,000 in a CPC model to drive 1,000 engagements. And imagine that what you're asking people to buy costs \$100 and you know that if you get them to spend this first \$100, they're likely to spend \$500 total over their lifetime:



These metrics can be used to compare marketing channels, better understand the behaviors and costs associated with different audience segments and forecast future ROI based on changes you make to the inputs of your marketing efforts.

Putting It All Together

Clearly, there's a lot associations can (and should) be doing on LinkedIn. If you're interested in talking more with someone from the Government & Advocacy team, check us out here: <https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/campaigns-and-advocacy>.

And if you're ready to take your LinkedIn marketing game to the next level, our [Sophisticated Marketer's Guide](#) series is a great place to get started.