



# 1: Why This Might Be the Perfect Time to Redesign Your Association Website

As the business landscape has changed over the last few weeks, we the associations we work with have responded in one of two ways: either by retreating or being proactive in looking for new information and solutions.

Naturally, we always think it's smarter to be ahead of the curve than falling behind. That's why, after consulting with several of the industry groups we work with, we think this might be the perfect time to make some improvements to your web presence.

Metrics that might run contrary to some of the conventional advice out there, but it's based on solid logic. Here are a few reasons you might want to start an association website redesign project now...

## **The Needs of Members and Leaders Have Changed**

It goes without saying that your members (not to mention your employees) have different needs and concerns than they did a month ago. By making some changes to your website, you can place the most pertinent content and tools at the front of your pages.

For instance, you may be experiencing renewed interest in newsletters, strategy tips, or industry updates. The easier these are to find, the more valuable your website is to the men and women who rely on your association.

## **You Can Integrate Online Learning and Awareness**

Much of the work in education that was being done through trade shows, conferences, and other in-person learning sessions is now being conducted online. If your website doesn't include these features, or make them easy to find, then some changes are called for.

Standards and best practices are shifting in a number of fields. At the same time, there has never been a better opportunity for your members to get up to speed on fresh ideas and regulations. Give them the online resources they are looking for, and you'll have an easier time holding onto members in the months to come.

## **This is Your Association's Chance to Breathe and Regroup**

There is one more reason to consider upgrading your association website now, and it's an easy one to miss: you probably have more time to focus on a project like this than you did in the past. If you've been putting off big tasks like web development projects because you are too busy, this might be your chance to catch up.

It's never a bad time to sharpen your skills or develop new tools. It's deeply unfortunate that we are dealing with the coronavirus crisis, but it does at least afford us a chance to catch our breath, regroup, and consider what we'll need in the months and years to come.

## **Need Help Formulating Your Plan?**

At Marcy Design, association leaders don't just turn to us because we are creative or responsive – they like dealing with our firm because we help them to spot opportunities and make solid choices. If your organization doesn't have a strong marketing and communications plan, let us help. Contact our team today to schedule a free consultation and learn more about our work.

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## 2: Using Your Association Website for Recruitment and Retention

People are the lifeblood of any association. It's not just your members who keep your organization running – staff and volunteers also play a huge role. With the right people on board, you can organize projects, events, and initiatives. Without them, it's nearly impossible to reach any of your goals.

One thing potential employees and members have in common, though, is that they are likely to visit your website first when learning about your group. The information they find online will either persuade them to keep looking at new opportunities or turn their attention elsewhere.

How can you use your website to boost recruitment and retention for your association? Here are a few things you can easily do starting today...

### **Spread Awareness of Openings and Opportunities**

Naturally, the easiest way to get more and better applicants for Association openings is to promote them online. However, we often find that associations aren't great about promoting career or volunteer opportunities on their own websites.

You should make sure yours are prominently displayed, with links from the home page leading to more complete descriptions. These will appeal not only to job-seekers, but also association members who might have contacts that would be perfect for your role.

### **Highlight the Strengths of Your Association as an Employer**

In the same way your body association website should be promoting the benefits of membership, you should also go out of your way to explain why someone might want to be part of your team. What perks are there for employees, volunteers, and committee chairs?

Associations are often wonderful places to work. They can help professionals develop skills, grow their networks, and gain specialized knowledge while providing a stable paycheck. Would someone visiting your website come away with that understanding?

### **Use Your Website to Better Manage and Support Your Team**

While recruiting staff might be your top priority, there are also ways you can use your association website to retain and manage employees as well. For example, you can use online scheduling, portals that lead to benefits, and even links to video training tools to make life easier for your staff.

Each of these helps you to lower costs while also providing convenient options for continued growth and learning. In other words, they allow you to duplicate member benefits for employees, saving you time and money all at once.

### **Need Help with Online Recruiting for Your Association?**

At Marcy Design in Columbus, we have experience working with dozens of associations and industry groups, both in Ohio and throughout the Midwest. If you want help putting together a smarter web and marketing strategy, contact us today to schedule a free videoconference consultation!

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## 3: Using Your Association Website as a Tool for Member Recruitment and Retention

Does your association website help you to increase and maintain membership, either directly or indirectly?

