



Studies show the post-holiday blues can linger into the later months of winter. Instead of becoming complacent, Avenue M thinks this is an opportune time for associations to assess, attract and retain members using a few easy-to-implement tactics.



01:

Winter Blues

For many of us located in parts of the country where January and February are filled with cold, snowy and often gloomy days, our energy and morale can sometimes “take a hit”. According to the Mayo Clinic, there are more than 3 million cases per year of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), commonly referred to as the “Winter Blues.” Poor weather conditions, increased credit card debt, elapsed time since religious and New Year’s celebrations and failing New Year’s resolutions all factor into this change in demeanor.

Post December, many companies take advantage of consumer temperament by heavily promoting things that make us happy—vacations, comfort foods, spa days, etc. This should be looked at as an opportunity for your association to bring some extra inspiration and happiness to your members—in other words, give them something to look forward to.

If your association has a meeting in January or February, is it located in a desirable location? Is there some form of entertainment or fun networking opportunities? Do you encourage your local chapters to host enjoyable events? Do your events appeal to various members (e.g. both Millennials and Baby Boomers)? Could you include humor or interesting facts in your newsletters?



02:

Annual Performance Review

When your boss mutters the words, “It’s time for your annual review”, what often comes to mind? (If you don’t have a manager, think of a time when you did.) For many employees, it doesn’t typically spark a joyous feeling of excitement. No matter the size of the organization or the industry, the annual review process can be a long and painful one. In an October 2016, Harvard Business Review article titled, *The Performance Management Revolution*, co-authors from Wharton and Columbia identified numerous companies—in fact, estimated at now more than one-third of U.S. companies¹—who are transitioning from emphasizing individual accountability for the year’s past results to giving people less formal, more frequent feedback, including eliminating numeric ratings. In today’s job market, the competitive pressures of attracting and retaining top talent has made employee development a major focus. Take the time at the end of each calendar/fiscal year to reflect on the performance review process and assess how, or if, it can be improved.

In the information and technology age, companies/organizations need to remain agile. Is your association providing the right topics/tools to improve learning and advancement? How frequently is it being offered? Does your association map out a path for self-development? Does it make sense to provide more frequent feedback?

¹ Companies including Adobe, Dell, Deloitte, Gap, Microsoft and GE



03:

The Power of Thank You

Two simple words, “Thank you”, can make a big difference. Think about the last time someone went out of his/her way (e.g. a handwritten note) to say, “Thank you”, and how appreciative you were. On the contrary, think about the last time someone didn’t say, “Thank you”, and how you remembered that for quite some time. How many times per year do you thank your members for belonging to your association and additionally their participation (events, webinars, etc.)? In Dan Ariely’s book, *Payoff*, he measured the influence of tangible assets (salary, bonus, gift cards) vs. intangible things such as compliments and the effect they have on worker productivity. As Dan alludes to, it’s virtually impossible to provide a set of motivational guidelines that fit all individuals; however, Dan’s experimentation, showed that compliments provided similar or better results of productivity—both short-term and long-term. Perhaps a “Thank you” can go a long way in retaining and attracting new members.

Do you thank members who attended events/webinars, etc.? Do you personally thank volunteers who give their time to help your organization? Do you congratulate members who have achieved certain milestones (e.g. 10-year member, job promotion, 1st research paper provided)? Do you have a communications plan in place to consistently stay in contact with members? Is your communication personal and genuine? Do you pay particularly close attention to Millennials (and soon Generation Z) who have grown up receiving instant gratification through social media?



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