



MODERN eMESSAGING FOR ASSOCIATIONS
Multi-Touchpoint. Multi-Channel. User-Centric.

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MODERN MESSAGING CAMPAIGNS

Effective communications with people is difficult in today's world due to the sheer amount of available information and overwhelming time demands in which most people live. It's no longer about sending individual emails or even a series of emails with a hope-and-pray strategy of capturing the attention of your target audience. Instead, modern messaging campaigns take as their premise that the user is extremely busy, wants to consume information on their timeline and in the format they prefer. Modern messaging campaigns are crafted to be multi-touchpoint and multi-channel by design—meaning that the campaign will include a variety of messaging mediums and attempts at delivering information to the target audience during a specified time period.

MULTI-TOUCHPOINT

Multi-touchpoint means that you are sending a series of planned communications to your target audience. You have broken out the calendar and planned your outbound messages based on an educated guess as to when your target will actually have the greatest probability of paying attention. This may certainly mean that emails should be able to arrive on Saturday morning during kids' soccer practice, in the evening when the target is checking their email before bed or voicemails at the beginning of the week to help your member stay on track with their CPE training schedule. The point being is that multi-touchpoint messaging means that you must know your target user in depth and understand their demands on their time and attention. Planning multi-touchpoint strategies requires that organizations move out of their comfort zone in planning campaigns that work well for the staff's time and resource schedule and instead, shift to communicating based on the timetable of the intended recipient. Multi-touchpoint also means acknowledging the fact that it may take several communications and a combination of channels in order to get the intended user to consume the information.

MULTI-CHANNEL

Multi-channel refers to the idea that your organization is a content-creation machine. Content is taken here in the broadest sense. In modern marketing, the term “content” is akin to “asset” and includes printed materials such as brochures, postcards, collateral, white papers, articles, annual reports as well as web-based material such as blogs, landing pages and web content. However, it goes even further to include images, videos, audio clips, tweets, Facebook posts, LinkedIn posts and PowerPoint presentations. This storehouse of content is created on a near daily basis by most organizations and is typically not the issue when diagnosing why engagement is not at an optimal level in the target audience.

Once we have content, we must deliver it. The distribution of content, the avenues for how we get content to our intended audience is what we mean by channels. Multi-channel refers to the idea that there is typically a variety of channels that must be used in order to successfully deliver—and elicit the desired response—in your target audience. The fallacy of multi-channel content delivery is that many organizations pick their channels based on what the organization knows, has internal capacity and skill to handle and that is as risk-free“as possible. In fact, this thinking is often the root cause for low response rates despite repeated efforts to gain the attention of your constituents.



"The fallacy of multi-channel content delivery is that many organizations pick their channels based on what the organization knows...this thinking is often the root cause for low response rates"

Communication channels must, therefore, be dictated by the target audience. If your target audience prefers text messages to receive updates, but your organization only sends printed newsletters in the mail, there is a disconnect. You can continue to send printed newsletters, but should understand that this spend is lost on the group of people that prefer text messaging. Your money is wasted and you will not see the return despite the frequency of send, relevancy of your content or amount of discounts you provide as incentive measures.

This fact is a conundrum for many organizations because it is highly inconvenient. Multi-channel means more work. Multi-channel means continual change as channels fluctuate. Today, Facebook might be a great way to distribute content that drives action, tomorrow this may be passé. We have grown comfortable in using email as an economical alternative to direct mail to the extent that we've eliminated direct mail, but we haven't looked at whether adding it back in might regenerate energy, and most of us have certainly not looked at the effect of combining channels of communication to spark absorption of content.

"One of the problems is that organizations are not thinking about their channels as a comprehensive portfolio and instead, just seeing them in isolation"



Today's typical organization has dutifully added on a Facebook page, Twitter account and LinkedIn profile. They have a website, a newsletter, and webinars. These are all bonafide communication channels, but their excitement has worn off; they are no longer new, they have become de facto standards. Modern marketing would explain that the next level to multi-channel lies in understanding how to differentiate these channels, measure these channels and optimize the usage of these channels to obtain the conversion and engagement results that you seek.

