

the Membership Management *report*

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Website of Interest

- www.mybookmarks.com This free Internet service allows users to keep their browser bookmarks and favorites online, making them accessible from anywhere.

— GARY WASSERMAN, AVANTAGE

Create Contests Your Members Will Clamor For

Offer your members the opportunity to win prizes and perks with true value as a major benefit and a perfect way to thank them for their support.

One organization that does so successfully is Imagine It! The Children's Museum of Atlanta (Atlanta, GA). Staff offer members the chance to

win special parking privileges for a month in one of two spots in the employee parking lot designated for just that purpose, says Laura Halad, membership coordinator.

"With the average parking lot downtown costing \$10 — some days it can be as high as \$30 if there is an event — we feel this is a great extra perk," Halad says. "Some of our winners use the spot two to three times a week, some use it once a month, but it is available all month long to the winners."

To enter for the chance to win the parking spot, members fill out a form on

the membership table at the museum and place it in an entry box. Members can enter once per visit. The form asks for member name, address, e-mail and car information, as well as the last five digits of his/her membership number.

"I have someone on staff pull the two names the morning of the first of the month and then call the winning families usually between 9 and 10 a.m.," says Halad. "We then mail them a form for their windshield. We require that the winner display a form in their window, to distinguish that they are permitted to park in our employee lot."

To let members know about this perk, she says, "we mention it to members in several ways. We have it on a rotating basis in our monthly e-newsletter, and we also mention it when guests join the museum at the front desk. In addition, our security desk is next to the membership table and they mention it to guests as they come onto the museum floor."

This simple yet worthwhile membership benefit, created by the museum's former director of marketing more than three years ago, is a favorite among members and staff, Halad says.

"Members love it, and our staff use it when they talk about memberships and the perks we have," she says. "Some months I have 100 entries and some months I have 10. It depends on traffic and word of mouth in the museum."

The contest costs virtually nothing as the museum already leases a parking lot for employees and guests of the museum on official business such as board meetings, interviews or meetings with development and other departments, Halad notes.

For organizations without access to a private parking lot, she advises purchasing a parking spot in a public lot as a contest prize, or providing one-time preferred parking for a special event.

FOR MEMBERS ONLY!

Register to Win a **Free Parking Spot** for the Month of February!

We invite you to enter to win **one of 2 free parking spots** (in our employee lot located at the corner of Baker & Williams streets) valid from **February 1 – February 29, 2008**

Not a member yet? Please join the Imagine It! CMA family today for your chance to win!

Just fill out the form below and drop it into the slot. Your entry form signifies acknowledgement and acceptance of the following terms and conditions of this free prize drawing:

- Entries accepted **January 1 thru January 31, 2008 by 4pm**
- You must be **18 years of age or older** to be eligible to win
- Winners will be notified on **February 1, 2008**
- One entry allowed per visit
- Passes are only for use at **Imagine It! The Children's Museum of Atlanta** (no other downtown venues). **OK passes** are valid only for the car listed on the entry form
- Parking pass valid during **Museum Hours ONLY**
- Employees and family members of employees of **Imagine It! The Children's Museum of Atlanta** are not eligible to win

Source: Laura Halad, Membership Coordinator, Imagine It! The Children's Museum of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA. Phone: (404) 527-5910. E-mail: laura.halad@imagineit.com

Brand Image and Identity Work Hand-in-hand

You've heard the phrase, "actions speak louder than words." That saying holds true especially when addressing the issue of branding.

"Organizations must understand that we continue to build brand image with every action, every experience and every message that is communicated," says Jill McCrory, ringleader, Leadership Outfitters, Inc. (Kensington, MD).

McCrory says that while brand image and brand identity work hand-in-hand to create a community perception of your organization, they take on different roles:

Branding image, she explains, "is the mental image or 'mental model' that a person has about your organization."

Brand identity, however, "is what the organization tries to build; it's how you hope people will perceive you. It is communicated through the experience, marketing and living the brand actions.

"These contribute to what will hopefully become your brand image and match your brand identity," she says. "The problem is that sometimes people's perception does not match the identity we are trying to communicate."

For instance, she explains, if an organization's brand identity is supposed to be quality service and a member doesn't receive that kind of service, the member now perceives the organization's brand to be something other than quality service.

McCrory advises all member organizations ask themselves: "What brand are we communicating when members call or e-mail? When they attend one of our events? Renew their membership? Buy a product? Register at the convention? Receive information about the organization? Talk to other members? Attend a board meeting?"

"You build your brand image through experience," she says. "What members experience, see, hear and understand is the image they have of their organization, no matter what is said on paper."

Once you have successfully built that brand image, work diligently to maintain it, stresses McCrory. "You must demonstrate it if you want it to be anything other than just a good idea. If you say you *are* the voice, you've got to *be* the voice. If you say you are all about quality, you've got to always have that as a priority. If you say you are a community, then you should operate like one."

*Source: Jill McCrory, Ringleader, Leadership Outfitters, Inc., Kensington, MD
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Common Branding Mistakes to Avoid

When it comes to building and living up to a brand identity, member organizations often make four mistakes, says Jill McCrory, ringleader, Leadership Outfitters, Inc. (Kensington, MD).

Those common missteps are:

1. **Thinking that branding is simply and solely logo redesign.** While a well-designed logo is an important part of your overall package, even the best logo won't change your brand image if the experience people have with your organization doesn't hold up to the brand image.
2. **Not communicating with everyone in your organization about brand identity and what your branding image and identity are.** Everyone is part of the experience that members have with an organization. Helping staff and volunteers understand that they are on the front line of communicating the brand—and what the brand is, specifically—are essential steps to a successful branding effort.
3. **Launching a brand effort and then moving on to the next project.** Building your brand identity is ongoing and forever, McCrory says.
4. **Creating a brand slogan but not living it.** Staff and members will become frustrated and disillusioned with your organization if their experiences with it fail to live up to the brand identity.

Offer Directory Options

Giving members a say in their profiles and hiring an outside vendor to compile a member directory is proving to be a winning combination for Duquesne University (Pittsburgh, PA), according to Julie Shepard, director, alumni relations.

The vendor sent all alumni a survey that achieved three objectives: notifying them of the directory project, asking for correct information and advertising sale of the directory. The mailing included a form preprinted with information Duquesne had on the alim with room for alim to make corrections.

Universities often use such a service to clean up databases and acquire new information about alumni, Shepard says. "In this case, the vendor did research, in addition to the questionnaires received from alumni, to gather information that was not in our alumni database, such as 'lost' or deceased alumni." The vendor also researched contact information on alumni who didn't respond to the survey.

For their directory listings, alumni could choose to include options such as:

- ┆ Name (including maiden)
- ┆ Year of graduation and degree earned
- ┆ Other universities from which they received degrees
- ┆ Home address, phone and e-mail
- ┆ Work title, employer, address, phone
- ┆ Names of spouse and children

Alumni could also choose to be excluded from the directory.

Alumni were assured of their privacy through a directory copyright specifically stating use of the directory for private, commercial or political mailing is strictly prohibited. All information collected was placed in the university's alumni database, as well as in hardback, paperback, CD-ROM and online directories.

Shepard says the project took about a year to complete and resulted in an above-average number of directories sold. She also notes that they sold about the same number of CD-ROM hardcover or book packages as they did individual softcover books.

Source: Julie Shepard, Director, Alumni Relations, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, Phone: (412) 226-1334; E-mail: jts@dukeuniversity.edu