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2015 Association Communications Benchmarking Report

The definitive annual report on communications best practices and peer benchmarking exclusively for the association community

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*Conducted by Naylor Association Solutions and the Association Adviser
in partnership with the Association Societies Alliance*

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Visit **communicationsbenchmark.naylor.com** to take a look at your association's personalized results. Additional tools allow you to build dynamic, personal and downloadable reports highlighting your communication strategy in direct comparison with other industry associations. Advanced users will have the ability to dive deeper into the data by segmenting based on membership structure, size, geography, industry and more.

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Executive Summary

Naylor Association Solutions is more committed than ever to helping associations identify, address and solve their member communication challenges. Through a series of strategic acquisitions and partnerships, Naylor is now in continuous contact with more than 1,800 trade and professional association clients. This gives us an even broader perspective on the community's ongoing needs.

Communication effectiveness – or lack thereof – continues to be one of those clearly identified needs. Since 2010, Naylor has partnered with Dr. M. Sean Limon of the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business Administration and numerous state societies of association executives to identify and deconstruct the top communications concerns cited by North American trade associations and professional societies. We not only study the effectiveness of associations' communication with members and volunteers, but the effectiveness of their communication with prospective members, including students and fast-rising young members of their industry or profession.

Our annual association communication benchmarking study, fielded in conjunction with more than a dozen state chapters of association executives, highlights the results of the different methodologies associations use to tackle these member communication challenges.

- **In 2011**, we learned many associations were operating in silos and believed they were doing a better job of integrating their communications programs than they actually were.

- **In 2012-13***, we discovered associations greatly underestimated the degree to which overload and communication clutter prevented them from reaching their members.

- **In 2014**, we found that associations truly capable of integrating their communications are more effective than other associations when it comes to engaging their members with better content that considers reader/member/advertiser needs.

- **In 2015**, social media eclipsed traditional online as the leading channel for high frequency touchpoints with members. Further, associations are finally starting to chip away at the long-standing challenges of information overload and communication waste. They're also getting better at targeting and segmenting their communications efforts, and they're making a substantial push into video and mobile. However, associations still struggle greatly with content relevancy, communication integration and using data advantageously to learn more about their members. And while staffing has increased slightly, it does not seem to be increasing sufficiently to handle the ever-increasing communication workload at today's association.

* The 2012-13 benchmarking study was based on a single survey that started in late 2012 and finished in early 2013.

As mentioned above, the level of communication integration among associations continues to decline, just as it has done every year since 2011. Today, just one out of every 16 associations (6%) claims to have a fully-integrated communications strategy. Compare that to 10 percent of associations in 2014 and to more than 20 percent of associations in 2011. Further, researchers found a disturbingly large number of associations admit they do not have a bona fide mobile, social media or video strategy in place. In fact, nearly one-third of associations (31%) said they were "not sure if members find social media valuable" – up from 26 percent who said so in 2014. What's more, less than 30 percent of respondents agreed members were engaging with their video offerings, and less than one in four (22%) said they were pleased with the ROI they received from their video initiatives.

Clearly mobile, social and video channels are linchpins of many associations' initiatives to connect with "Next Gen". As such, respondents told us they were more concerned about losing new members than they have been we began this study in 2011. Researchers also learned associations continue to struggle with content relevance, communication segmentation for different member subgroups, and collecting and using data to know their members better.

On the bright side, our research suggests most associations are well aware of their communication challenges and most are taking steps to address them. The size (and courage) of those steps can vary greatly, but most associations are attempting to adapt to the fast-changing media consumption habits, preferences and expectations of their members. For example, when asked what they would do if their publishing/content creation teams received an unexpected 50 percent budget increase, more than one-third of respondents (39%) told us they would "**develop a real mobile strategy**" and another third (31.9%) said they would "**put a lot more muscle behind their social media.**" What's more, nearly half of associations report they have integrated video to some degree into their communication strategies and another one-fourth of respondents (24%) said they plan to integrate video in the near future. On another positive note, our research found that more than half of associations (55%) **have optimized their websites for mobile** (up from 48% in 2014). Further, two in five (39%) **have a mobile conference app** (up from 35 percent in 2014) and more than one-third (33%) have **optimized their e-newsletters and blogs for mobile devices**.

The 2015 Communications Landscape

Whether you're new to the association world or a lifelong association professional, there's never been more pressure on your organization to cut through the cluttered communication landscape and to remain top of mind with members – and prospective members – especially those at the early stages of their careers. Economic, demographic, technological and social factors are making it increasingly challenging for North American trade associations and professional societies to recruit and retain members, and to maintain their position as the trusted thought leaders of their industries. This report assesses the current communications landscape by examining the results of Naylor's *2015 Communications Benchmarking Survey*. It identifies patterns and trends that illustrate how associations manage their communications, and it compares communications department budgets and staff sizes for small, medium and large associations.

Our research confirms the suspicion that associations of all sizes, industries and operating budgets are communicating with members more frequently, via more channels and platforms than ever before. For instance, while the frequency of monthly touchpoints with members held steady via print and online channels over the past year, the percentage of associations connecting with members via social media continues to increase. More than 50 percent of associations are connecting with members at least 11 times per month via social media (up from 43 percent in 2014), and 32 percent are connecting at least 20 times per month via social media (up from 27 percent in 2014).

Unfortunately, our study shows that associations are communicating **even less effectively with members than they were as recently as three years ago**. First, there is the challenge of remaining relevant with members of all ages. Topics such as how-to, best practices, career advice and professional development continue to rise in importance, while association content staples such as lobbying, advocacy, industry news and event coverage continue to decline in importance.

Topics most important to association members, 2011-2015:

Rank	2011	2014	2015
#1	Industry News/Trends	Lobbying/Advocacy	How-To/Best Practices
#2	Lobbying/Advocacy	How-To/Best Practices	Career/Professional Dev.
#3	Career/Professional Dev.	Industry News/Trends	Industry News/Trends
#4	Member News	Career/Professional Dev.	Lobbying/Advocacy
#5	Coverage of Industry Events	Actionable Data	Actionable Data

N = 524 in 2011; 842 in 2014; 704 in 2015. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2014.

While associations have slightly increased the number of staff devoted to publishing/content and social media, they're generally not staffing up commensurately to meet the increased workload on those departments. Although resources devoted to mobile and social media have increased substantially since last year's report, 58 percent of the 704 association leaders who responded to our 2015 survey still believe their ***members ignore at least half of the communication pieces sent to them regularly***. While that's a 13 percentage point improvement over 2014 levels (71%) and a 4 percentage point improvement over 2011 levels (62%), associations are still hitting members with too much messaging that recipients don't find relevant to their own needs or to their staffs' needs.

What's more, less than one-third of associations (31%) believe their communication efforts have improved significantly from three years ago. That's down 5 percentage points from 2014 and down 15 percentage points from 2011. Finally, only about half of associations (55%) self-rated their member communications "above average" or "best in class" relative to their peers. That's a slight improvement over 2014 (53%), but not enough to match the 59 percent threshold reported in our inaugural study in 2011. The picture becomes bleaker when you break out the "best in class" portion of the aforementioned data. Our research shows only one out of 18 associations (5.5%) believe their communications are truly best in class relative to their peers – that's down from a level of 7 percent in 2014 and from 9.1 percent in 2011.

- **41.7% of associations feel understaffed overall**
- **43.5% feel their publishing/content creation teams are understaffed**
- **43.6% feel their social media teams are understaffed**

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Selected trends in association communication effectiveness, 2011 to 2015:

	4 years			1 year		
	2011	2015	CHANGE	2014	2015	CHANGE
Rate own communications "above average" or "best in class" relative to peers	58.5%	55.0%	-3.5	52.6%	55.0%	2.4
Best in class only	9.1%	5.5%	-3.6	7.0%	5.5%	-1.5
Believe own communications have significantly improved from three years ago	45.8%	31.4%	-14.4	36.4%	31.4%	-5.0
Believe members ignore at least half of what the association sends	62.0%	58.2%	-3.8	70.8%	57.4%	-13.4

N = 524 in 2011; 842 in 2014; 704 in 2015. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

Please note: rounding errors <> .1% may occur

● negative trend
● positive trend

Gaps to fill

To their credit, associations are working hard to shed their stereotype as overly cautious, slow-moving, bureaucratic organizations. They have made significant strides in optimizing their websites and publications for mobile, and in offering members a wide variety of streaming video content, mobile apps and social media outlets. But, there is a big disconnect between associations' willingness to try new forms of communication and their willingness to put a viable strategy behind those channels, much less staff them adequately, support them financially and measure them aggressively.

When asked what they would do with an ***unexpected 50 percent increase in their annual budgets*** (which allowed for multiple answers), associations were more likely to improve and fix their current communication strategies and tactics versus launching or developing new communication vehicles. For instance, 54 percent said they would improve the quality of their existing communication vehicles, while 48 percent of respondents said they would upgrade their publishing tools, technologies and processes. Forty-eight percent said they would hire more staff (up from 44 percent in 2014), 39 percent said they would develop "a real mobile strategy," (up from 31 percent in 2014) and nearly one-third (32%) said they would "put a lot more muscle" behind a social media strategy. Finally, one in four respondents (26%) said they would launch or develop **new communications vehicles** in 2015, down from 29 percent in 2014.

If your publishing/content creation team received an unexpected 50 percent increase in its annual budget, how would you recommend they spend it?

NOTE: Total exceeds 100% due to multiple response option.