Far too often, we meet with association executives who haven't (yet) utilized the power of online recruiting and retention. They have seen their websites as a way to convey basic information, but not to actually draw in new members or increase dues.

We think that's a huge mistake. Your website is likely to be your most important avenue for reaching out to industry professionals and potential members – particularly at a time when so many are working from home. Let's look at a few online tools you can use to enhance and retain members in your association...

### **Content That Highlights Membership Benefits**

The first thing you need to get members from your website is content that highlights the benefits of joining up and paying dues. These could include articles on industry best practices, testimonials showcasing the networking power that association members will benefit from, or even highlights from recent events and get-togethers. Just be sure someone who visits your site can easily understand why it's in their best interest to be involved.

### **Web-Based Training and Resources**

Even before conferences and meetings started being canceled or postponed, web-based training was on the rise. Now, smart associations are using online videos, articles, and courses to keep members learning and growing. These tools are convenient for members and provide evergreen learning options they can use at any time. Shouldn't they be a part of your association website?

### **Online Signup Features That Make Joining Convenient**

Prospective association members should be able to join your organization directly from your website. If you don't already have that functionality, you should know that it isn't difficult (or expensive) to install. Even better, we have seen time and again that offering new members this convenient option can boost sign-up and conversion rates significantly. If you only make one improvement to your web presence this year, make it adding online registration.

### **Need Help with Your Association Website?**

Any web designer can help you design a set of pages for your organization, but at Marcy Design, we have experience working with industry groups of every size. We can help you formulate a strategy that not only brings you more members and better tools but also helps you get the resources you need quickly and cost-effectively.

Contact us today to schedule a free consultation to discuss your association website!

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## 4: Does Your Association Website Accept Payments?

Because we work with so many association executives, we are exposed to dozens of websites for different industry groups every month. One thing that shocks us is how many of them are missing even basic ecommerce functionality.

While it's true that association websites aren't online stores, they can typically help an organization reach its goals more effectively by accepting payments securely. What sorts of things might you want to "sell" through your group's web pages? Here are a few good possibilities...

### **Dues and Fees**

When members and sponsors can pay their bills through your website, the process becomes more convenient and less expensive. That lets you get your money faster, and that the whole process is less of a hassle for the professionals you depend on. Using simple shopping cart tools is an easy way to smooth out your association's bottom line.

### **Training Programs**

Does your association offer online or off-line training and certification programs? If you do – or if it's something you're considering for the future – then accepting online payments can remove a huge bottleneck in the process. Online training is the present and the future, but you can't make it work without payment processing.

### **Event Registrations**

The same goes for meetings, conferences, trade shows, and other related events. You might not be hosting these kinds of gatherings right now, but you will again in the future. And once you do, having the ability to accept online payments is going to be a big deal. Why not take a small step now that better positions your organization for the future?

### **Association Merchandise**

There are literally hundreds of things your association might sell, from guidebooks and directories to shirts or other pieces of branded merchandise. You may even offer tools specific to an industry or profession. Members want to order these sorts of things online, and the extra revenue can be great for your organization.

### **Want to Talk More About Your Association Website?**

Adding online payment features to your association website can be a lot faster and more convenient than you might think. If you're looking for answers and specifics, our team can help. Reach out to Marcy Design in Columbus today to get a free quote or learn more about association web design.

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## 5: Why Association Websites Member Database Features are Incredibly Valuable

When looking over the most useful and valuable features of an association website, it can be easy to overlook a fully functional membership database. After all, databases don't generate money like online registration, and they aren't as visible as web-based learning modules.

Nonetheless, having a membership database that users can interact with is a big deal. Let's look at a few of the reasons why...

### **Your Member Database is the Lifeblood of Your Organization**

Your association membership list is crucial to everything your group does. It's your source of current and future revenue, the basis for networking events, and your means of communicating with those who need content and information. If you doubt that your membership database is the lifeblood of your organization, then ask yourself what you would do if it suddenly went missing. Isn't it worth having the tools you need to keep it accurate and up to date?

### **Having Members Update Info Online Saves Time and Money**

Associations spend time and money keeping membership lists up to date in many ways, but having contacts verify or correct their own details online is by far the most cost-effective way to handle this crucial task. It's convenient for members, reduces staff hours, and perhaps most importantly, leads to fewer errors, duplications, and invalid entries. Keeping membership rolls current is a crucial task, and one that's best handled by your website.