DIFFERENTIATING YOUR CHANNELS

Many web-based channels are still not well understood within organizations due to generational differences, lack of in-house skill and experience and lack of a commonly understood set of terms and constructs to discuss "all things web". Historically, organizations have put "all things web" into technology departments and then struggled to understand the cross-over into communications, membership, events and publications.

In the past few years, countless new channels that either are new web-based channels or rely on the concepts of web-based channels have evolved. We have added social media and mobile channels onto a very weak foundation of organizational understanding of the web so it is not surprising to see that most organizations are struggling with how to budget, measure and manage their multi-channel portfolio. In fact, one of the problems is that organizations are not thinking about their channels as a comprehensive portfolio and instead, just seeing them in isolation to keep down the feeling of being overwhelmed. If we think of each channel as needing to belong to a certain department for management, it seems easier to understand who controls it, but it also means that the organization stymies its own growth and won't reach maturity where the communication channels are understood and used by all staff members. Keeping communication channels under the control of just one or two departments means that the organization never fully matures to the point where it sheds its organizational ego and re-organizes itself around the member.

To date, management of multi-channel communication portfolios has largely been broken up within an organization based on specific skills seen within a department. This management mistake perpetuates the silos that organizations have stated they seek to break down and continues to enforce the digital divide between departments that understand modern communication channels and those that do not.

Further, it builds dependencies and bottlenecks within the organization. It allows departments to wield power over other departments as they vie for the avenues to reach constituents and continues the inter-departmental standstills in which many of us continue to be locked.

We have largely thought of the emergence of new channels such as mobile and social as additional places to post the same message. Look! A new billboard was just put up on Waterfront Street! Let's post the exact same message that we have posted on Main Street and disregard the fact that people seeing our message on Main Street are largely people going to work in cars within the city and the people seeing our message on Waterfront Street are mostly people in boats who are out for recreational purposes. This simple analogy can quickly help many organizations understand that taking the same message and posting it to Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn has not resulted in the uptick of interest as they had hoped. It is of little wonder when you realize that the exercise that was skipped was in understanding the tastes, preferences & adoption rates of the various channels within the segments and niche groups of your constituency.

Organizations have largely gotten over the shock of social and mobile. The collective realization that these channels are not going away and have fundamentally changed something is here. The questions on which we need to now focus are at a higher level: how do you optimize these channels and leverage them to maximize results? These questions call for system level, critical analysis thinking and cannot be solved by one department alone. The answer is in understanding the core concept of modern messaging and the culture needed to support today's creation and delivery of products and services.

THE MODERN ORGANIZATION'S MARKETING MINDSET

How do we innovate our organizations and re-engineer them to be faster, more energetic, more dynamic and more responsive? The answer is no less than a total shift in mindset to embrace the idea that the organization is nothing and the user is everything. In a world of user-centric design where the customer has the buying power due to the availability and transparency of information, market forces of supply and demand dominate. Smart customers have overwhelming choice and can well afford to be incredibly picky and particular in their selections. With so much choice, attention spans are measured in the seconds and what used to impress customers is now seen as fluff.



"What the customer craves is change"

We now have customers that bore easily and expect to get products and services when, where and how they want. Customers today are super sophisticated and quickly understand whether something is of value to them or not based on what they will personally get out of it. This is a difficult environment in which to market because the customer no longer demands perfection in product delivery which could be attained. Instead, what the customer now craves is change. The users' appetite for variety, volume and variability is massive and the fundamental question in serving this typical user is this: "how is your organization creating & feeding the appetites of various groups in your constituency?". Ironically, the years organizations have spent in making sure that their website, newsletter and direct mail all match are over and the premise now antiquated. Customers no longer want consistency, they want excitement. This is a double challenge for associations that are traditionally risk-averse and fear experimentation.

However, brands that have taken this premise of change to heart have quickly seen that it is incredibly powerful. Putting the customer at the center and then building operations around the customer changes not just the organizational structure of the organization, but the very culture itself. Re-engineering an organization to be designed for service to people who have shifting tastes and preferences in an environment that is constantly changing finds organizations ditching their Six Sigma and cost-cutting efficiency models that were popularized and adopted from manufacturing and shifting to customer experience models used by entertainment and hospital-ity industries.