	2014	2015	CHANGE
Improve quality of existing communication vehicles	53.9%	53.3%	-0.6
Upgrade our publishing tools, technologies or processes	47.7%	47.0%	-0.7
Hire more staff	44.0%	46.2%	+2.2
Develop a real mobile strategy	33.8%	39.2%	+5.3
Put a lot more muscle behind our social media	30.9%	31.9%	+1.0
Launch new communication vehicles	29.3%	26.7%	-2.6
Other	7.3%	6.1%	

N = 835 2014 | 704 2015. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

Communication staffing not keeping pace

Data suggests associations are realizing they cannot rely exclusively on technology, outsourcing and volunteers to handle their ever-increasing communication workload. Nearly half (46%) said they would use their budget windfall to hire more staff (up from 44 percent in 2014). Nearly half of associations overall (42%) reported that they felt understaffed in 2015, compared to just 2 percent that said they felt overstaffed. What's more, 44 percent of associations felt their publishing/content creation teams were understaffed compared to just 1 percent that felt their publishing/content teams were overstaffed. And 44 percent of associations felt their social media teams were understaffed, compared to less than 1 percent that felt their social media teams were overstaffed. As we'll discuss in more detail later in this report, midsize associations were more likely than small and large associations to feel they were understaffed across all departments, but smaller associations (less than 1,000 members) were the most likely to feel that their publishing, content and social media teams were understaffed.

Lack of communication integration

Today, more than three in five associations (62%) claim to have at least some level of communication integration in place, but that proportion is down from a level of 66 percent in 2014 and nearly 71 percent in 2011.

Among the one-third of associations (38%) that told us they **do not** have an integrated communications strategy, 10.7 percent expect to do so within the next 12 months, up slightly from 9.7 percent in 2014. As will be shown later in this report, the lack of an integrated communications platform can have profound, adverse consequences for a membership organization.

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Selected trends in association communication integration, 2011 to 2015

	4 years			1 year		
	2011	2015	CHANGE	2014	2015	CHANGE
Associations that consider their communications fully integrated	20.4%	6.1%	-14.3	10.5%	6.1%	-4.4
Associations that consider their communications "somewhat integrated"	50.4%	56.0%	+5.6	55.0%	56.0%	+1.0
Subtotal (all or partially integrated)	70.8%	62.1%	-8.7	65.5%	62.1%	-3.4
Communications not yet integrated, but planning to	9.9%	10.9%	+1.0	9.7%	10.9%	+1.2
Not integrated	19.3%	27.0%	+7.7	24.8%	27.0%	+2.2

N = 674 in 2011; 1,031 in 2014; 704 in 2015. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

Please note: rounding errors <> .1% may occur.

○ negative trend
○ positive trend

Not asking financial supporters if they're getting ROI

Researchers were also surprised to discover less than half of associations (47%) regularly ask their advertisers and sponsors if they feel they're getting their money's worth from them (down from 53 percent in 2014). However, of the associations that **do** ask, three out of four (75%) are incorporating the feedback they get from advertisers and sponsors into their pricing considerations to some extent – up from 60 percent who said so in 2014 and up from 62 percent who said so in 2011. Researchers wondered if some associations were neglecting to ask members and suppliers about the continuing value of their legacy communication channels in this mobile/social/digital age. As our data reveals, ***live events, print magazines, print directories and traditional e-newsletters continue to be among the highest-rated association communication channels.***

Communications strategy recommendations

So, how do resource-challenged associations learn to communicate more effectively with time-pressed, media-saturated members of all ages? How do they do so on each member's preferred terms? How do they customize their offerings to appeal to each member subgroup without becoming overextended? How do they measure progress (or lack thereof) and invest their resources more appropriately to mesh with member preferences? This report offers actionable recommendations for associations of all sizes to help them access, integrate and measure their communications practices in order to better engage their members and grow their membership bases. This report also provides compelling statistics which demonstrate that associations with carefully segmented and well-integrated communication programs are able to recruit, retain and engage members more effectively than organizations that don't.

We also offer numerous recommendations to help you improve your member communication effectiveness. Once you recognize the strengths and weaknesses of your current communications program you can begin to optimize your efforts, doing more of what works and less of what doesn't. The recommendations also provide guidance on when to seek assistance and what some of your best untapped resources might be.

About Association Adviser

The *Association Adviser* communications brand delivers best practices, news and leadership strategies to association executives and their staffs. Through the weekly blog articles, monthly eNewsletter, annual magazine, online video channel *(Association TV)* and our annual benchmarking study, we reach thousands of association professionals across hundreds of industries. Join us online at www.AssociationAdviser.com.

Research Objectives

Researchers wanted to investigate several important areas of association communication beliefs, trends and best practices that have yet to be thoroughly explored. These areas include: communication strategies; communication channels (traditional and emerging); success measures and tools; and member preferences for customizing and opting in (or out) of communications they receive from their association. We also investigated the volume of association touchpoints with members; the extent to which associations are integrating their communication channels; and the extent to which associations are adjusting their resource and staffing decisions.

A primary goal of this report is to provide association leaders with objective data about the state of their communications today and to demonstrate how their communications strategies and resource investments compare to organizations of similar size, type and industry. Another goal of this report is to help association leaders further their understanding of ways in which they can increase the value of their print, electronic, social, mobile, video and live-event programs for members and industry suppliers. We also hope this report will aid association professionals in identifying gaps in their current offerings and recommend strategies, tactics and best practices for closing those gaps given the staffing and resource challenges of like-minded organizations.

If nothing else, we hope to use empirical data to support our hypothesis that associations with well-integrated and well-supported communications strategies have better engagement with members, and tend to have better recruitment and retention rates, than associations that *don't* have well-integrated and well-supported communication plans. **To that end, we've made a multi-year commitment to this research initiative that will keep Naylor, our clients and our research partners on the forefront of association communication trends and best practices as they emerge and evolve.**

Research Methodology

After consulting with Naylor Association Solution's senior management team, the *Association Adviser* team, the executive directors of more than a dozen state societies of association executives (SAEs), and M. Sean Limon, Ph.D., communications lecturer at the Center for Management Communication at the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business Administration, we constructed a 52-question, multiple choice, online survey with a select number of open-ended questions. As has been the case in our three previous annual studies, the goals of the 2015 survey were to give association leaders a comprehensive look at membership communication trends, best practices and resource investments for all-size organizations in nearly 100 different industries across North America. Multiple-choice questions asked respondents to check the single answer that best described their opinion about an association communication channel or issue, or to select all answers that applied to their experience with an association communication challenge or issue. In many cases, respondents were asked to state the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with a question or statement, generally on a scale of 1 through 5. Again, a select number of questions allowed space for respondents to provide open-ended comments to supplement their answer choices.

Great care was taken to ensure the survey would be thorough and comprehensive, yet one that could be completed quickly, easily and without the use of expensive incentives, telephone follow-up or substantial reminders to take part. In exchange for their participation, all respondents who completed the survey in its entirety received a $5 Starbucks gift card and priority access to the results.

In several waves between May 7, 2015 and June 4, 2015, researchers sent the 52-question survey via email to senior staff at North American trade associations, professional societies and association management companies. Respondents were composed of Naylor clients and prospects (a mix of small, medium and large associations), as well as Association Societies Alliance members in 12 states, readers of *Association Adviser* e-newsletter and viewers of *Association Adviser TV*.

Recipients were asked to forward the survey link to the most senior member of their department or organization if they did not feel they met the criteria for "senior management." Follow-up reminder emails were sent to all survey participants one week and two weeks after they received the initial survey invitation. When the survey closed on June 9, 2015, a total of 704 surveys had been satisfactorily completed.

About the Survey Respondents

Nearly 68 percent of the 704 respondents to our survey classified themselves as senior management, including 37 percent who held the title of executive director, president or CEO. Another third of respondents (32%) held the title of vice president, director or senior manager. In terms of job function, nearly two-thirds of respondents were either in general management (42%) or publishing, marketing or communications (24%). Nearly half of respondents (44%) were employed by trade associations, 35 percent were employed by professional societies, 11 percent worked for association management companies, and the remaining 10 percent classified themselves as industry suppliers or "other."

In terms of membership scope, more than half of respondents (52%) worked for state or regional associations, about one in seven (15%) worked for national associations, 25 percent worked for international associations and 8 percent worked for local organizations.

The majority of respondents worked for smaller associations, which by our definition meant they had fewer than 25 full-time staff, fewer than 5,000 members and worked within an annual operating budget of less than $5 million. Respondents represented more than 100 different industries, although five industries accounted for more than 40 percent of the respondent pool: health care (20%), education (10%) and building/construction/hospitality (10% combined).

How This Report is Organized

The 2015 edition of our annual association communications benchmarking study is divided into the following sections:

SECTION 1: Tell Us About Yourself

SECTION 2: Staffing Comparison

SECTION 3: Primary Communication Challenges

SECTION 4: Evaluation of Communications-Specific Vehicles

SECTION 5: Top Recommendations for Assocations

APPENDIX 1: Small Association Challanges

APPENDIX 2: Midsize Association Challanges

APPENDIX 3: Large Association Challanges

APPENDIX 4: Integrated vs. Non-Integrated Communications

Section 1: Tell Us About Yourself

Due to respondents' high level of professional experience (see Question 3), the median age of respondents may be older than the median age for all association staff members. Question 1 simply asked respondents to confirm their email address.

Q2. What is your age?

Under 30 — 10.7%
31-40 — 21.2%
41-50 — 26.2%
51-60 — 28.4%
Over 60 — 13.5%
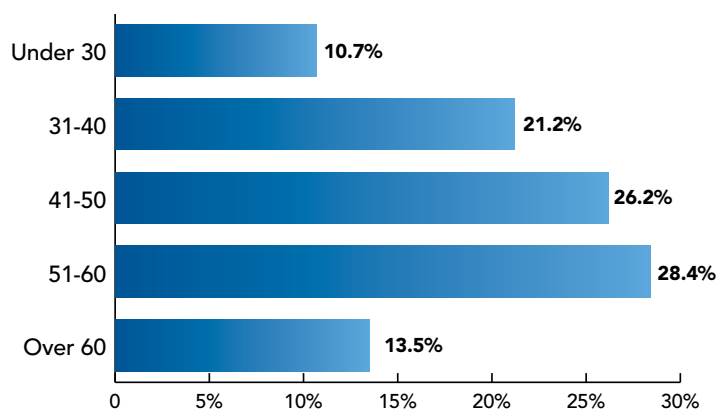
N=698. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly one-third of respondents (31.9%) are under age 40.
- More than one-fourth of respondents (26.2%) are age 41-50.
- Two-fifths of respondents (41.9%) are over age 50.