### **Keeping Accurate Member Information Makes Everything Easier**

Imagine for a moment what life would be like if you had membership data that continually updated and wasn't a burden on your staff. How much easier would it be to put together mailings, industry events, or new promotions? At a time when so many people are changing employers and contact details, it only makes sense to add or improve membership database functionality on your association website.

### **Ready to Upgrade Your Association Website?**

Interested in learning more or getting a quote for upgrades to your association website? Talk to the experts at Marcy Design in Columbus. We've worked with dozens of industry groups and can help you create the plan and budget you need to get your project moving. Contact us today to schedule a free consultation!

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## 6: 3 Ways Your Association Can Use Email Marketing

Email marketing has become so commonplace that lots of association leaders overlook its power. Instead of seeing a cost-effective way to reach out to thousands (or tens of thousands) of members and partners at once, they see a technique that isn't as flashy as other methods like online advertising or social media.

Just to be clear, we absolutely think there is value in using as many tools as you can to help your association reach its goals – internet advertising and social networking included. However, we don't want you to overlook the simple effectiveness of a strong email newsletter and what it can do for your organization.

To give you a quick sense of why it's so important to your online marketing efforts, let's look at three ways your association can use email marketing starting today...

### #1 To Increase Memberships and Renewals

Your association probably keeps a list of past and current members, not to mention those who have inquired about joining in the past (and if you aren't, we can help you set one up). By keeping track of their status and integrating them with your email newsletter, you can attract new members and retain the ones you have at much higher rates.

### #2 To Promote Events and Activities

Whether you're having a live event or an online session, getting participants is crucial. Not only do higher numbers mean more revenue and networking opportunities, but they also increase engagement. Of course, one of the best ways to get people to participate in your event is by sending them well-timed reminders that arrive directly in their inbox.

### #3 For Announcements and Industry News

In this day and age, keeping members informed about ongoing events – with regards to economic data, best practices, new legislation, etc. – is a core mission for any association. You can spread the word through social media and printed materials, but for instant and targeted communication nothing beats a strong email newsletter distributed to your subscriber base.

### Need Help Marketing Your Association in 2020 and Beyond?

At Marcy Design, our specialty is in helping associations to build better websites and find cost-effective marketing solutions to increase membership and reach their other goals. If that's the kind of service you want from a creative partner, contact our team today to schedule a free consultation.

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## 7: Does SEO Matter for Association Websites?

SEO (short for search engine optimization) is a standard part of any online marketing plan for a for-profit company. But what about association websites?

We sometimes meet with executives who don't know or understand whether search engine visibility matters for professional groups. In some cases, they reason that they don't have products or services to sell, so why bother trying to stand out on Google?

Many years of experience in association web design have taught us that SEO matters to associations. If you haven't taken steps to optimize your website, consider getting started today. Here are just a few of the best reasons why...

### **New Members and Media Professionals are Looking for Your Website**

Right now, someone may be looking for information about the profession or industry you serve. If they can't find you, you've missed out on a dues-paying member who could have contributed to discussions, attended events, and even spread the word about your group.

The same goes for members of the media who might want to interview your leadership or use your resources (and help build your association's name at the same time). Google is the first stop for most information-seekers, so it's important to have a prominent presence on the world's largest search engine.

### **SEO Can Help You Get More Mileage from Your Content**

Every association produces regular content. This can come in the form of newsletters, downloadable guides, videos, or a host of other materials. The point, though, is that you're already creating them, so why not use them to boost your search engine visibility?

When you make SEO a part of your association content strategy, you'll get more value from your ideas and increase viewership across the board. What would happen if you had twice as many people reading the articles you post, or paying attention to your reports?

### **Good SEO Helps You Reach Other Association Marketing Goals**

The big mistake some association executives make is to think of search engine optimization as a granular activity. What they don't realize is that it isn't just about driving traffic or conversions – it's about increasing awareness, and even building a stronger branding footprint.

Whether you're trying to find more members, get media attention for your initiatives, or even work with legislators and officials, being more visible online helps. And that usually starts with putting together a strong search engine optimization campaign.