"The biggest fundamental shift in user-centric design is understanding where your organization fits into the life of your constituent"



The Walt Disney Company and Hyatt Hotels fundamentally understand that they must constantly change, update, innovate, throw away and start over on ideas on how to serve their customers. Product companies such as Apple, Nike, Coca-Cola and Starbucks have embraced this same “customer is king” philosophy and designed their entire organization around this precept, creating a brand culture that sticks rapid continual improvement at the very center of its identity.

Not-for-profit organizations, higher education and governmental organizations are now undergoing this change. How can you identify not-for-profits that are transitioning to these modern marketing frameworks? Look for organizations that are on their way to re-designing their overall messaging design and seeking to understand how to better combine multiple communication channels. Identify the organizations that are still issuing RFPs for one aspect of their communication channel portfolio in isolation from other channels as an indicator that they have not transitioned to modern marketing principles because redesigning your website in

isolation from your social, mobile and direct mail delivery channels no longer makes sense once you understand user-centric messaging design.

Sophisticated organizations now seek to understand their user, devise provocative messaging and then move to update the delivery channels of the message. Continuing to repackage content without first understanding if the content itself is relevant and understanding how the content channel fits into the user’s world view is an expensive effort that gives organizations the false impression of innovation. However, in the new world of marketing, activity without impact is seen as a complete waste of resources. Impact—that is the ability to elicit a response in targeted user groups—is the true measure of a worthwhile endeavor, and impact now occurs when the organization sets out to understand and design total experience flows for its constituents.

USER-CENTRIC MESSAGING DESIGN

A fundamental shift has occurred in modern messaging. Successful brands have deconstructed their mass communication approach and rebuilt it around highly segmented, niche target audiences. Organizations now spend time and money to understand what is compelling for each niche target and heavily survey target groups to understand what they want. More messaging is now being added to campaigns to target these niche groups and provide a variety of formats to fit the preferences of individual users. Mass messaging that is put out by organizations on a timeframe convenient to the organization is no longer effective. What does work is creating target audience personas and then crafting a messaging strategy around the real ways that this group lives. With the advent of mobile and the ability for users to now receive communications wherever they are and in any part of the day, modern messaging is built around understanding the time periods of the day when the target user is most likely to pay attention to your organization’s message and is not otherwise taken up with tasks or activities.

The biggest fundamental shift in user-centric design is understanding where your organization fits into the life of your constituent. It is a humbling process whereby your messaging campaigns need to look for tiny windows of time when you can slip into your constituents' day, spark their interest enough to hold their attention long enough to deliver your message. Whether those windows of attention opportunity are convenient to your organization is irrelevant; to stay relevant your organization must be able to morph into a communications machine that can function 24/7/365.

The last key to user-centric design is understanding the fundamental shift in timeframes that has occurred in the last few years, largely due to the influence of mobile and social media. Since both mobile and social are inherently real-time, users, overall, have gotten used to being delivered content in a "just in time" mode. While this doesn't seem all that surprising if you think about how used to responding to last-minute coupons and Facebook updates we have become, it has severe repercussions for organizations when put into the context of program planning.

Let's take events. It used to be that you would start to promote your event months-even years-in advance and heavily rely on early bird pricing for needed cash. The implicit understanding was that communications could be planned well in advance with little need to deal with large quantities of registrations at the last minute. Perhaps a better case is that of webinars. Most organizations are ill-prepared to handle a large volume of registrants on the day of the webinar. However, this is at odds with the reality that most people now plan their day on a daily basis and do not register weeks in advance and then attend (in fact, the people that register weeks in advance are typically the ones that don't attend). What's changed? Our overall sense of time has changed because users operate in a far more "just in time" framework than they have in the past. Users now assume that the webinar registration will still be there the day before or the day of the event

and they can hold off on registering until that day when they have a clear understanding of their own day's schedule.



"Organizations that are succeeding are quickly seeing that the key to success is finding more time for staff members to be creative in their communications"

Does this mean that your organization should not advertise until the day of the event? Of course not, but it does perhaps mean that your timeframes for promoting your event are decreased. It also means that we can now discuss the last fundamental shift that has occurred in messaging campaigns which is that everything is additive. While we need to be able to handle the "just in time" mode, it doesn't eliminate the need for messaging that we've historically performed.

