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# **THOUGHT LEADERSHIP**

for

**Using Email Marketing Campaigns**

for

**Membership Retention and Recruitment**

and

**Attendance Promotion  
For  
Annual Meetings & Shows**

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## FACING MEMBER RETENTION ISSUES

In today's economic environment most trade associations and professional organizations are facing the same urgent issues: loss of revenue from decreased membership, and decreased attendance at meetings.

According to ASAE, the average retention rate before the current downturn began was 82 to 90 percent. Of course, each industry has its own specific set of factors affecting member activity.

Nonetheless, as Stephen C. Carey, Ph.D., CAE, states in his article appearing in the February 2009 issue of *Associations Now*, "In today's environment, if you are running below 80 percent, you probably need to tune up your retention machine and develop additional incentives that address your specific value equation. If you're running below 75 percent, your value equation is probably in need of a major overhaul. "

Not much has changed in a year since that article was published. And, although 2010 promises a reversal of the downward trend, associations would do well to take a good hard look not only at their "retention machine", but at how they are communicating their unique value equation to members and the industry.

Spectrum has identified the following objectives:

- Enhance industry awareness of the value of membership in your association and thereby improve membership retention and recruitment results.
- Improve the retention rate of current and recent past attendees at your annual meeting.
- Increase the number of first-time attendees to the show from within all segments of the industry and go deeper into each member organization.
- Increase the number of exhibitors in the trade show.

## Consistent Communication Strategy

Spectrum Group Productions has developed a plan to address this urgent issue of member retention and the need to increase attendance at major annual events. Many organizations are using new email technology to communicate with their members. However, this technology is merely a tool that requires a strong communication strategy forged into a carefully planned marketing campaign to be effective.

The essential strategy of our proposal is based on a simple yet powerful premise

***to maximize the use of dynamic on-going email marketing to reach members of your industry and compel them to act.***

Using this highly effective strategy we have put together two proposed campaigns — promotion of membership retention and recruitment and promotion of your annual meeting or show.

## Why Use An Email Marketing Campaign

An effective email marketing campaign relies on many of the same components as traditional direct marketing — messaging that sparks interest and speaks to audience needs and desires, repeated contact over an extended period of time, dynamic design and brand recognition, as well as a compelling “call to action.” This approach is sometimes referred to as “drip marketing” — a phrase derived from an agricultural process where plants or crops are watered consistently in small amounts over time in order to nurture vigorous and abundant growth.

Further, the use of email and related Internet-based technologies generates even more powerful results than traditional print media direct marketing campaigns. By utilizing a regular and consistent application of Internet-based technologies — email, web-based video and compelling digital graphics — we believe you can significantly increase attendance, broaden participation among all segments of the industry and expand membership in the organization.

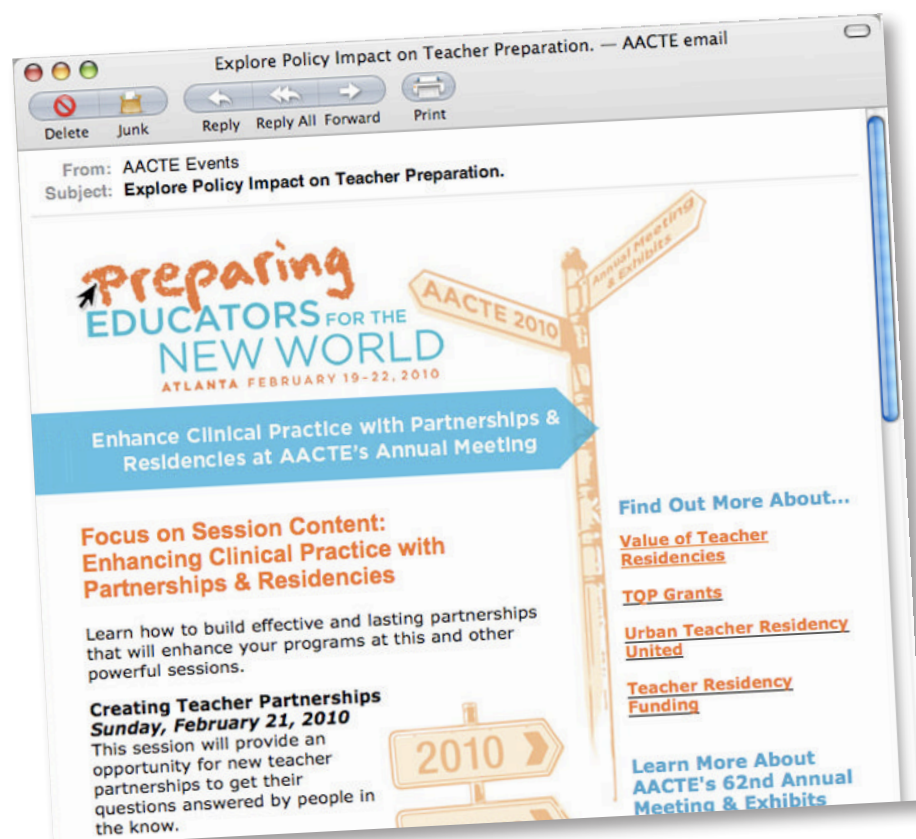
***According to Gail Bozeman, VP for Meetings & Events at AACTE, total meeting registration increased 19% and registrants responded 15-25% faster over last year. “We attribute this to the email campaign,” said Bozeman***

