



A Series on Membership, Part II: The Benefits of Membership

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In our last issue, we encouraged you to think first about your goals and member profile when creating a membership campaign, rather than diving right into the benefits pool. Planning a campaign strategically allows you to create a slate of benefits that will appeal to your member profile and help you fulfill your goals.

Typically, members can be divided into two classes: affinity and value. Affinity members join your organization because they want exclusive access and to contribute to your impact. Value members are joining because they are seeking wallet-friendly activities. If you think of members this way, you'll realize that one-size-fits-all benefits are not going to work. You need to target the perks for the type of member you are trying to recruit. For example, affinity member benefits should make them feel a part of your "family": special-interest tours, exclusive programs/events, behind-the-scenes tours, enhanced communications, special volunteer opportunities, or a members-only section on your website. Value members are typically families, but not always, and are looking for economical ways to enjoy your programs. Offer them perks like a year-long admissions pass, free or discounted parking, special access or exclusive children's programs, a member entrance at family events, reciprocal entry to other organizations, and discounts to local businesses.

Want both? Then offer different membership packages that cater to the separate types, or allow your prospects to customize their memberships by choosing the benefits they will use at a price they can afford. Just keep the benefit structure simple - complex membership programs are not only complicated to administer but might confuse someone wanting to join.

Lastly, a word on pricing. Having a large membership base is great, but not if it isn't cost-effective for the institution. Determine the cost of those benefits you're offering, and know that the cost of each membership category should exceed that. Or, if you prefer, calculate the cost-per-member and double that figure to ensure the memberships add to your revenue stream, not your expenses.

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