THE ADDITIVE EFFECT OF MODERN COMMUNICATIONS

The additive effect means that we need more messaging. Gone are the days of fearing that we're over-communicating because we might bother the user. The assumption now is that we are serving the user by providing a variety of messaging options from which they can choose. Our goal is to build the users' trust that we are a reliable resource that is providing a concierge-like information service that fits their lifestyle.

What this also means is that we are adding on more and more channels, more touchpoints and a greater variety of user needs to meet. We are moving to a world of hyperlocalization in our communications that requires more time and creativity. While we know that the results are there if we practice niche marketing, few organizations are in a position where they can just continue to add more staff without additional top-line growth. Organizations that are succeeding are

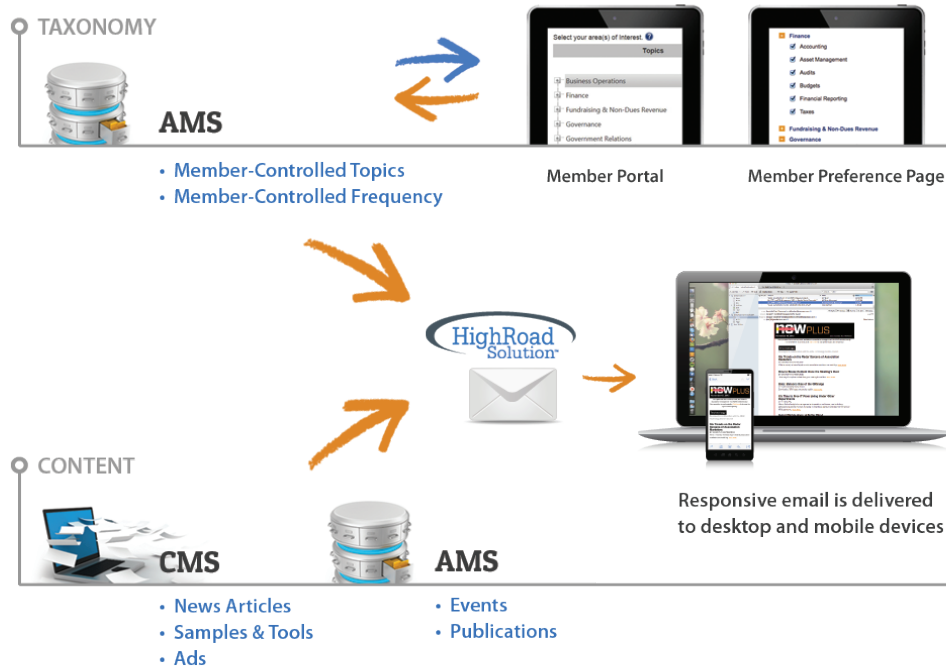
quickly seeing that the key to success is finding more time for staff members to be creative in their communications.

AUTOMATION

One of the ways that organizations are freeing up more time from current resources is through automation of their communication systems. As communications have evolved, so have the skill levels required in staff. In moving from an industrial factory-level worker mindset where a staff member may spend countless hours per month manually updating member records and uploading email lists between systems, organizations are graduating to the creative economy mindset where workers' key asset is not their physical presence, but their intellectual one. Organizations are therefore,

automating any tasks that are overly time-consuming in an effort to re-allocate workers' time to value-add tasks.

Email marketing is a natural area for automation. The time-consuming nature of list management, segmentation and production of emails is largely still done manually by most organizations. Savvy organizations are switching to marketing automation platforms that can automatically send out emails that onboard new members, send renewal notices, market events to non-registrants and thank members for their patronage at anniversary dates. Truly visionary organizations are taking automation one step further by integrating their communication platforms with their customer relationship database systems in order to move to automated hyper-personalization.



INTEGRATION

A modern software platform is designed to allow data to easily be pulled out of its database and have data easily be written into it. Modern software is designed from a premise that systems should be connected to allow data to flow

between systems for easy aggregation and analysis. Organizations that have invested in platforms are now evolving to the next stage of maturation in connecting platform-to-platform to allow for sophisticated automation that is made possible through multiple points of integration.

