



# Addressing Low-Performing Programs

If you are experiencing, in any of your membership subgroups, participation in the organization's programs that is not what it could be, the reason for the absence of penetration in that potential market can only be one of three things.

## One: Programs Don't Match Needs

Perhaps people aren't participating in your program because the benefits of the program you are offering are not well matched to what their real needs are. If the benefits of the program you offer are not matched to their needs, you had better change your programs!

## Two: Poor Communication

If you have a program where the benefits of the programs are well aligned with member needs but they are still not attending, maybe it's because you've done a poor job in communicating in a fashion that lets them understand the value of the program and how it does match the benefit they're looking for.

If your problem is that you're using language and images that are unrelated to the member's interests and preferences, you need a better communications strategy. If the marketing strategy and the marketing are right for the match between what you're offering and their needs, but they're still not attending, you've got to fix the communications.

## Three: Barriers to Participation

Suppose the match between the benefits and the programs you offer and your members' needs is a good match, and suppose you're doing a reasonably good job in communicating the value of the program to them but they are still not coming. There probably are some barriers to their participation. They want to come; they know about the program and they like it; however, there's something preventing them from taking advantage of it. If you discover that in your research, the strategy to employ is to figure out what the barriers are and either find some way around them, knock them down or re-engineer the offering so that the benefit can be accessed in a way that doesn't involve the barrier. The barrier might be cost, time or travel but whatever it is you had better understand what it is.

***The number of associations that try to solve this problem, absent any knowledge, and then proceed to invest in a solution strategy that's designed to fix a problem other than the one they are facing is legendary.***

If your problem is the mismatch between the benefits and the programs you offer on prime and anticipated needs, no change in your communications strategy is going to fix that. If the problem is that there are barriers to participation, changing your program of work is foolish because all you're doing is removing programs they want to come to. What you need to do is get the roadblocks out of the way. Although it's from another field, the following statement should resonate with you: "Prescription without diagnosis is malpractice." You are better off investing in collecting the insight needed to understand what to do to correct the problem.

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