Q3. What is your gender?

Male 29.3%
Female 70.7%
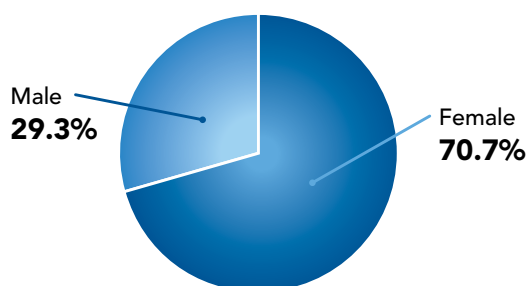
N=697. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than seven in 10 respondents (70.7%) are female.

Q4. Which of the following best describes your job title?

Executive Director/CEO/President	36.6%
Senior Management (i.e., VP/Director/Senior Manager)	31.7%
Manager/Staff	31.0%
Board Member/Volunteer	0.9%

N=704. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than two-thirds of respondents (68.2%) are senior-level executives, including nearly 37 percent who are executive directors, CEOs or presidents of their respective associations.
- Nearly one-third (31.7%) are in senior management (VP, director or senior manager).

Although this report focuses on association communications, researchers felt it was important to obtain feedback from a broad range of association job functions, not just publishing, content, marketing or communications (see Question 5 below).

Q5. Which of the following best describes your primary job responsibility?

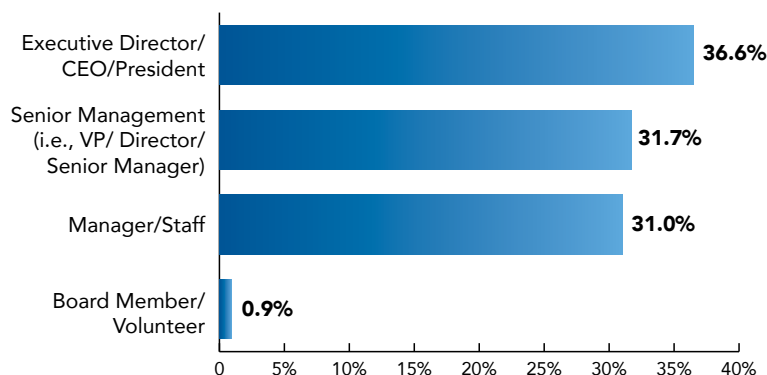|	
General Management	42.1%
Marketing/Communications/Content Creation/Publishing	24.4%
Education/Meetings & Events	11.7%
Membership Development	8.8%
Member/Customer Support	4.9%
Finance & Administration	3.6%
Lobbying/Advocacy/Legal Affairs	3.3%
Technology/IT	1.3%
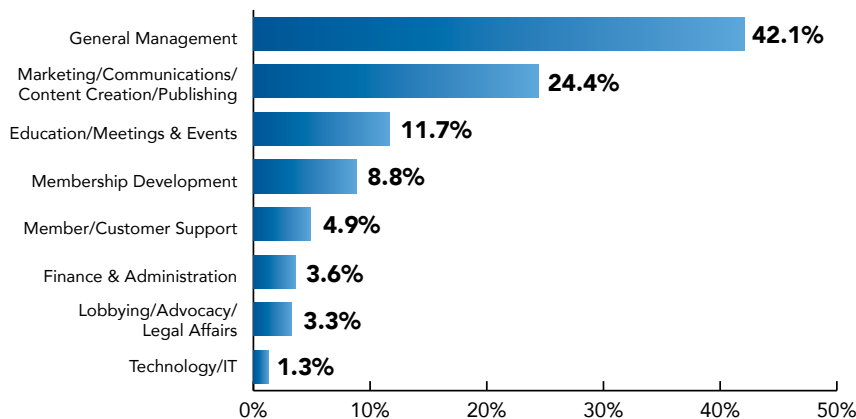
N=701. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than two in five respondents (42.1%) are general managers.
- Nearly one in four respondents (24.4%) work in marketing, communications or content creation roles.
- Approximately one in five respondents (20.6%) work in membership development, finance, administration, lobbying, advocacy, legal affairs or customer support.
- Approximately one in eight respondents (11.7%) work in professional education, meeting facilitation or event planning.

Researchers felt it was important to solicit feedback from professional societies, trade associations and association management companies. We felt it was important to gauge the temperature of organizations that had different membership structures, geographic focus and industry orientation.

Q6. Please describe your membership structure.
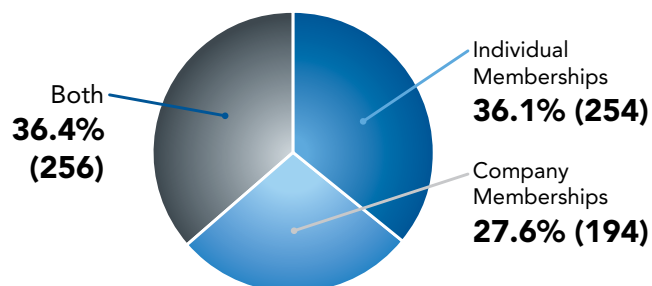
Both
**36.4%
(256)**

Individual
Memberships
36.1% (254)

Company
Memberships
27.6% (194)

N=704. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Approximately one-third of respondents (36.1%) work for individual membership organizations.
- Another one-third of respondents (36.4%) work for hybrid organizations (both individual and corporate memberships).
- Slightly more than one in four respondents (27.6%) work for corporate membership organizations.

Q7. At what type of organization are you currently employed?
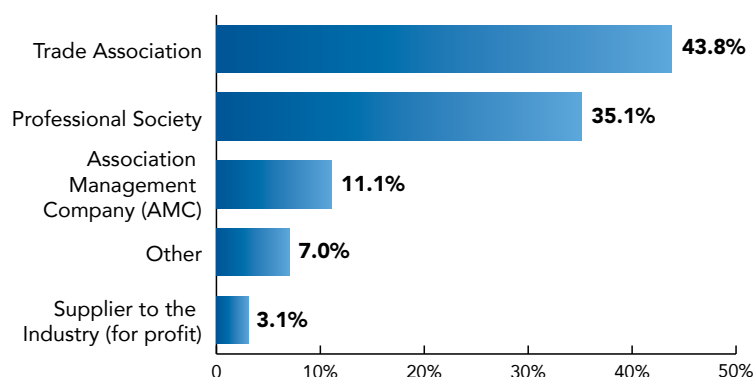
Organization	Percentage
Trade Association	43.8%
Professional Society	35.1%
Association Management Company (AMC)	11.1%
Other	7.0%
Supplier to the Industry (for profit)	3.1%

N=704. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly half of respondents (43.8%) work for trade associations.
- More than one-third of respondents (35.1%) work for professional societies.
- More than one in 10 respondents (11.1%) work for association management companies.
- One-tenth of respondents are industry suppliers or other types of organizations.

Q8. What is your current employer's geographic scope?
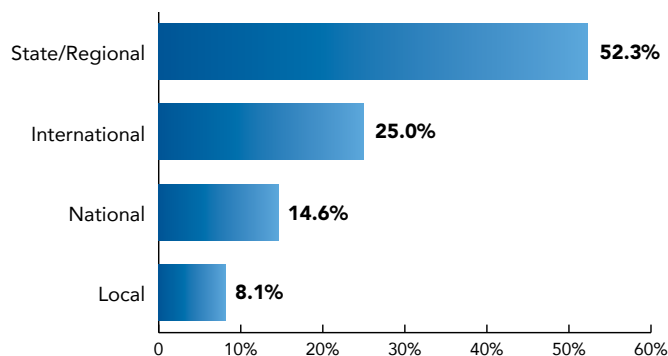
State/Regional — 52.3%
International — 25.0%
National — 14.6%
Local — 8.1%

N=704 Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions 2015

- More than half of respondents (52.3%) work for state and regional associations.
- One in four respondents (25.0%) work for international associations — nearly twice the percentage that work for national associations (14.6%).
- Just 8.1 percent of respondents work for local associations.

Q9. Which of the following best describes your industry classification?

Health Care — 20.1%
Education — 9.8%
Building & Construction — 5.4%
Hospitality, Travel, Tourism — 4.1%
Real Estate — 3.8%
Agriculture — 3.7%
Prof. Association Mgmt. — 3.7%
All Other — 49.4%
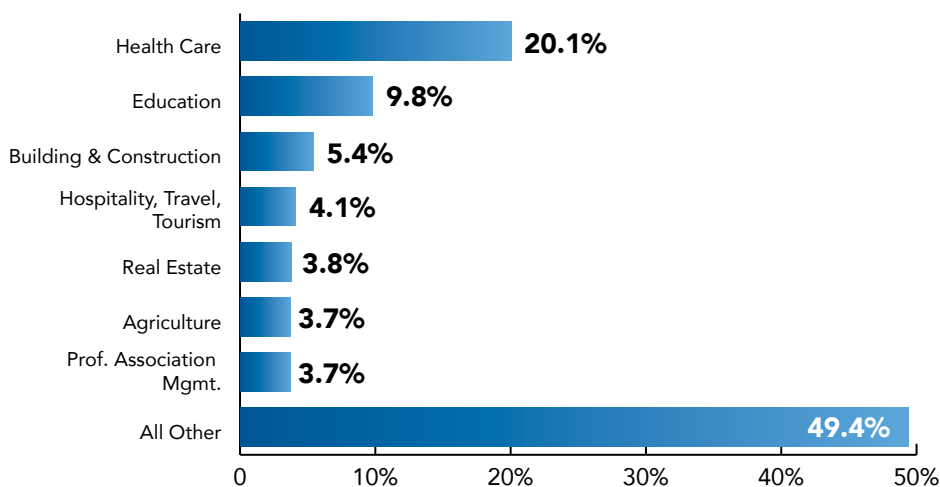
N=702. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

The respondent pool is broadly dispersed among more than two dozen major industries, although…

- Nearly 30 percent of respondents work in either health care or education.
- Nearly 10 percent of respondents work in building, construction, hospitality or tourism.
- More than 11 percent work in real estate, agriculture or association management companies.