While integration as a concept is easy enough to understand, integration in practice is rarely simple. Truly robust integrations requires in-depth knowledge of the data structures and application layer of multiple platforms along with the business acumen to understand the purpose of the desired integration. Understanding the business rules, the ability to design optimized user workflow processes to minimize staff while imbuing the integration with inherent flexibility so that it can change over time requires a team that is focused on being experts at integration methodologies. In fact, integrations are truly a specialty of their own and smart organizations choose firms that fully focus on the creation and support of integrations. While product manufacturers may have a services team that can provide an integration, it is never the focus of the company. In order for organizations to truly create integrations that automate their communications, they need to partner with a firm that is fully focused on architecting solutions that join together multiple platforms

MODERN MESSAGING IN ACTION: A Case Study of ASAE

The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) serve the needs of 21,000 association professionals who look to the association for best practices in all things association—from marketing to finances to technology. In addition, ASAE serves another 10,000 industry partners who subscribe to their publications, take part in their events and support the association community as a whole. Like many professional associations, ASAE covers a wide variety of topics and special interest areas and largely relied on email as its main outbound communication channel. The number of topic areas to cover meant that over time, ASAE continued to introduce more and more newsletters that covered specific interest areas. While the depth of coverage in content was appreciated by members, the sheer number of newsletters and the complexity in managing emails was not. ASAE realized it had more than a dozen newsletters that were going out each month with some members being bombarded with email.

ASAE set out to consolidate its communications as well as to adopt modern marketing principles of user-centricity and multi-touchpoint thinking. Having just finished a multiple-year taxonomy project to tag content according to topics, roles and content type, ASAE sought to leverage its large repository of content while finding a way to automate the process of re-marketing content. Additionally, ASAE wanted to provide a new experience for users and let them dictate their own experience based on their own tastes and preferences. ASAE was ready to let go of control and empower members to design their own experience.

To craft the solution, ASAE worked with HighRoad to design a new type of newsletter that would not require ASAE staff involvement. The future newsletter needed to work on any screen-size, including smartphones and tablets, and to present itself in a way that still ensured that sponsors' banner ads were prominently displayed. The solution crafted by HighRoad not only met ASAE's needs, but far surpassed them.

"Not only are we making this newsletter more germane to the people who have to use it, we got rid of all the infrastructure, staff time, etc. that used to be done to coalesce this newsletter. Content is not about what we want to dictate people should get. Content is about what they want to get."

-Reggie Henry, CIO, ASAE

First, HighRoad applied the modern marketing principle of user-centric design by utilizing the data found in each member's profile to understand their geographic location and member dues expiration period to ensure that emails were automatically stopped should the member fall outside of the grace period. Second, HighRoad integrated multiple source systems to the marketing automation platform to pull together not just the member's record, but also the content management

system employed by ASAE. Third, HighRoad developed a sophisticated user preference center that leveraged ASAE’s taxonomy work to allow users to select into a variety of topics and indicate at what level of expertise they were to ensure the right level of content was delivered. Content delivery was completely predicated on the user’s inputted selections on topic and knowledge level with the one twist being that HighRoad added logic as to how to display the content.

Preferences are input by the actual user by selecting topics of interest and then the level of content that they desire: fundamental, practical or strategic. Users update their own profile on ASAE’s website and preferences are automatically written into ASAE’s member database. This data then dictates what content will be served up to each individual member.

Leadership			
CEO Succession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CEOs/Executive Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Change Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Leadership Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organizational Culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal			
Antitrust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compliance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Looking at user selection behavior, HighRoad wrote code into the email delivery system to dictate the order that content would appear. For example, if a user selected 6 sub-topics within the topic of “Marketing”, but only 3 sub topics within the topic of “Events”, the email newsletter would deliver an experience that listed articles under Marketing first followed by Events. Using user-selected inputs as a voting system of sorts that translated into the listing order of content meant that each newsletter would be unique to the individual. Each person would receive not just the content topics in which they’re interested, but also in the order and level of expertise to which they most associated. In addition

