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Membership Dues Increase Marketing Case Study

Situation

The last time the membership dues was increased was 2002. It was increased from \$48 to \$58. In 2016, the board of directors voted to increase the membership to \$75 representing a 17% increase. It was expected the dues increase would not be well-received by the membership. The organization stood to lose a significant number of members as a result. When the dues were increased in 2002, the organization lost 25% of the membership. Given this history, it was expected at least 25% of the membership would not renew, and most likely, the loss would be greater due to the significant dues increase.

Membership Year Cycle Change Opportunity.

For six years, I recommended the organization change the membership year cycle from annual to year-to-date. Membership was on an annual year beginning in September. To receive a full year of membership benefits, a member had to renew in September. There was not a pro-rate system for joining after September. If you joined in July, you paid for a full year membership of \$58, but you only received July and August membership benefits. The membership would expire two months later in September. This was a downside to joining the organization. In addition to it being an obstacle for member retention, it also presented a barrier in year-round new member acquisition marketing. After six years of persistence, I convinced the board of directors to move to a year-to-date membership year. It was approved and would be announced with the dues increase.

Timeline

Eight weeks to launch the new dues increase and year-to-date membership.

Strategy

I developed a special membership offer to coincide with the dues increase announcement. The objective was to soften the potential negative news and fallout of the membership increase. Members could lock-in at the current annual dues rate of \$58 for two years. Members would have eight weeks to lock-in the special dues rate. Also, the move to a year-to-date membership was announced. The special offer and move to year-to-date membership were communicated to members via email, e-newsletter, website and public relations.

Product/Program Launch Strategy

1. Develop special landing pages for membership renewal and new membership acquisition.
2. Press release announcing special offer to industry media.
3. Promote to existing members via email and e-newsletter.

4. Create 15 and 30 second commercials for online media. Call to action: Go to a special landing page to join AMA.
5. Promotion on AMA website.
6. Google and Facebook advertising.
7. Advertising on leading online drone/UAV media sites.

Metrics

The two-year dues lock-in special offer was a success with 88% of the members renewing. The move to a year-to-date membership received an overwhelming response from members. Moving to a year-to-date membership improved new member acquisition numbers. In addition, the special offer generated upfront revenue.