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Q10. Approximately how many members belong to your organization?

Below 1,000 members	48.0%
1,000 to 5,000 members	29.9%
Over 5,000 members	22.1%
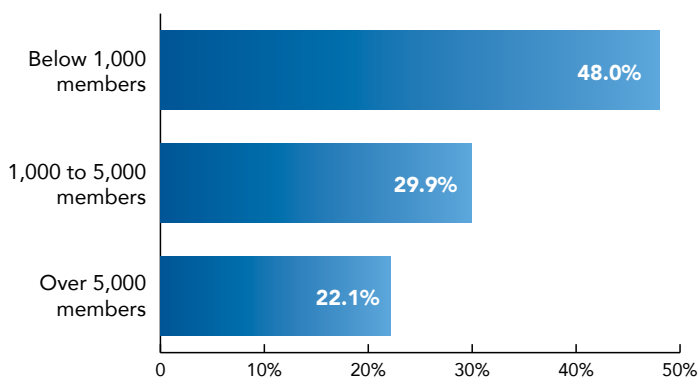
N=696. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly half of respondents (48.0%) work for small membership organizations (under 1,000 members).
- Nearly 30 percent of respondents (29.9%) work for midsize membership organizations (1,000 to 5,000 members).
- Nearly one in four respondents (22.1%) work for large membership organizations (over 5,000 members).

Q11. What is the annual operating budget of your organization?
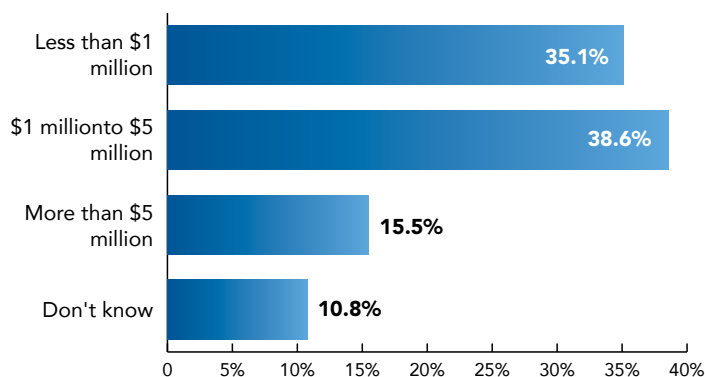
Less than $1 million	35.1%
$1 million to $5 million	38.6%
More than $5 million	15.5%
Don't know	10.8%

N=704. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than one-third of respondents (35.1%) work for organizations with annual operating budgets of less $1 million.
- Nearly two in five respondents (38.6%) work for organizations with annual operating budgets of between $1 million and $5 million.
- Only one in seven respondents (15.5%) work for organizations with annual operating budgets of more than $5 million.

Section 2: Staffing Comparison

While most association professionals lament their lack of staffing resources, a small membership size does not necessarily equate to a small staff size or a small operating budget and vice versa. We also know from experience that many associations have generous and highly skilled volunteers who contribute a great deal of assistance to association operating functions – including communications – which can make an association's staff-to-revenue ratio appear lower than it would be for a comparably sized for-profit business or government organization. What's more, many association staff members relish the chance to wear multiple hats and to enjoy a wide variety of fulfilling job functions and responsibilities. The challenge with this staffing model is that it becomes relatively simple to launch, test and roll out new communication channels and initiatives, but it can become very hard to sustain them, improve upon them and measure their success effectively.

As Question 19 reveals, only one in five associations (20.0%) believe adding staff improves member engagement. This staffing conundrum is a partial explanation for the disconnect between associations' increasing communication frequency and decreasing communication effectiveness.

Q12. How many full-time staff are assigned to the following areas:

	None	1	2 to 5	6 or more	TOTAL
Your Overall Organization	**2.4%**	**18.8%**	**35.0%**	43.7%	100%
Your Publishing/ Content Creation Team	13.0%	**38.8%**	**39.0%**	9.2%	100%
Your Social Media Team	**17.2%**	**51.5%**	29.5%	1.8%	100%

N=703. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than half of respondents (56.2%) work for organizations with five or fewer full-time staff members overall.
- The vast majority of respondents (77.8%) work for associations with between one and five full-time staff on their **publishing/content creation teams**.
- More than two-thirds of respondents (68.7%) work for associations with one or fewer full-time staff on their **social media teams**.

Publishing/Content Team Staffing Comparison, 2014-2015
(all size organizations)

	None	1	2 to 5	6 or more	TOTAL
2015	13.0%	38.8%	39.0%	9.2%	100%
2014	14.5%	42.5%	35.3%	7.7%	100%
CHANGE	-1.5	-3.7	**+3.7**	**+1.5**	

- Data suggests a slight increase in full-time staffing for association publishing and content creation teams since 2014, and fewer associations are trying to get by with only one staff member (or none).

Social Media Team Staffing Comparison, 2014-2015

	None	1	2 to 5	6 or more	TOTAL
2015	17.2%	51.5%	29.5%	1.8%	100%
2014	17.4%	57.2%	24.0%	1.5%	100%
CHANGE	-0.2	-5.7	**+5.5**	+0.3	

- Data suggests an increase in staffing for association social media teams and fewer associations are trying to get by with only one staff full-time staff member (or none) dedicated to social media.

Q13. To what extent do your feel your organization is appropriately staffed?

	Understaffed	Just right	Overstaffed	TOTAL
Your Overall Organization	**41.7%**	56.2%	2.1%	100%
Your Publishing/Content Creation Team	**43.5%**	53.4%	1.1%	100%
Your Social Media Team	**43.6%**	56.1%	0.3%	100%

N=703. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly half of respondents feel their organizations are understaffed in all areas, including publishing/content creation and social media.
- Very few respondents feel their organizations are overstaffed in any area.

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To what extent do you feel your **overall organization** is appropriately staffed?

	Understaffed	Just right	Overstaffed	TOTAL
ALL ASSOCIATIONS	**41.7%**	56.2%	2.1%	100%
Small (under 1,000 members)	42.1%	56.3%	1.6%	100%
Midsize (1,000 to 5,000 members)	**43.4%**	55.1%	1.5%	100%
Large (over 5,000 members)	39.6%	55.8%	4.6%	100%

N=703. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than two in five respondents (41.7%) felt their overall organizations were understaffed. Respondents from **midsize organizations** (43.4%) were most likely to feel they were understaffed.

To what extent do you feel your **publishing/content team** is appropriately staffed?

	Understaffed	Just right	Overstaffed	TOTAL
ALL ASSOCIATIONS	**43.6%**	55.3%	1.1%	100%
Small (under 1,000 members)	**44.4%**	54.6%	1.0%	100%
Midsize (1,000 to 5,000 members)	**43.7%**	55.8%	0.5%	100%
Large (over 5,000 members)	41.8%	56.2%	2.0%	100%

N=683. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly half of respondents overall (43.6%) felt their publishing/content team was understaffed. Respondents from **small** (44.4%) **and midsize organizations** (43.4%) were more likely than those from larger organizations to feel they were understaffed in this area.

To what extent do you feel your **social media team** is appropriately staffed?

	Understaffed	Just right	Overstaffed	TOTAL
ALL ASSOCIATIONS	**43.5%**	56.2%	0.5%	100%
Small (under 1,000 members)	**47.4%**	52.6%	0.0%	100%
Midsize (1,000 to 5,000 members)	43.0%	56.5%	0.5%	100%
Large (over 5,000 members)	36.0%	63.4%	0.6%	100%

N=681. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly half of respondents overall (43.5%) felt their social media teams were understaffed. Respondents from **small organizations** (47.4%) were more likely than those from larger organizations to feel they were understaffed in social media.

F/T STAFF PUBL. & CONTENT	Small Assoc. (<1,000 members)			Midsize Assoc. (1,000 to 5,000 members)			Large Assoc. (>5,000 members)		
	2014	2015	CHG.	2014	2015	CHG.	2014	2015	CHG.
0	19.4%	19.1%	-0.3	11.7%	12.1%	+0.4	3.6%	2.0%	-1.6
1	48.3%	46.6%	-1.7	**47.6%**	**41.8%**	**-5.8**	21.6%	19.7%	-1.9
2-5	28.9%	30.0%	+1.1	**37.5%**	**42.2%**	**+4.7**	48.5%	51.3%	+2.8
6+	3.5%	4.0%	+0.5	3.3%	3.9%	+0.6	26.3%	27.0%	+0.7

N=696 in 2015; 1,031 in 2014. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions.

- Midsize associations are more likely than other associations to have seen a shift from single-staff publishing/content creation teams to multiple-staff publishing/content creation teams.

- As one would expect, the larger the association, the larger its publishing/content creation team.

