

Marketer Toolbox

Making the Most of Your Association Membership

By Liz Kuntz, Ingenuity Marketing Group

There are always good reasons to miss association meetings, but if you miss too many you may as well just save your money. Having your logo in the association directory will not create new business. Showing up and meeting people and becoming actively involved will. As you know, if you are selling professional services you are selling yourself. Here are a few sure-fire methods to make the most of your investment in any association.

Show Up ... And Interact

Once you figure out your association's meeting pattern, put each month's meeting in your calendar for the entire year. Treat these meetings like an appointment, not like something you can do if no other appointments get made. Show up early and stay late. The most valuable networking time is usually before or after the meeting.

Join a Committee

Every association has committees — government relations, membership,

sponsorship, programs, communications, special events, the list goes on. Pick one and join it. Committees integrate you with the association in ways being a regular member never will. You will build more intense, meaningful relationships with the people on your committee, and the person sitting next to you could become your firm's biggest client.

Sponsor an Event

From being a general chapter sponsor to sponsoring a specific event, there is a wide range of sponsorship opportunities

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available through associations. Even advertising in the association newsletter or magazine can be seen as sponsorship.

Sponsoring a hole at a golf tournament is always a wise way to spend your money, especially if the tournament director allows you to administer a contest on the hole and give away prizes (which will have your firm's name, logo and contact information). The opportunity to interact with potential clients in this fun, laid back atmosphere is priceless. People let their guard down in this casual environment, so it's an easy opportunity to build relationships.



About the Author:

Liz Kuntz is a marketing consultant for Ingenuity Marketing Group, a St. Paul, Minnesota-based training, marketing and communications firm that caters to professional service firms. Ingenuity helped found the Minnesota AAM chapter and recently started a strategic networking group for young professionals called Power Up! Liz is a member of the Association for Accounting Marketing and Legal Marketing Association. She is also the former president of a local association management

company. Liz can be reached at 651.690.3358 or liz@ingenuitymarketing.com.

Have Your Way With Words

Find out if your association publishes a newsletter or magazine. If it does, contact the editor and inquire about article submission guidelines. Associations typically do not have a huge budget for freelancers or staff writers, so the editors of association trade publications will welcome pre-written articles or members willing to write articles. Getting published in your association's publications will lend credibility to you and your firm. This is also true as a speaker. In addition to monthly meetings, your association may have workshops. These workshops are usually intended to provide hands-on tactical information and are a perfect place for you to present.

Recommended Reading / Bibliography

Levinson, Jay Conrad. "Guerilla Marketing: Big Profits from your Small Business." Houghton Mifflin Company: 1993.

Ellis, Susan J. "Tracking Volunteer Trends." Association Management magazine: January 2005.

Despite all the marketing you do, possibly the most effective will be joining associations, according to Jay Conrad Levinson, author of "Guerilla Marketing: Secrets for Making Big Profits from your Small Business." You will make lots of contacts with people who can give you business and with people who will refer business to you.

If you join just to obtain business without being willing to help the industry and the association, all of these surefire tips will be worthless. Your true motivation will be discovered. Give back to the community or industry that has been good to you, and you will end up with important contacts — and business. **AA**