- **Frequency Messaging:** Each email is unique. Emails are structured to build and reinforce a strategic message by delivering valuable information on a regular periodic basis — monthly, bi-weekly, weekly — such as benefits of membership or attending the annual meeting.
- **Dynamic Branding:** Compelling designs, photos and graphics, or Flash files that incorporate your show and/or association logo distinguish marketing emails from other text-only emails further engaging your audience and building brand recognition.
- **Enhancing Interest:** Content can be embedded with links to documents, website, flash video files or content that enrich the message and engage the audience.
- **Ease of Sharing:** Emails can be passed along to friends and colleagues who share similar interests or needs, thereby leveraging your audience into an expanded sales force.
- **Timely Information:** Messages can be quickly adapted to new developments and changes in your program without the significant lead times needed for print materials and mailings.
- **Cost-effective Delivery:** Marketing emails can be produced and delivered at a small fraction of the cost of print media and mailings.
- **Call to Action:** Each email incorporates a specific call to action — to register, join or seek more information — that is linked to an online resource that allows the reader to immediately respond with ease at the moment he or she is convinced of the value and/or need to act.

## ANNUAL MEETING OR SHOW CAMPAIGN

Spectrum proposes an email marketing campaign for your annual meeting that includes the following components:

**Email Template:** We will utilize a graphically rich, eye-catching template that incorporates the meeting logo, theme and graphics. The template will be divided into three content sections to present a primary, secondary and tertiary message. We will use this message prioritization to give multiple exposures on a given topic during the course of several emails. In addition, links to your registration system, association and meeting information web pages, as well as “additional information” web pages, which support the primary message, will be embedded in each email to give readers the opportunity to take immediate action and/or find more information.

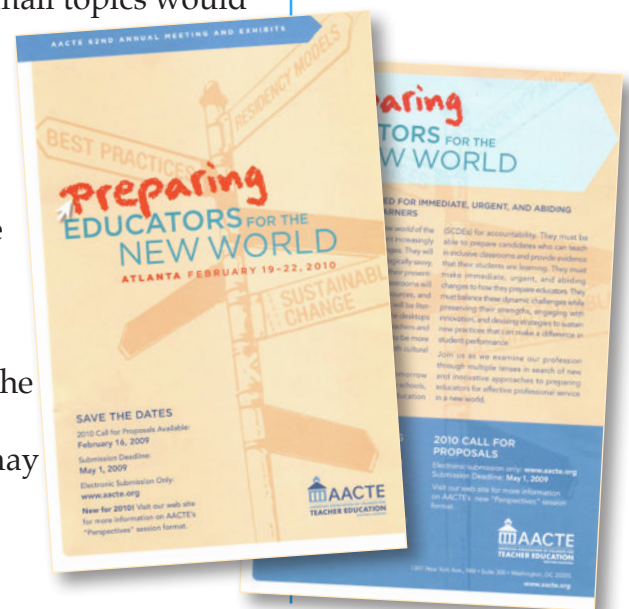


**Message Content and Campaign Development:** Working in close cooperation with staff and leadership, we will develop a content schedule for the campaign that incorporates the top reasons to attend the meeting and tradeshow, e.g., education, regulatory and legislative information, networking, trade show, participation in your association, etc. In addition, important registration and housing deadlines, destination highlights and other meeting features will be included in the content schedule. We will develop and provide you with the content schedule to use as a roadmap throughout the campaign.