F/T STAFF SOCIAL MEDIA	Small Assoc. (<1,000 members)			Midsize Assoc. (1,000 to 5,000 members)			Large Assoc. (>5,000 members)		
	2014	2015	CHG.	2014	2015	CHG.	2014	2015	CHG.
0	22.7%	24.5%	+1.8	15.0%	16.1%	+1.1	4.6%	4.0%	-0.6
1	57.4%	52.8%	**-4.6**	65.1%	54.9%	**-10.2**	45.4%	44.1%	-1.3
2-5	18.6%	21.5%	**+2.9**	19.5%	27.5%	**+8.0**	46.4%	48.7%	+2.3
6+	1.4%	1.2%	-0.2	0.3%	1.5%	+1.2	3.6%	3.2%	-0.4

N=696 in 2015, |1,031 in 2014, Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions.

- Small and especially midsize associations have shown a significant shift in the past year from single staff social media departments to multiple-staff social media departments.
- As one would expect, the larger the association, the larger its social media team.

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Section 3: Primary Communication Challenges

Key Takeaways

**Associations improved in important areas, including:**

- Relative to peer associations, **55.5 percent considered themselves "Above Average" or "Best in Class"** in 2015 compared to 52.6 percent in 2014.

- The **percentage who felt members ignored <u>at least half</u> of what they sent them declined** to 58.2 percent in 2015 from 70.8 percent in 2014. **Big improvement**.

- The inability to **understand reader/member advertiser needs** was the No. 3 communication challenge in 2014 (17.8% agreed), but only the No. 5 communication challenge in 2015 (cited by 11.8%).

- **Information overload/communication clutter** is still the most frequently cited communication challenge when communicating with members, but it was cited by only 66 percent of respondents in 2015 vs. 70 percent in 2014.

- The inability to **help members find info quickly** was cited by only 41.4 percent of respondents in 2015, down from 47.8 percent in 2014. In other words, associations felt they improved in this area.

- The inability to provide **mobile-friendly communication** was cited by 37.9 percent of respondents in 2015, down from 41.7 percent in 2014.

- More than half (55.2%) of associations have **optimized their websites for mobile**, up from 48 percent in 2014.

- Associations are **less likely to launch new communication products just because they have extra money** in the budget – 26 percent said they would do so today, down from 29 percent in 2014.

Associations still have a great deal of work to do in areas such as:

- More than one-third of associations believe they have significant challenges when it comes to content. From needing to develop more relevant content to effectively leveraging their content across all communication channels – associations clearly believe they have room for improvement.

- **"Utilizing content across communication channels"** is now the No. 2 association communication challenge.

- The **inability to communicate member benefits effectively** was cited by 60 percent of respondents in 2015, up from 55.3 percent in 2014.

- The **inability to customize communications for different member subgroups** was cited by 55.1 percent of respondents in 2015, up **substantially** from 45.6 percent in 2014.

- Print media remains one of the most highly valued channels in the association communication mix, but the average value of print has dropped to 4.13 for **print magazines** (out of a possible 5.0) from 4.2 in 2014. The average value of **printed member directories** dropped to 3.69 from 3.83 in 2014), **printed show guides** dropped (3.75 vs. 3.83) and print newsletters dropped (3.64 vs. 3.85) year-over-year.

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- On the digital side, the **average value of online buyer's guides dropped** year-over-year to 3.46 in 2015 from 3.69 in 2014, and RSS feeds dropped to 2.43 from 2.69.

- On the social media side, Facebook and Twitter showed only small increases in perceived value, LinkedIn and group email lists dropped slightly, while **private social networks dropped significantly** (2.47 vs. 2.94).

- The percentage of respondents who **said their organization's communications were "fully integrated"** dropped to 6.1 percent in 2015, from 10.4 percent in 2014 and 20.4 percent in 2011.

Q14. What is the <u>single greatest</u> communication challenge your organization faces in 2015?
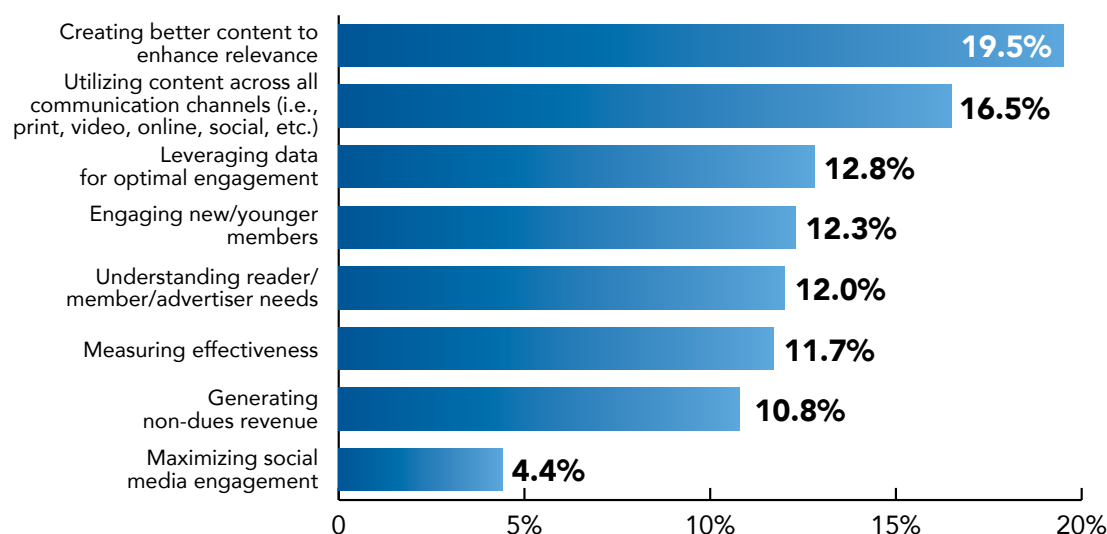
N=632. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than one-third of respondents said their single biggest communication challenge is either **"creating more relevant content"** (19.5%) or **"utilizing content more effectively across all their communication channels"** (16.5%).

- Nearly 30 percent of respondents (29.5%) cited challenges with engagement – either **"leveraging data for optimal engagement"** (12.8%) or **"engaging newer/younger members" more effectively** (12.3%) or **"social media engagement"** (4.4%).

- One in eight respondents (12.0%) cited a need for **"better understanding reader, member and advertiser needs."**

- Nearly 12 percent say their biggest challenge is **"measuring the effectiveness of their communications,"** and nearly 11 percent cite the need to **"generate more non-dues revenue."**

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	Creating more relevant content	Understanding reader/ member/ advertiser needs	Leveraging data for optimal engage-ment	Engaging new/ younger members	Social media engage-ment	Utilizing content across all channels	Measuring effectiveness	Generating non-dues revenue	TOTAL
SMALL Association <1,000 members	22.0%	11.0%	9.7%	12.0%	5.3%	17.3%	11.7%	11.0%	100%
MIDSIZE 1,000 to 5,000 members	14.1%	13.1%	14.1%	13.6%	3.7%	17.3%	13.6%	10.5%	100%
LARGE (Over 5,000 members)	22.2%	12.6%	17.8%	10.4%	3.7%	13.3%	9.6%	10.4%	100%

N = 626. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- **_Creating relevant content_** is more likely to be a challenge at small and large associations, rather than at midsize associations – even though midsize associations are most likely to complain about having under-staffed communications teams.

- Small associations are somewhat less likely than their larger counterparts to say they have significant challenges **_understanding the needs of readers, member and advertisers_**.

- **_Leveraging data for optimal engagement_** is most likely to be a large association challenge.

- Small and midsize associations are more likely than larger associations to say they have trouble **_engaging new and younger members_** and **_utilizing content across channels_**.

- Midsize associations are more likely than other associations to say they have challenges **_measuring the effectiveness_** of their member communications.

Q15. Relative to other associations of similar scope or size, how would you rate the overall effectiveness of your communications vehicles (magazine, website, newsletters, email, etc.)?
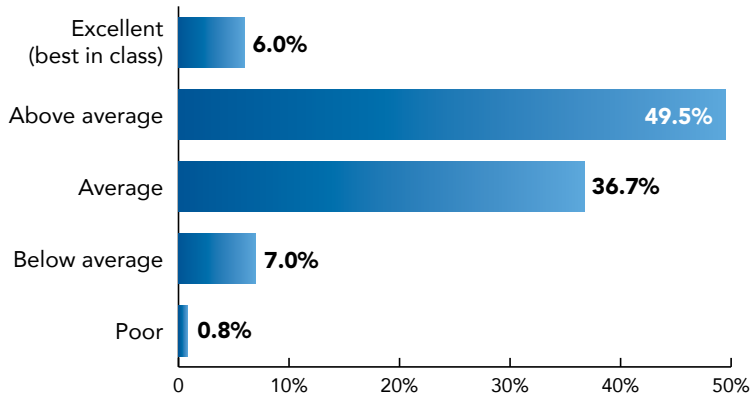
N=632. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than half of associations surveyed (55.5%) consider their member communications to be **above average** or **"best in class"** relative to their peer organizations – an improvement of nearly 3 percentage points from 2014 (52.6%).

- About one-third of associations (36.7%) consider their communication to be on par with peer organizations – down from 40.4 percent in 2014.

- However, nearly one in 12 associations (7.8%) now consider their communications to be below average or poor. That's 1 percent higher than in 2014 and nearly twice as high as 2011 levels.

	1 year change				4 year change		
	2014	2015	1 YR. CHG.		2011	2015	4 YR. CHG.
Excellent (best in class)	7.0%	6.0%	-1.0	Excellent (best in class)	9.1%	6.0%	-3.1
Above average	45.6%	49.5%	+3.9	Above average	49.4%	49.5%	+0.1
Average	40.4%	36.7%	-3.7	Average	38.2%	36.7%	-1.5
Below average	6.0%	7.0%	+1.0	Below average	3.2%	7.0%	+3.8
Poor	1.0%	0.8%	-0.2	Poor	0.2%	0.8%	+0.6

N=915 in 2014; 628 in 2011; 632 in 2015. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions.

