

EXECUTIVE BULLETIN

Growth through the eyes of your future members

How to burst the member bubble for deeper insights

One of the most valuable sources of insight to drive association growth is the voice of the non-member. Yet, research to gather their perspective is chronically underfunded and underused.

This executive brief explores how three healthcare associations successfully leveraged non-member insights to forge a pathway toward growth.

Breaking out of the association bubble to grow

Associations often conduct research to understand members' affinity toward their organization and, as a result, neglect the one perspective crucial for growth: that of non-members. Typically, an association's membership base does not contain the entire profession, despite aiming to represent its challenges comprehensively.

As a result, associations can find themselves in a "bubble," predominantly hearing from active members. This limits their ability to understand and address the needs of the broader market they can serve. This blind spot impedes growth, engagement, revenue, impact, and influence.

Non-members can be those who:

- Chose not to join
- Joined but left
- Unintentionally left due to poor communication
- Joined a competitor
- Were unaware of the association

Associations needing non-member research often face:

- Stagnant membership growth
- Limited engagement
- Slow revenue growth
- Reduced impact

Barriers to non-member research:

- Outdated contact information
- Reluctance to engage lapsed members
- Complex anti-spam laws
- Difficulty engaging uninterested non-members
- Costs of engaging disinterested parties



CASE STUDY 1

Breaking the stalemate of stagnant membership



Nebraska
Pharmacists
Association

PROBLEM

NPA struggled with a high churn rate and limited market penetration, despite receiving excellent feedback from its dedicated members. One prevalent pattern observed was that students joined NPA upon graduation to seek assistance with their exams, only to lapse once they entered the profession. Both the dedicated board and staff were frustrated by these growth challenges and uncertain about the next steps to break the cycle of stagnant membership numbers.

APPROACH

As a result of the student turnover, NPA accumulated a significant list of lapsed members. Halmyre's non-member research enabled NPA to leverage this list, actively engage with lapsed members, and understand the full range of members' and potential members' wants and needs.

OUTCOME

Through non-member interviews, the association gained insights on how to expand beyond its current member base and implement a revamped strategy for NPA's value proposition.

The research provided detailed insights into several critical areas:

- Identified a non-member "free rider" problem and proposed strategies.
- Revealed diverse preferences of non-members, paving the way for new segments.
- Informed frameworks aimed at attracting and retaining members.
- Provided benchmarking data for strategic investment decisions.
- Supported development of board-approved value proposition strategic direction, three-year action plan, and an ROI.

CASE STUDY 2

Bursting the membership bubble



PROBLEM

Despite investing in strengthening its value proposition, the national certifying body and association for medical laboratory technologists and assistants wasn't experiencing the growth it sought.. CSMLS also noticed a concerning trend: students often let their membership lapse once they entered the workforce. In response to these critical insights, CSMLS embarked on a transformative journey to revitalize its value proposition and reconnect with both prospective and current members.

APPROACH

CSMLS leveraged a list of non-members and lapsed members to identify interviewees. Halmyre then conducted comprehensive interviews to understand CSMLS's perceived value, services, and opportunities across the entire career journey to uncover areas of disengagement. The objective was to identify avenues for enhancing member value and re-engaging with lapsed members.

OUTCOME

Through non-member research, CSMLS gained the following insights:

- Two “flagship” benefits were identified as lower value revealing gaps in CSMLS's value proposition and guiding their investment decisions.
- Supported new value proposition strategy for future member services and messaging.
- Recognized cost barriers during membership renewals, prompting consideration of solutions.
- Provided insights into member expectations, empowering CSMLS to improve its services.

Armed with this knowledge, CSMLS is now poised to take action to address these insights and better serve its community.

CASE STUDY 3

A thundering response from a previously ill-defined market



PROBLEM

How can an association claim to represent a jurisdiction without a clear understanding of its market landscape? This question drove Sonography Canada's strategic imperative. Lacking comprehensive data on the size and composition of their jurisdiction, and compounded by varying regulations, they only had half of the picture. Sonography Canada needed deeper insights into their market to navigate this ambiguity.

APPROACH

Sonography Canada partnered with Halmyre to embark on a targeted marketing campaign, leveraging organic social media and third-party collaborations to reach beyond current and lapsed members. Halmyre's expertise in strategic planning and data-driven approaches played a crucial role in overcoming this obstacle.

The campaign drove participation in a national sonography census, capturing varying demographics, locations, conditions, and workplace challenges. Importantly, the initiative aimed to engage non-members to include their perspectives in shaping the profession's future.

OUTCOME

The campaign yielded a thundering response, reaching statistical significance far beyond expectations. Supported by Halmyre's strategic approach, the extended duration of the census — two to three times longer than typical initiatives — and disciplined stakeholder engagement led to exceptionally high participation rate.

The census:

- Identified and defined Sonography Canada's market landscape.
- Discerned specific desires, needs, and sentiments of sonographers towards the profession.
- Provided context and content for a comprehensive report tailored for both public and professional audiences.
- Solidified Sonography Canada's position as a thought leader in the field.

Non-member research paves the way for a brighter future

Benefits:

- Breaks barriers to growth
- Offers diverse member insights
- Opens dialogue with future members
- Generates ideas for new services
- Informs strategic planning

Outcomes:

- Identify barriers to new markets
- Understand member needs
- Overcome insularity
- Develop member personas
- Realize growth isn't just from current members
- Generate ideas for new services
- Inform strategic planning

Tactics:

- Launch high-impact ad campaigns
- Create dynamic referral programs
- Engage stakeholders with tailored programs
- Extend outreach initiatives
- Offer compelling incentives

Despite practical challenges, engaging non-members offers valuable insights that enrich members' experiences and guide strategic evolution. Their perspectives are crucial for associations aiming for resilient and impactful growth.

Want to learn more?

Every profession has unique challenges. Halmyre's non-member research will help develop the solutions you need!

Contact Halmyre to transform your member research into a driver of insights and growth.

Talk to an [expert](#) about member research and insights.

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