2022 Leadership Academy Executive Summary

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Project:

Reason for lapses or discontinuation in membership from former members

Goals:

1. Review best practices and insights from association membership industry
2. Review NCDA’s current membership structure and benefits strategy
3. Analyze Lapsed membership data from the last 5 years (2016-2021)
4. Survey lapsed members with a brief 4 question survey and report results
5. Offer structural and marketing recommendation to the NCDA board

**Association Membership Industry Review**

Covid-19 has had and will continue to have an impact on association membership engagement

strategies. Renewing membership has been seen by many as a low or non priority due to other stresses and pressures. Decreases in membership tied to conferences and in person events were observed across the industry. Staffing challenges in the workforce have also led to a decrease in association engagement. The 2022 MGI Association Economic Report contains the following predictions:

“Overall, associations have a positive outlook for 2022, with expected increases in membership, renewals, and engagement; an optimistic financial outlook for the end of the year; a return to in-person events; and anticipated increases in their marketing budgets.”

A review of top reasons for lapsed membership across the association membership industry suggested the following:

* Lack of engagement
* Lack of value
* Lack of support from employer to pay dues

Another reminder from industry is the principle of, “Membership is sold not sought, it is a push product not a pull product.”

[Resources from Marketing General and Joy of Membership](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ERGVz64jr4dVPcmMwX61Ben4SpmEfBMC?usp=sharing)

**NCDA Membership Structure and Lapsed Membership**

8,847 NCDA memberships have lapsed over the last 5 years (2016-2021). Review the table below for lapses by category and current cost.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| # | Category | Cost |
| 2108 | Promotional | Free with FCD or credentialing |
| 1850 | New Member | $40 for first year |
| 968 | Student | $40 while enrolled in undergraduate or graduate school |
| 129 | Retired/Emeritus | $60 if NCDA member 10+ years |
| 3324 | Regular/NCDA direct | $95 |
| 377 | Professional/ACA | ACA $105-189 + NCDA $95 |
| 91 | Organizational | Tiered pricing at 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, or more by request |

* Shaded rows include free or discounted membership and account for 57% of lapses
* Regular, professional, and individuals with organizational membership account for 43% of lapses
* Those who choose not to renew after promotional or first year membership account for 45% of lapses
* More in depth analysis of the lapsed membership data demographics could reveal further insights based on gender, ethnicity, degree, counseling/non-counseling, and location.

**Survey Design and Responses**

A brief 4 item survey was created and sent to 8,370 lapsed member emails. 84 responses were received for a .01% response rate. A survey population of lapsed members was expected to have a low response rate. A summary of each question and responses can be found below.

*Q1 What factors contributed to not renewing your NCDA membership? 84 answered, 0 skipped*

The highest responses from select all that apply include the following

* I didn’t find value in the cost of membership 32%
* My employer didn’t support paying for dues 31%
* I didn’t feel engaged with NCDA 25%
* I forgot to renew 20%

The lowest responses include the following

* I can access benefits without membership 0%
* I only joined for a discount on conference 1%
* My free membership expired 2%
* The cost increased from student/new professional/first timer to professional membership category 5%

*Q2 How did you engage with NCDA as a member? 80 answered, 4 skipped*

The highest responses from select all that apply include the following

* Read publications and articles in areas of interest 82%
* Read publications and articles in areas of interest 61%
* Expanded my skill set in the career development field 46%
* Learned from experts and thought leaders 46%
* Networked with other career professionals 36%

The lowest responses include the following

* Became involved as a leader/joining the Board of Directors or Leadership Academy 9%
* Followed and supported government relations activities 10%
* Participated in constituency groups (Counselor ed, Higher ed, School, agencies, business, private practice) 13%

*Q3 What would have encouraged you to renew? 77 answered, 7 skipped*

The highest responses from select all that apply include the following

* Lower cost of membership
* Automatic renewal option
* More connections with other members

The lowest responses include the following

* More discounts on resources from the NCDA store 9%
* Members only newsletter 10%
* More members only resources 13%

*Q4 (Optional) Is there anything else you would like to share about your membership experience or reasons for not renewing? 33 answered, 51 skipped*

The following insights were gathered from responses

* 11 responses about cutting costs and budget constraints
  + “Since I pay for membership out-of-pocket, I couldn't justify paying for both NCDA and the state chapter, so chose to renew with my state's chapter since I am able to more fully utilize those benefits”
* Several responses focused on misalignment due to career change or specific non-career development job functions
  + “I work in business/industry and have found NCDA to be increasingly academic student/education focused, rather than reflecting the real business context that I work in”
* Other responses offer specific feedback or ideas for NCDA to consider
  + “I have not enjoyed virtual conferences recently, and have opted not to attend”
  + “Text reminders would be nice too”
  + “I’d didn’t know that my membership was up. This last year I wasn’t sure if I was member or not”

[Lapsed Member Data, Survey and all Responses](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HF22tGlpNf7JID_8QN7XH6M3iTURxjp_?usp=sharing)

**Structural and Marketing Recommendations**

The following recommendations and items to consider were developed from industry review, survey interpretation, and mentoring discussions.

*Structural*

Recommend

1. Implement an automatic credit card renewal process with notification of upcoming renewal

Consider

1. Simplify membership categories by combining new professional, first-timers, student and retired in the same category price of $40
2. Offer gold, silver, bronze budget options for various levels of desired engagement,

NOTE: a. inclusive rather than exclusive language about options would be important b. This could be complex for NCDA staff hours needed to manage organizational and pricing changes

1. Offer discounted or grant based membership for unemployed or displaced career development professionals

*Marketing*

Recommend

1. Highlight relationship-based membership benefits more prominently (i.e. mentoring, networking, ask a question)
2. Clarify organizational membership benefits with targeted marketing to organizational decision makers

Consider

1. A 1st year discount based on referrals by a member and a reward for the referring member
2. Increase marketing budget according to needs and goals for membership growth
3. Text reminders about renewals

We thank the NCDA board for the encouragement and support of this project and invite any continued collaboration and questions you may have about these recommendations.

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