



Publications



Three Cheers for

Print!

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Print has a place in every association, particularly if it's focused on communicating with your active membership. An association magazine can be a useful tool to accomplish this. There are three primary reasons why a printed publication is a worthwhile and necessary investment by your association, even in this ever-growing digital world.

1. Expectation

"A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes." This sentiment has been attributed to many famous individuals – the lack of the truth here is ironic –. Yet, it's something we know all too well in this digital age. Misinformation abounds. Anybody with an opinion can share it publicly, and the influence of such an opinion has an impact on others far beyond them, whether it's true or not.

Yes, digital is fast. That's part of the convenience but also part of the danger. Digital can be very effective for your association's communication plan and methodology, relaying time-sensitive information, growing brand awareness, and helping direct people to other aspects of your association (such as events or the association website) so they can engage further. Yet digital should be just one of the pillars of your overall strategy, and it may work its best at essential junctures in the membership lifecycle, such as attracting new members.

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– JASON SMITH, PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR AT VPDCS

The cornerstone of communication with active members remains with print, that tactile, physical piece of paper. Why? One of the big reasons is trust. “There is a sense of authority that a magazine provides because it’s gone through several people, an inherent vetting process,” explains Jason Smith, Publications Director at VPDCS and an editor and writer for over three decades. This is supported by Worldmetrics’ Magazine Readership Statistics, in that “print

magazines are the most trusted source of information for affluent consumers; 85% of magazine readers use them as a source of inspiration; and the average magazine is read by 3.6 people over the course of its lifetime.” So, print magazines are perceived as more trustworthy as well as worth sharing.

This also applies to advertising, which could be valuable for potential advertisers to your association publication. A study by eMarketer “found that 46% of U.S. adults say they trust print ads while fewer than 1 in 5 adults (19%) said they trusted social media ads.” In a neuromarketing study conducted by USPS and Temple University, which compared the effectiveness of physical and digital advertising on younger and older consumers, “across all age groups, physical ads were more effective than digital ads in leaving a lasting impression.” That same study also found that Millennials are the most likely to take action on marketing mail, which could be useful for growing membership within younger demographics.

With a high-quality printed magazine, members come to expect good information from your association, placing you in a position of authority and respect – and they will also feel more confident to interact with the advertisers included within those pages.

2. Engagement

Throughout the day, you manage much of your business via a screen of some kind – writing emails, responding to employee inquiries, reviewing resumes, checking proposals, compiling and analyzing reports, proofing marketing material, and perhaps composing articles of your own as a subject matter expert. That’s just the business side of life. Sprinkled throughout the day are other digital requests that take your attention of a personal nature: a text about stopping at the grocery store, a teacher’s email about up-and-coming events at the school, your calendar app reminding you that your anniversary is two days away. And the list goes on. Digital is quicker, but it can also be less impactful because we get so much of it all the time, at all times of the day. All this convenient yet insistent interaction is leading to digital fatigue.

A printed magazine offers a respite: “Worldmetrics found that people who sit down with a magazine spend an average of 41 minutes with it at a time, and 83% of magazine readers say they help them relax and unwind.” According to digital magazine producers such as Nexbooks and Maglr, analytics show that readers spend an average of three to seven minutes online within the publication over 10 pages. Don’t you want your association members to remain engaged in the content you so carefully cultivated for them for longer?

There is also something to be said about retention. Staying singularly focused on a printed piece without distractions from notifications, swipes, lights, and clicks allows the brain to work more effectively. Temple University's neuroscience research firm True Impact and other research institutions "suggest that printed marketing materials outperform digital along several key dimensions. These include reading comprehension, recall, emotional impact, and persuasiveness." A study conducted by Bangor University and branding agency Millward Brown found that "physical material involves more emotional processing, which is important for memory and brand associations." A print product helps to strengthen your brand and further cement itself as important in a person's mind.

Consider how you engage with information via digital means versus printed means. If you want your members to engage and retain the information you think is essential for them, do so in a way that will encourage them to do so. "Right when an association wants to provide the most valuable info to their membership, do it in a format that people have the potential of enjoying it and remembering it, rather than dismissing it," recommends Smith.

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— WORLDMETRICS



3. Experience

There's something about reading from a page. People, your members, will associate that reading experience with your organization. Reading a print magazine tends to elicit positive emotional connections. For instance, according to a Magnetic Media article, "Magazine media and its role in the media mix," "77% of adults feel positive when reading magazines, which is higher when compared with social media (59%).

"The physical product carries more weight," says Smith. Take non-association publications and big players, such as Field & Stream and Life Magazine, who went digital or discontinued print altogether and are now undergoing a "print revival" and returning to the press. Indeed, a digital version will remain part of the mix, but that is the truth for any publication now: It needs to be available to be consumed at the time and choice of the intended reader. Yet big-name publishers are realizing that a printed product is worth the investment.

In the association world, a print publication informs, educates, and entertains. It can be used as a renewal vehicle or as an enticement for new members. Still, at its core, it is a way to enhance the membership experience. "A membership magazine as a communication tool, a lifeline, a funnel of information to the membership and a tangible benefit of membership," explains Smith, who has seen time and again through house-conducted membership surveys on behalf of associations that members highly value the association publication in comparison to other member benefits. It's the most tactile, consistent reminder of a person's membership with your organization. It may take longer to marinate, to put together, and to read – and this "lag" time may seem frustrating in this speed-driven world – but people tend to appreciate thoughtful and knowledgeable information upon which they can depend, as well as have the opportunity to relax while reading something that is not on a screen.

When a printed magazine from your association shows up in the mail, your association shows up, too. Print isn't dead; it's an important – often preferred – part of the communication potpourri, one that your members will genuinely appreciate. Hip, hip, hooray!

If you'd like to learn more about print publishing or VP Demand Creation Services, email Jillian at Jillian.LaCross@vpdcs.com.

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Meet Jillian

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