Q16. Do you think members would say your communication vehicles are better or worse today than they were three years ago?

Significantly better — 32.8%
Somewhat better — 51.6%
Stayed the same — 13.6%
Somewhat worse — 1.9%
Significantly worse — 0.2%
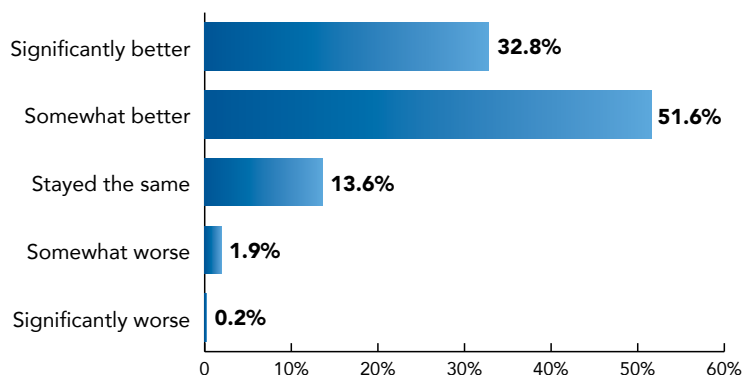
N=632. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

	2014	2015	CHANGE
Significantly better	36.4%	32.8%	**-3.6**
Somewhat better	48.2%	51.6%	**+3.4**
Stayed the same	13.6%	13.6%	NC
Worse	1.8%	2.1%	+0.3

- Nearly one-third of respondents (32.8%) believe their overall member communications have improved significantly over the past three years – *down slightly from 36.4 percent* who felt that way a year ago.

- More than half of respondents (51.6%) believe their overall member communications have improved somewhat over the past three years – *up slightly from 48.2 percent* who felt that way a year ago.

Q17. In response to the previous question, please indicate the degree to which each of the following factors contributed to your self-rating.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree
The design (look & feel) of our communications is better today	**61.0%**	34.0%	5.0%
The quality of our content is better today	**47.0%**	48.9%	4.1%
The communications members receive today are more targeted to their preferences	26.5%	51.5%	22.0%
We know what kind of information/content members want, and we give it to them	18.8%	62.9%	18.3%

N = 626. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- The two biggest factors contributing to respondents' belief their communications have improved in recent years are **better design** and **higher quality of content**.
- Content customization and content relevancy are considered to be less important factors.

Q18. What percentage of your overall communications vehicles do you believe members are reading/engaging with on a regular basis?
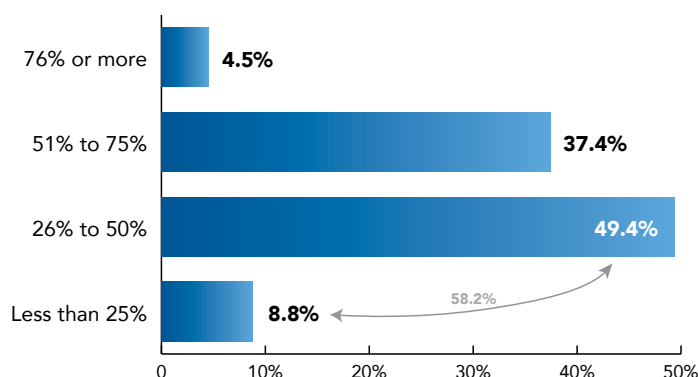
N=628. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than three in five respondents (58.2%) believe members ignore at least half of what they send them.
- While this figure may appear high, it is a significant improvement over 2014, in which nearly 71 percent of respondents felt half of their member communications were ignored, and over 2011, in which 62 percent of respondents felt half of their member communications were ignored.

Q19. Regarding your answer to the previous question about communication waste, what would it take to get your member engagement percentage higher? (select up to 3)

Really understanding what type of content our members expect	**64.6%**
Enhance our ability to collect/use data	**43.8%**
Integrate messaging consistently across all communication channels	**40.6%**
Better engagement on social media/mobile	**35.4%**
Knowing more about our members	**34.2%**
Developing a mobile strategy	**22.1%**
More staffing	**20.0%**
Communicating less frequently	**12.2%**

0   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%

N=625. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly two-thirds (64.6%) of respondents believe communication waste could be reduced by "really understanding the types of content members expect."

- Two in five associations cited "enhancing their ability to collect and use data" (43.8%) and "integrating messaging consistently across all communication channels" (40.6%) would reduce communication waste.

- One-third of respondents cited "better engagement on social/mobile media" (35.4%) or knowing more about their members (34.2%).

- One in five respondents cited the need to develop a mobile strategy (22.1%) or increase staffing (20.0%).

- Only one in eight (12.2%) respondents cited the need to communicate LESS frequently.

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Q20. Which members are MOST LIKELY to be highly engaged with your member communication vehicles?
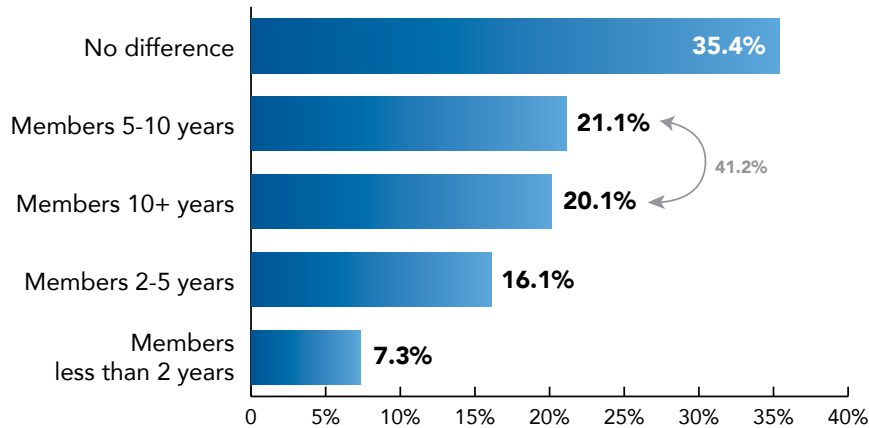
Horizontal bar chart:

Category	Percentage
No difference	35.4%
Members 5-10 years	21.1%
Members 10+ years	20.1%
Members 2-5 years	16.1%
Members less than 2 years	7.3%

(Members 5-10 years and Members 10+ years combined: 41.2%)

N=627. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than one-third of respondents (35.4%) could not identify a member segment that was most engaged with its communications — long-standing members appear most engaged.

- More than two in five respondents (41.2%) believe members who have belonged to their organization for five years or more were most engaged with their association.

- Only one in six respondents (16.1%) felt that two-to-five year members were most engaged, and only one in 14 respondents (7.3%) felt new members were most engaged.

Q21. To what extent do you customize communications for your members (i.e., tailored to member subgroups vs. one-size-fits-all)?

	Highly customized	Somewhat customized	Not customized yet, but plan to	No special customization
New members (joined in last six months)	**11.0%**	**39.8%**	15.2%	33.9%
Student members	8.2%	19.8%	13.3%	58.8%
Young professionals	**7.6%**	**24.8%**	20.6%	47.0%
"Other" member segments we have identified	6.6%	27.5%	14.3%	51.6%
Members less than two years	2.9%	23.3%	16.1%	57.7%
Members 5-10 years	2.9%	16.9%	14.0%	66.1%
Members 10+ years	2.8%	17.8%	13.8%	65.5%

N=627. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than half of respondents (50.8%) say they customize communications for new members.
- About one-third of respondents (32.4%) say they customize communications for young professionals.

Q22. Please describe the biggest challenges you're having when it comes to customizing member communications.
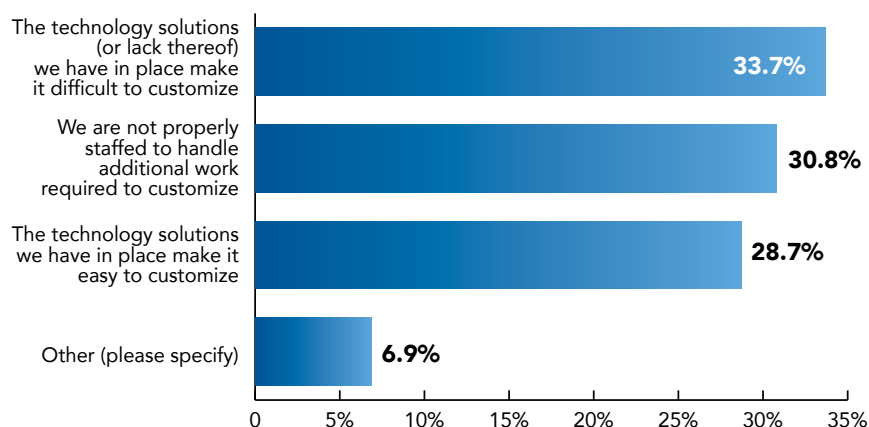
N=627. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than one in three respondents (33.7%) cited technology challenges as the biggest barrier to customizing their member communications.
- Staffing shortages (30.8%) were the second most frequently cited barrier to customizing member communication.
- Just over one in four associations (28.7%) said they had the right technology in place to easily customize member communications.