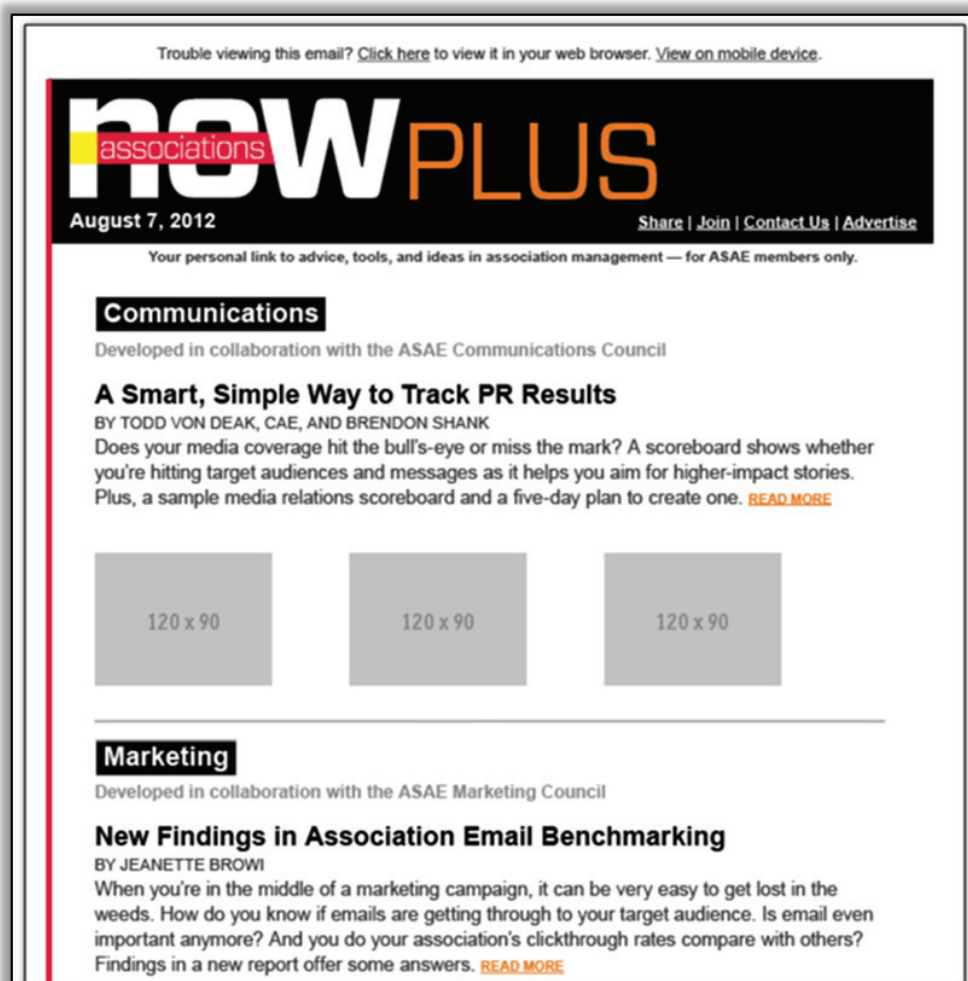
to content articles, ASAE made sure to tag events, webinars, continuing education programs and the like which ensured that members were receiving associated programming that aligned with their topic interests of choice.

To ensure that the newsletter was automated, HighRoad integrated its transactional email marketing automation platform with ASAE’s content management system to ensure that the email newsletter could be dynamically created and sent without any ASAE staff involvement. Utilizing transactional messaging architecture allowed HighRoad to send a high volume of email



that were individually created based on pulling together data from ASAE's Aptify member management system, its content management system and its email marketing database. Each individual email was compiled and sent through HighRoad's transactional messaging platform that has deliverability rates above 98%. With personalized content coming to users based on their own inputted selections, email open rates soared. ASAE's open rates skyrocketed to more than 20% more than previous blast emails when ASAE was sending one mass message to all individuals. Giving up control of the message and allowing members to design their own experience translated into more engagement. ASAE became an

instant believer in the efficacy of modern marketing principles and looked to continue to expand its taxonomy across additional platforms so that content contained within can be included in the automated email newsletters.



ASAE designed a newsletter that could auto-reformat to fit mobile screen sizes for phone and tablets using responsive designed templates. The order of content is also personalized to each member's level of interest in specific topic areas ensuring that members see the content that they care about first.



