FIRST STEP RESOURCE · SECTION 5

Association *in Balance*

Member Value Proposition Builder

Say what membership actually does for someone

If you cannot finish the sentence "Members join because..." without defaulting to a list of benefits nobody asked for, this is where to start. One clear sentence changes everything downstream.

For boards, executive directors, and volunteer leaders · **Clarity first. Everything else follows.**

THE PROBLEM WITH MOST VALUE PROPOSITIONS

A list of benefits is not a value proposition

Most associations describe their value proposition as a list: networking, education, advocacy, discounts, publications, events. That is not a value proposition. That is an inventory. Nobody joins an association because of an inventory. They join because of a transformation, a connection, or a competitive advantage they cannot get anywhere else.

The genius moment in this builder

Ask your best members why they joined, not why they stay. The joining reason is aspirational and specific. The staying reason is habitual and vague. The joining reason is your real value proposition, and most associations have never systematically collected it.

Three tests your value proposition must pass

TEST 1

The stranger test

Could you explain the value of membership to someone who has never heard of your association, in two sentences, without using the words "networking," "community," or "resources"? If not, your value proposition is built on jargon, not reality.

TEST 2

The competitor test

Could a competitor use your exact value proposition to describe their organization? If yes, yours is too generic. The most powerful value propositions describe something only your association can deliver.

TEST 3

The member test

If you asked ten of your best members to describe the value of membership in their own words, would their answers match what you say on your website? The gap between those two things is your real positioning problem.

YOUR FIRST STEP

Ask three members this week

Before you rewrite your website, redesign your brochure, or hold a brand workshop, do this one thing. Call or email three of your most engaged members and ask them one question.

The one question to ask

"When you joined, what were you hoping membership would do for you or your career? And did it?"

That question surfaces the real aspiration that drove the decision. Their answer, in their own words, is almost always better than anything on your website right now.

Build your one-sentence value proposition

Fill in the blanks based on what your best members actually tell you. This becomes the sentence that drives your recruitment, your renewal campaigns, and your elevator pitch.

[Association name] helps _____

(who exactly)

to _____

(what outcome or transformation)

through _____

(what only you can offer)

What your three members actually said

Their words, not yours. This is the gold.

The phrase or idea that appeared more than once

That pattern is your value proposition waiting to be written.

Know what to say but not sure how to say it?

A clear value proposition changes everything from your renewal campaigns to your sponsor pitches. If you have the raw material but want help shaping it, let's talk.

Schedule a Complimentary Ecosystem Check-Up

Jeanne Eury · je@associationinbalance.com · (919) 624-8237



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je@associationinbalance.com · associationinbalance.com