Q23. What are you currently doing to engage the next-generation member? (select all that apply)

Category	Percentage
Young professionals groups with social media component	43.4%
Involvement with communications committee and/or staff	38.5%
Specific, targeted communication to get them more involved	36.1%
Seat on the board	26.5%
Other (please specify)	21.3%
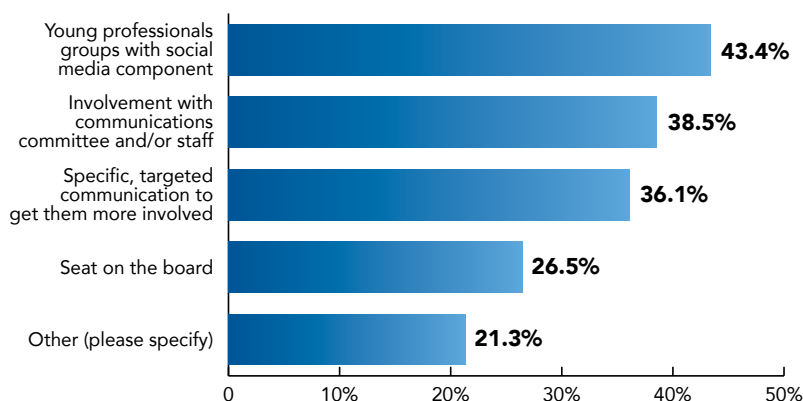
N=574. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly half of respondents (43.4%) said they're using social media to engage young professional groups.
- Nearly two in five associations (38.5%) are involving young people with their communications committees and staff or specifically targeting communications to them (36.1%).
- More than one in four associations (26.5%) are offering industry up-and-comers a seat on their boards.

Q24. If you could share one word or piece of advice with your association peers for engaging the next generation member, what would it be?

N=328. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

Q25. Which of the following MEMBER COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES do you believe your organization may be facing?
(select all that apply)

Challenge	Percentage	Biggest area of improvement since 2014
Information overload/cutting clutter	66.0%	vs. 70.0% in 2014
Communicating member benefits effectively	59.0%	
Customizing communications to different member age groups and special interest groups (SIGs)	53.6%	vs. 47.8% in 2014
Engaging young professionals	52.3%	vs. 41.7% in 2014
Overcoming technical barriers to reaching members (i.e., spam filters, etc.)	44.5%	vs. 40.3% in 2014
Helping members find appropriate information quickly	41.9%	vs. 34.1% in 2014
Providing mobile-friendly communications	38.8%	vs. 33.8% in 2014
Facilitating member-to-member communication	37.5%	
Maintaining position as industry's No. 1 source of information	35.6%	
Keeping members informed about new events and continuing education	30.3%	
Keeping members abreast of legislative, regulatory, technical updates	27.0%	
Other (please specify)	2.6%	

N=627. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- As has been the case every year since we began this study in 2011, **"information overload/communication clutter"** and **"communicating member benefits effectively"** are the two biggest communication challenges associations face in 2015.

- While two-thirds of associations surveyed (66.0%) cited **information overload/clutter** in 2015, that is down from 70 percent who cited that challenge in 2014 – i.e., a 4 percentage point improvement – but still significantly higher (i.e., worse) than it was in 2011 when only 54 percent of associations cited this challenge.

- **Communicating member benefits effectively** continues to plague associations as it was cited by nearly three in five respondents (59%) in 2015, up from 55 percent in 2014 and 32 percent in 2011.

- **Customizing communications to different member subgroups** is now the third most frequently cited challenge by association leaders (53.6% in 2015, up from 45.6% in 2014 and 23.1% in 2011).

- More than half of respondents (52.3%) cited **"engaging young professionals"** – now the fourth most frequently cited association communication challenge.*

- **Overcoming technical barriers to reaching members** remains the fifth most frequently cited association communication challenge (mentioned by 44.5% of respondents in 2015 and 44.7% in 2014).

* New answer choice for 2015.

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Top 5 Association Communication Challenges, 2011-2015

Rank	2011	2014	2015
#1	Information overload/communication clutter	Information overload/communication clutter	Information overload/communication clutter
#2	Communicating member benefits effectively	Communicating member benefits effectively	Communicating member benefits effectively
#3	Maintaining position as No. 1 source of information	Helping members find appropriate information quickly	Customizing communications to different member subgroups
#4	Customizing communications to different member subgroups	Customizing communications to different member subgroups	Engaging young professionals
#5	Keeping members informed about upcoming events/prof. education	Overcoming technical barriers to reaching members	Overcoming technical barriers to reaching members

Top Association Communication Challenges Ranked by Percentage of Respondents Agreeing, 2015

CHALLENGE	2014	2015	CHANGE
Information overload/clutter	70.0%	66.0%	-4.0
Communicating member benefits effectively	55.3%	59.0%	3.7
Customizing communication to different member subgroups	45.6%	53.6%	8.0
Engaging young professionals	N/A	52.3%	N/A
Overcoming technical barriers to reaching members	44.7%	44.5%	-0.2
Helping members find appropriate information	47.8%	41.9%	-5.9
Facilitating member-to-member communication	40.3%	37.5%	-2.8
Maintaining position as our industry's No.1 source of information	35.7%	35.6%	0.1
Keeping members informed about news events and programs	34.1%	30.3%	-3.8
Keeping members abreast of legislative, regulatory news	33.8%	27.0%	-6.8

N=627 in 2015; 914 in 2014. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions.
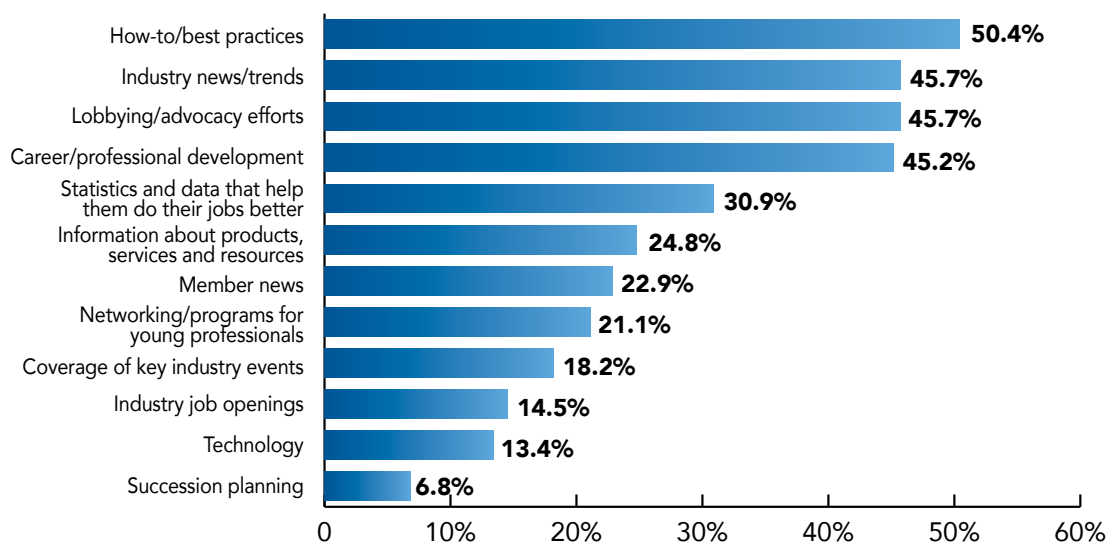
⬤ worse
⬤ improved
◯ minimal change

Q26. How has the overall effectiveness of the following channels changed in your organization over the last two years?

	Increased	Decreased	Stayed about the same	Don't know
Social media marketing	**65.9%**	2.6%	23.6%	7.9%
Email marketing	**61.6%**	5.7%	28.0%	4.6%
Event marketing	**59.3%**	3.7%	33.7%	3.4%
Content marketing	**46.4%**	3.4%	39.1%	11.1%
Website marketing	**42.9%**	5.6%	44.1%	7.4%
Digital advertising	32.0%	5.7%	39.7%	22.6%
Mobile marketing	30.0%	3.5%	37.2%	29.3%
Search engine optimization (SEO)	27.8%	3.9%	40.2%	28.1%
Direct mail marketing	13.1%	**33.2%**	40.2%	13.6%
Print advertising	12.6%	**27.4%**	44.7%	15.3%
Other tactics	9.3%	1.5%	34.3%	54.9%

N=628. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- At least three in five associations believe the effectiveness of their social media marketing, email marketing and event marketing has improved over the past two years.

- Nearly half of associations believe their content marketing and website marketing has improved over the past two years.

- One-third of associations (33.2%) believe their direct mail marketing has become less effective over the past two years, and over one in four (27.4%) believe their print advertising has become less effective over that time.

Q27. Which of the following types of information is most important to your members? (select up to 3 answers)

Category	Percentage
How-to/best practices	50.4%
Industry news/trends	45.7%
Lobbying/advocacy efforts	45.7%
Career/professional development	45.2%
Statistics and data that help them do their jobs better	30.9%
Information about products, services and resources	24.8%
Member news	22.9%
Networking/programs for young professionals	21.1%
Coverage of key industry events	18.2%
Industry job openings	14.5%
Technology	13.4%
Succession planning	6.8%

N=621. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

	2014	2015	CHANGE
How-to/best practices	49.6%	50.4%	0.8
Lobbying/advocacy efforts	52.1%	45.7%	-6.4
Industry news/trends	45.6%	45.7%	0.1
Career/professional development	41.5%	45.2%	3.7
Statistics and data that help them do their jobs better	25.8%	30.9%	5.1
Information about products, services, resources	23.3%	24.8%	1.5
Member news	18.5%	22.9%	4.4
Networking for young professionals	16.6%	21.1%	4.5
Coverage of key industry events	17.8%	18.2%	0.4

- Approximately half (49.6%) of associations agree how-to/best practices, lobbying/advocacy efforts, industry news/trends and career development are highly important topics for their members.
- Lobbying/advocacy has become relatively less important to associations since 2014.
- Member news, networking for young professionals and statistics that help members do their jobs better have become relatively more important to associations since 2014.

○ Less important
○ More important
○ Minimal change

Q28. How do you decide which issues from the previous question are most important to your members?