Each individual's newsletter also includes links to events and publications that align with that individual's interest areas. ASAE has taken the idea of user-centricity to the next level by allowing users to receive the content that they truly want with the confidence in their brand that if users decide to change their preferences, they will come to ASAE for additional needed information.

Education

- JAN. 12: [Making the most of your Mentoring: Empowering yourself as a Mentee](#)
- JAN. 17: [Women's Executive Forum: Generosity Towards the Self: A Workshop on Caring For and About Yourself](#)
- JAN. 30-FEB. 12: [Supervisory Management](#)
- FEB. 1-3: [CAE Kickoff Study Course](#)
- FEB 6.-MAR. 1: [Principles of Association Management](#)
- MAR. 25-27: [Great Ideas Conference](#)

Publications

- [2012 Associations Now Volunteer Leadership Issue](#)
- [ASAE Association Compensation and Benefits Study, 2012-2013 Edition](#)
- [CAE Study Guide, 2012-2013 Edition](#)
- [Association Law Handbook, 5th Ed.](#)

Sample Tools & Resources

- [Code of Ethics](#)
- [Foundation Tools and Resources](#)
- [Policies: Joint Venture](#)
- [Legal Forms & Models](#)
- [Strategic Plans](#)
- [Tactical Planning Tools](#)

SEE ALL MODELS AND SAMPLES



associations NOW PLUS

{ \$senddate } | [Share](#) | [Join](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise](#)

Your personal link to advice, tools, and ideas in association management - for ASAE members only.

{ \$section.name }

Developed in collaboration with the { \$section.councilname }

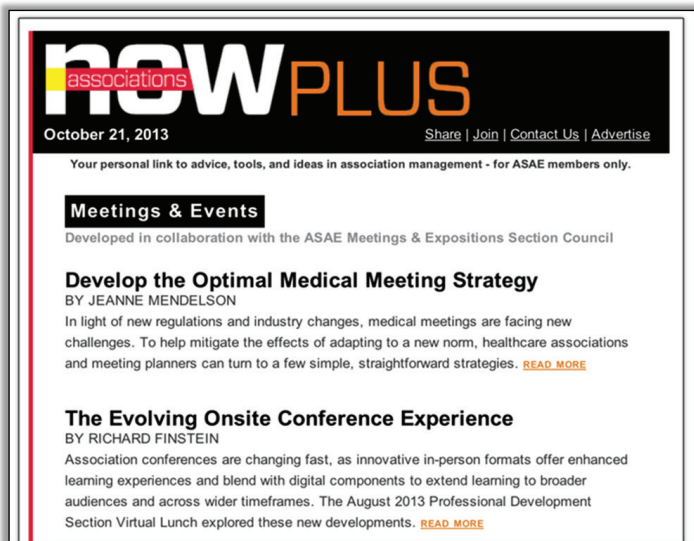
{foreach from=\$section.article item=article name=articles} **{ \$article.title }**
 BY { \$article.author }
 { \$article.description } [READ MORE](#)

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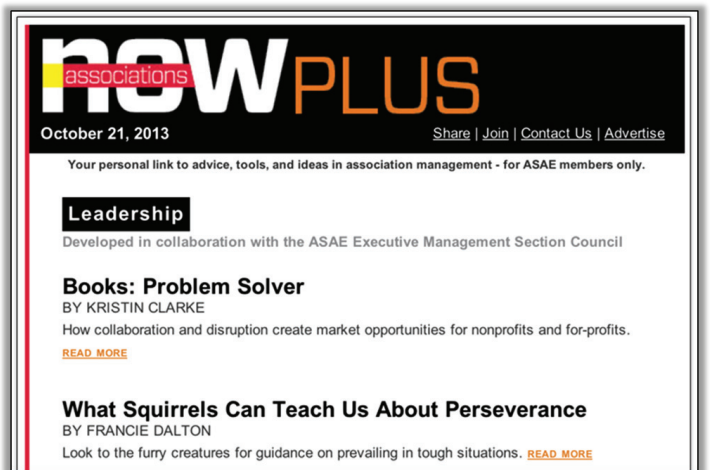
ASAE took advantage of HighRoad's transactional messaging know-how to have templates built that were both responsive in design as well as utilized the Smarty Tag PHP framework to allow for each email to be created on the fly based on embedded queries that pulled data from across ASAE's member database, content management system and other database sources to populate each member's newsletter with unique content.