### **Want Help with Association Web Design or SEO?**

One of the great things about handling online marketing for association websites is that the keywords and search terms that make the most sense aren't incredibly competitive. That is, we can begin working and see almost immediate results.

If you'd like to see some real-world case studies or talk about specifics for your association, we encourage you to reach out to Marcy Design in Columbus today. We will be happy to schedule a free consultation and answer any questions you have.

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## 8: Using Your Association Website to Make Legislative PACs More Effective

Associations generally exist to help their members. Part of that job is helping those within a certain industry or professional group to advance their legislative goals. If your association website isn't set up in a way that moves votes or opinions in the right direction, then you aren't using one of your most important tools to its greatest potential.

With that in mind, you might be wondering what you can do online to advance the goals of your association's legislative PAC. In our experience, good strategies include...

### **Keeping Association Members in the Loop**

In many ways, the first goal of advancing a legislative agenda is simply raising awareness of an issue. Simply put, your members can't coalesce or take action if they aren't sure what's going on or why they need to be involved. Using web-based tools like online calendars, email marketing, social posting, and on-site notifications, you can make sure your audience knows what you're doing to protect their interests.

### **Reminding Subscribers About Key Votes or Deadlines**

While awareness tends to be ongoing, many major policy decisions are made through scheduled votes and regular line-item budgeting meetings. You can use the legislative portion of your website to make sure stakeholders are aware of these events and their importance. That can lead to better meeting attendance, organized call-in campaigns, and other actions that can influence outcomes – or at least support other legislative efforts.

### **Informing the Public About Your Point of View**

For most legislative issues concerning your association, your association members are going to be a receptive audience. A bigger challenge can be influencing public discussion around a specific topic or initiative. This is another area where your website can be crucial, particularly if you have resources for lawmakers, media members, and others who might be interested in a potential policy change but aren't aware of the specifics involved.

### **Want to Turn Your Association Website into Something More?**

At Marcy Design, we know clients don't just turn to us because they want better-looking association websites – they need tools to boost membership and public visibility. If you want design and online marketing work that yields real-world results, contact us today to schedule a free consultation and see how we can help.

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## 9: Does Your Association Have the Right Web Hosting Plan?

The average association executive is an expert in their field, but may not be as knowledgeable as they would like to be in the field of web design. For that reason, they may overlook minor details in the association's web design and development process.

We have seen again and again that web hosting tends to fall into this category. It's something that lots of leaders aren't very familiar with, and that the majority haven't paid much attention to.

That's understandable, but it's far from ideal. Choosing the right web hosting package is crucial to the success of your association's web design project. If yours was selected on a whim – or with the help of someone like an intern who might not have had the right knowledge base – your web presence could be negatively affected in a number of ways.

Here are some of the things that web hosting affects...

### **Website Speed**

You might not realize it, but your website is stored on a computer somewhere and transmitted to users when they type the address in a web browser. The speed of that computer is crucial. Better web hosting means space on faster servers that deliver your content as needed.

### **Reliability**

Improved servers aren't just faster, they are also more reliable. If you've ever tried to visit a website that was offline unexpectedly or down for unplanned maintenance, you know how aggravating and inconvenient it is. With the right hosting package, these problems are rare or nonexistent.

### **Online Security**

Some web hosting companies cram thousands of sites on a single disc, with many "neighbors" including adult content, online gambling, and other unsavory activities. That kind of configuration can slow your website down because your pages tend to be blocked, and may also lead to problems with hacking and malware.

### **Scalability**

The better your web hosting package, the more server space you have to work with. That might not be an issue for you right now, but what happens if your association decides to expand in the future? It's always a good idea to have room to grow online, particularly if you're planning on adding content in the weeks or months to come.

### **Better Value**

The interesting thing about so-called "premium" web hosting packages is that they are often available for a negligible increase in monthly rates. In other words, you can get all the security and performance improvements you want without stretching your association's technology or marketing budgets.

### **Does Your Association's Website Strategy Make Sense?**

We meet with many association executives who tell us their online strategies were put together almost by accident. That's when we step in to help them right the ship and find a new direction.

If you feel your organization's website isn't doing everything it should or could, or you want to explore your options for improvement, contact Marcy Design today. We will be happy to schedule a complimentary consultation and show you how we can help.

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