

AssociCom

We put the "Association" in Associations

Your Members are Using Facebook - What's Next? Private Networking **Within** Your Association

Social Networking in Associations

Social networking communities are proven, valuable tools for connecting their members around areas of common interest. The most noteworthy example, Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>), has a membership base of 500 million members engaging in social activities. Another example is LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>), a professional networking site with 70 million members. Given these numbers it is no surprise that many (if not most) of your members and 92% of associations are using some form of social media. So the question is not whether social media is a factor in associations, but instead is "what is the most effective social media strategy for my association"?

Private Social Networks in Associations

In a definitive 2010 survey [2010 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report] on membership practices and outcomes in associations, **private social networks were cited most often** (more than LinkedIn, Facebook, blogs, or any other tool) when associations were asked which two social media outlets (tools) were **most effective at achieving membership goals**. A private social network is simply one which is administered by the association and whose membership is restricted to members of the association. Understanding the benefits of private social networking over open networks such as Facebook makes it clear why they are most effective at achieving membership goals. Let's look briefly at some of these benefits:

1. **Association Focus:** Your private social network is part of your association and a benefit of membership. As your members (and potential members) continue to associate outside your association on a variety of sites, the less relevant your association becomes and lost are many opportunities for a strong, single, central community of members facilitated by your association.
2. **Benefit of Membership and Renewals:** Your private social network is a visible and important benefit enjoyed by your members. It is a service you provide which facilitates connectivity to the executive, information, and their professional community. It is arguably your most valuable service and will be a primary consideration when members consider renewing their membership. This is critical because lack of perceived value is the most cited cause of non-renewal.
3. **Your Private Network is Under Your Control:** Your private network is branded to your association, it is configured according to your needs, it is administered according to your policies, its membership is determined by you, and it can adapt as your needs change. In short, unlike external networks, your network is indeed **your network**, and is under your complete control to define, administer, grow and adapt.

4. **Your Private Network is, in fact, Private:** Your private network is not only the focus of your members' professional connections and learning opportunities, but it is also a place where interactions and information can be shared privately within in your community. Unless configured otherwise, non members will not have direct access to the internal goings-on of your association.

In summary, deciding on your professional member networking strategy is likely one of the most important decision you will be making and will influence the location and manner in which your members (and potential members) associate – a core mandate. There are both strong arguments and mounting evidence that private member networking within the association will strengthen your association and support your membership goals more than any other social strategy. Your members will find ways to connect. Having them do so within your association will benefit your membership through a single, central and strong association. If you are interested in learning more, please check out “About AssociCom”, below. Best regards and take care -

Murray Goldberg – AssociCom (murray at AssociCom.com)

About AssociCom: AssociCom (<http://www.AssociCom.com>) is a private member networking tool built specifically for associations. It is focused on discovery of information and members, and has a sophisticated feature set facilitating in-house configuration, branding and customization, connectivity to your existing systems such as general website and member database, and professionally-oriented networking features such as member library, groups, reputation system, polling, question areas and much more. AssociCom is very affordable, can be set up immediately, and requires no upfront fees or long term commitments. You can create a trial site right now – there is no cost or obligation (<http://www.AssociCom.com>).

About Murray Goldberg: Murray Goldberg was a tenured faculty member in the department of Computer Science for over 10 years. He is a pioneer in the field of eLearning and social systems. His first company, WebCT, was the world's most widely used learning management system – serving 14 million students in 80 countries at 4,000 universities and colleges. Since then Murray has gone on to create other social learning systems including Silicon Chalk, Brainify, and now AssociCom. Murray is a board member, advisor and consultant to the eLearning and social industry, has given over 200 keynote lectures and invited presentations and has been honoured with an honorary Ph.D. from the Southern Cross University, the 2004 \$100,000 National Manning Innovation Award, the National CANARIE IWAY Award, the New Media Hyperion Award – and others – all for his work on eLearning and social systems.

Please contact us anytime if we can be of help: AssociCom - #207, 1551 Johnston Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada, www.associcom.com