The results of ASAE's automated newsletter is nothing short of breakthrough. Email open rates that are double what they previously were with zero additional staff time means a massive ROI on the project. Members are delighted to receive content that is of interest and at the appropriate level for their experience and interest levels. ASAE staff have saved countless hours per month and consolidated eleven newsletters into one newsletter that members not only want, but look forward to receiving at the time interval that they decide. ASAE has achieved modern marketing by combining user-centricity, automation and integration. The organization looks to continue to modernize by adding in supporting channels and continuing to build in multi-touchpoint marketing.

MEMBER #1

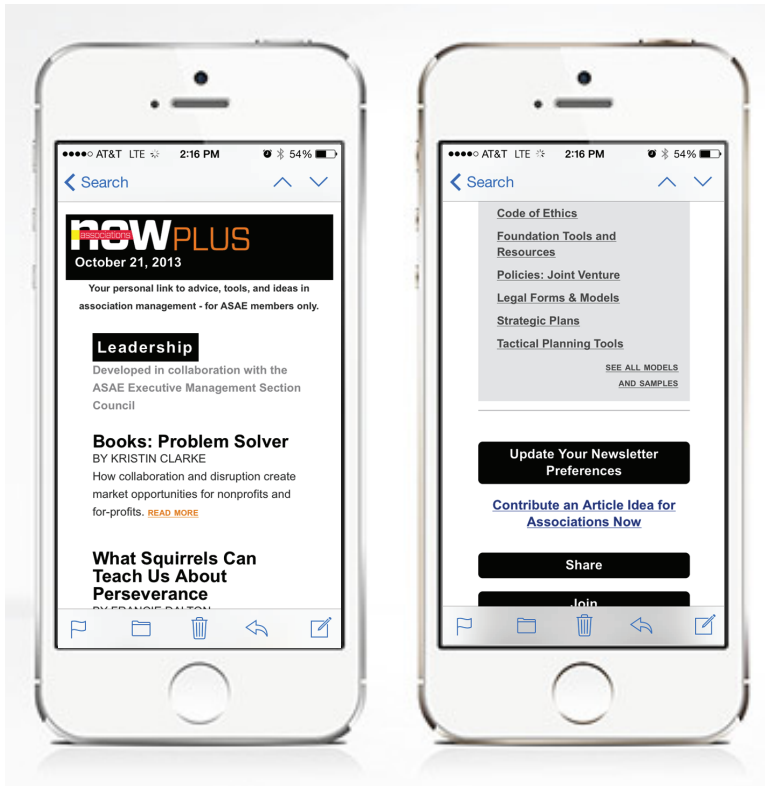


MEMBER #2



ASAE's newsletter's built-in intelligence allows each member to receive an email newsletter that is unique to their own interests and expertise level. Emails are sent out based on the periodicity chosen by the member and are completely automated—ASAE staff are not involved at all.





ASAE Associations Now Plus newsletter uses email templates specifically designed to work on today's mobile smartphones and tablets. Content layouts are automatically reconfigured and button sizes are optimized for mobile use.

SUMMARY

While ASAE has taken the lead in integrating and automating their marketing communication platforms, they are far from bleeding edge. Many organizations are now adding automation and integration line items to their annual budgets and more importantly, redesigning their communications processes from the viewpoint of the user. Hot topics in association marketing and communications now include discussions on the proper skillsets needed, whether to have a creative team in-house or outsource and how to measure communication efforts at the campaign level while tying into top-line revenue growth goals. The modern marketing mindset that is quickly being adopted top-down in the association space is leading to organizations that are more nimble, have greater brand recognition and increased interest levels in members. Adopting multi-channel, multi-touchpoint and user-centric methodologies are resulting in near-immediate changes in audience response and leading organizations to a period of renewed growth.



The only eMessaging solution used by and endorsed by the American Society of Association Executives

Integrated eMessaging Solutions for:



Marketing Automation



Event Marketing



Membership Marketing



Social Marketing



Mobile Marketing



Content Marketing

Contact us for a Demo: sales@highroadsolution.com or **703.297.8894**