After the content schedule has been agreed to we will write content on a regular schedule for review, revision and approval. Spectrum will format the approved content into the template incorporating appropriate links and additional images and then deliver the finalized email to you to broadcast to your membership and prospect email lists.

Although content will be developed around the “top reasons to attend,” each email will cover specific topics to create a unique message of interest to your industry. For example, one email might focus on a particular general session speaker with extensive biographical information and supporting background material that addresses the speaker’s topic; another email might highlight a group of break-out sessions with a common theme (or track name); yet another email might focus on the trade show with links to a comprehensive listing of exhibitors. Email topics would be supplemented with attendee testimonials or survey statistics that emphasize the value of the meeting to attendees. The overall effect during the course of the campaign is to build interest in the many facets of your show and boost attendance through instant response to the registration system.

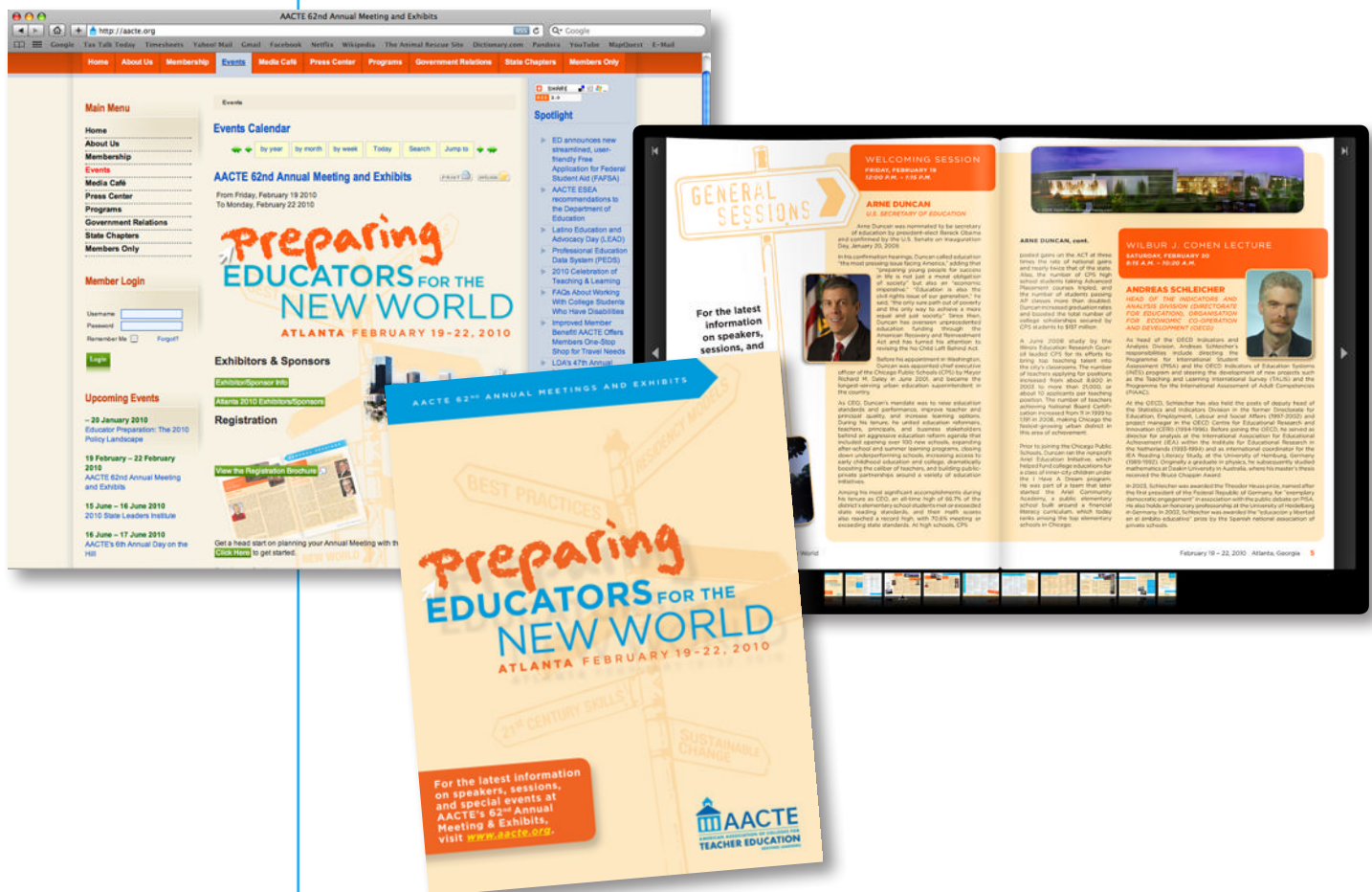
**Campaign Phases:** We envision the 18-month campaign will have several distinct phases and the frequency and depth of content will build as we draw closer to the event. As examples, phases may include **Save-the-date**, **Exhibitor Sales**, and **Early-bird Registration**.





**Print/Digital Materials:** Many of our clients have found significant benefit to converting their tradition print promotional materials into interactive, online brochures and/or digital pdf formats.

This approach is ideal for an email marketing campaign and can also be easily incorporated in the association website. We propose to develop the design and layout of your promotional materials in order to create a unified graphic look for the meeting. This design can be used for both digital and/or print versions. Anticipated materials include a “save the date” postcard, exhibitor promotional brochure, registration brochure, and on-site program brochure. We will integrate the show logo/theme into the design and content of each piece, but also create a distinctive look that is suitable and recognizable to the target audience. All print materials will underscore the “top reasons” behind the overall campaign.





# MEMBERSHIP EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

We believe an email marketing campaign similar to that outlined above for your annual meeting or show can have a significant positive impact on membership retention and recruitment. Although the timeline would be adjusted to conform with your renewal campaign and the content schedule would naturally be adapted to meet the specific needs of each segment of your membership the same principles of an email-based “drip marketing” approach would apply.

**Email Template(s):** We would develop an branded membership benefits template with interchangeable elements unique to each segment of your membership. Each member would receive an email that clearly was graphically designed to address their interests and needs, etc. Each of these membership templates would be divided into sections that would allow us to develop a particular benefit of membership, provide timely updates on your activities that address that benefit and supply member testimonials or relevant member satisfaction survey information that reflects member appreciation of the specific benefit discussed.

**Message Content:** In close collaboration with staff and leadership we would identify the key reasons for membership in the association for each particular segment. We would anticipate overlap in some areas but the content for each segment’s email would be tailored to speak to their specific needs and desires. A content schedule would be developed that conforms to your annual renewal campaign with contact increasing in frequency as critical renewal deadlines approach. At a minimum, members of each segment would receive at least one email a month that underscores the benefits they have been receiving. Each email would contain a link to membership renewal information as part of the “call to action.”

Content would be adapted to speak to prospective members in order to develop a parallel set of emails highlighting the top reasons to *join* with a “call to action” that would link the reader to your membership application, your website for more information and/or a contact to discuss membership in more detail.

**Campaign Phases:** We recommend developing a two-phased campaign: First a short-term campaign to ramp up to the current year's renewal. The next campaign would be a long-term, 12-month campaign to both reinforce the value of membership and to target new members throughout the year.

The specifics and the budget for each of these campaigns would have to be developed in close collaboration with your membership staff in order to take advantage of historical trends in recruitment, dues pro-rating offers, and meeting registration discount incentives, where possible and appropriate.

**Membership Video:** Adapting the general membership benefit themes stressed in our email campaigns, we would create a short (2 minute) web-based membership recruitment video that highlights the top reasons to belong. The video would incorporate dynamic graphics, short member testimonials and a stirring call to action.

Once produced the video would be integrated into the overall campaign and timeline and could be employed in a variety of formats — placement on the website, emailed to current and prospective members, presented at your various meetings or displayed on a laptop at member-to-member recruitment meetings.

Spectrum is eager to work closely with your membership staff to generate creative solutions to the specific problems you are encountering in membership retention and recruitment.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Spectrum's long-standing partnership with the professional and trade association community has given us unique insights into your needs and objectives and we welcome the opportunity to apply our creative communication expertise to the critical challenges you face in enhancing your membership retention and recruitment and promoting your Annual Show.

We believe the email marketing campaigns that we have proposed will have immediate and significant results by giving you the tools to reach your current membership in new and powerful ways.