(select all that apply)

Response	Percentage
Face-to-face interaction at conferences, town halls, on-site meetings, etc.	61.2%
Member satisfaction surveys	51.4%
Annual meeting	42.9%
Customer/member service (phone or online)	30.4%
Social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube)	30.1%
Website (e.g., contact or landing pages)	25.2%
Reader surveys	18.8%
Focus groups	16.5%
Webinars	15.5%
Group email lists/online discussion groups	13.4%
Single or half-day in-person programs	11.6%
Other (please specify)	6.6%
Blogs	5.4%
Telephone surveys	4.1%
Net promoter score	4.0%
Advertiser surveys	2.8%
Online polls	1.7%

N=632. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Three in five respondents (61.2%) believe face-to-face interaction is an effective means of determining the most important topics for members.

- More than half (51.4%) of respondents indicated member satisfaction surveys are useful for determining topics of interest to members.

- Customer service, the annual meeting and the organization's website round out the top five means of determining topics of interest to members according to survey respondents.

- Legacy tools such as reader surveys, focus groups and webinars are deemed effective by less than one in four associations for determining member interest in hot topics.

Association Adviser
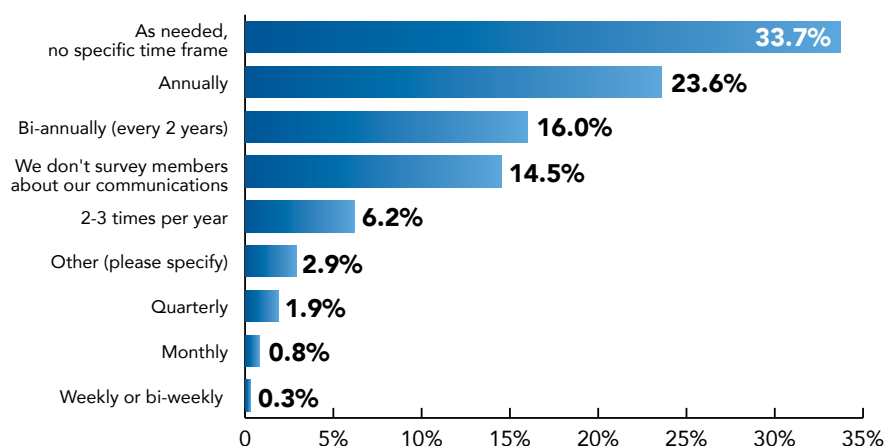
Year-Over-Year Change in Feedback Mechanisms

	2014	2015	CHANGE
Face-to-face interaction	76.4%	61.2%	-15.2
Member satisfaction surveys	58.6%	51.4%	-7.2
Annual meetings	41.6%	42.9%	+1.3
Customer/member service (phone or online)	36.0%	30.4%	-5.6
Social media	24.5%	30.1%	+5.6
Website (e.g., contact or landing pages)	25.8%	25.2%	-0.6
Reader surveys	13.9%	18.8%	+4.9
Focus groups	N/A	16.5%	N/A
Webinars	13.0%	15.5%	+2.5
Single or half-day programs	14.4%	11.6%	-2.8
Group email lists	8.5%	13.4%	+4.9

N=915 in 2014; 632 in 2015. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

◯ Less important
◯ More important
◯ Minimal change

- When it comes to determining which issues are most important to members, associations are **increasingly** turning to social media, reader surveys and group email lists, and **less likely** to rely on face-to-face interaction, member satisfaction surveys and customer service interaction.

Q29. How often do you survey members and ask questions specific to your communications program?

As needed, no specific time frame — 33.7%
Annually — 23.6%
Bi-annually (every 2 years) — 16.0%
We don't survey members about our communications — 14.5%
2-3 times per year — 6.2%
Other (please specify) — 2.9%
Quarterly — 1.9%
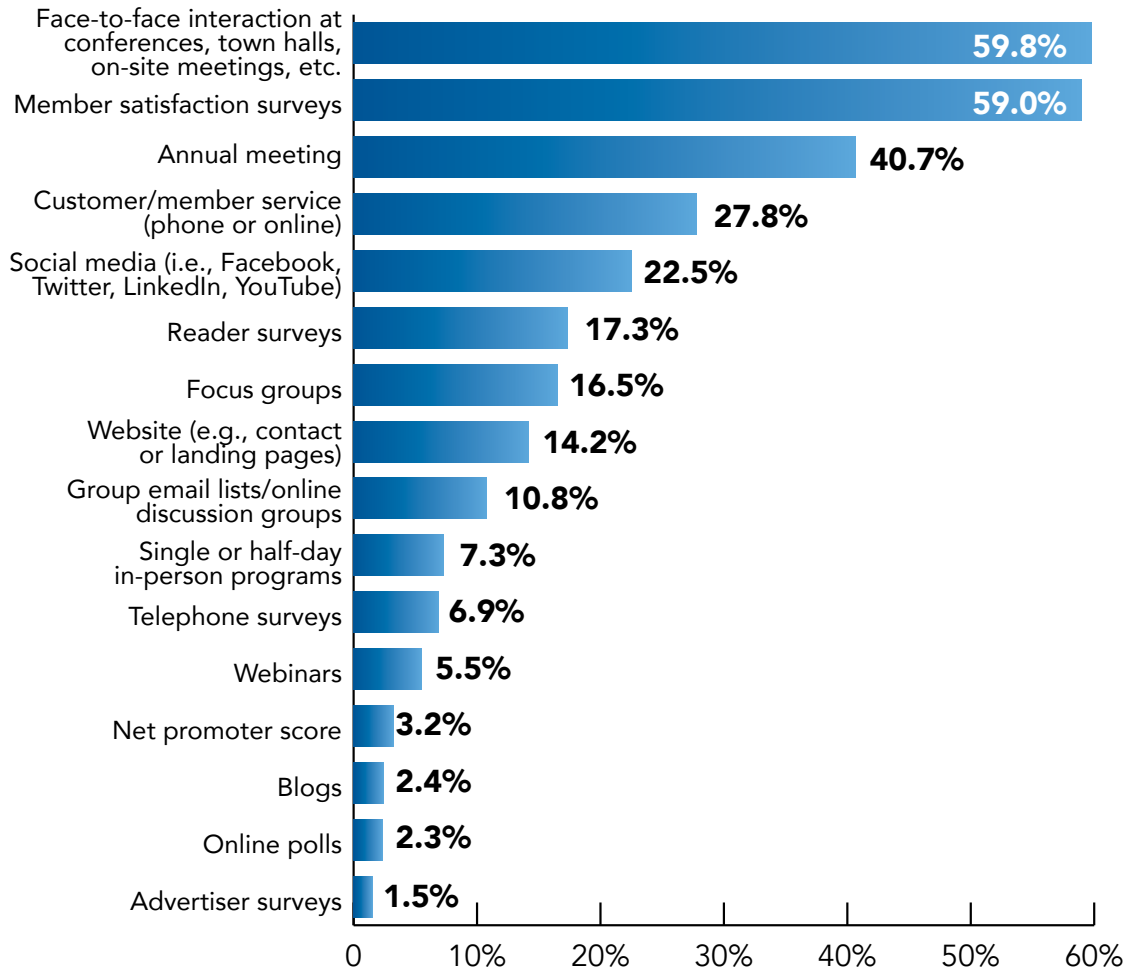Monthly — 0.8%
Weekly or bi-weekly — 0.3%

N=632. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- The majority of associations are not surveying members on a disciplined, consistent basis about their communications programs.

- Less than one in four (23.6%) associations survey members **annually** about their communications programs.

- Less than one (9.2%) in 10 associations said they survey their members **more than once per year** about the effectiveness of their communications programs.

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Q30. Which of the following tools do you find most valuable for obtaining member feedback?

(select all that apply)

Tool	Percentage
Face-to-face interaction at conferences, town halls, on-site meetings, etc.	59.8%
Member satisfaction surveys	59.0%
Annual meeting	40.7%
Customer/member service (phone or online)	27.8%
Social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube)	22.5%
Reader surveys	17.3%
Focus groups	16.5%
Website (e.g., contact or landing pages)	14.2%
Group email lists/online discussion groups	10.8%
Single or half-day in-person programs	7.3%
Telephone surveys	6.9%
Webinars	5.5%
Net promoter score	3.2%
Blogs	2.4%
Online polls	2.3%
Advertiser surveys	1.5%

N=619. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly three out of five associations (59%) told us they use face-to-face interaction and member satisfaction surveys to obtain feedback from members (see chart above). No other vehicle comes close.

- More than two out of five respondents (40.7%) told us they obtain valuable member feedback at their annual meetings, and roughly one in four associations told us they obtain good feedback from customer service records (27.8%) and social media posts (22.5%).

- Reader surveys, advertiser surveys and telephone surveys are no longer among the top five mechanisms used to obtain reader feedback.

Association Adviser

Q31. On average, how often are you connecting with members each month via your different types of communication vehicles?

	20+ or more times	11-19 times	4-10 times	2-3 times	1 time or less	Don't know	TOTAL
PRINT (e.g., magazines, directories, direct mail)	1.5%	1.4%	8.9%	17.8%	67.5%	2.9%	100%
ONLINE/DIGITAL (e.g., e-newsletters, email blasts, blogs)	15.4%	16.1%	41.0%	20.3%	6.3%	0.9%	100%
SOCIAL MEDIA (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, private label platform)	31.5%	18.7%	24.8%	10.9%	9.9%	4.2%	100%
VIDEO (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, private label platform)	1.8%	1.6%	6.6%	11.9%	64.5%	13.6%	100%

N=593. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- **Social media** is the channel most likely to be used for reaching members 20+ times per month.
- **Online** (including e-newsletters, e-blasts and blogs) is the channel most likely to be used for reaching members more than four to 10 times per month.
- **Print** and **video** are the channels most likely to be used for reaching members once per month.

Percent of associations contacting members more than once per month by channel, 2014 vs. 2015

	2014	2015	CHANGE
PRINT (e.g., magazines, directories, direct mail)	23.6%	29.6%	+6.0
ONLINE/DIGITAL (e.g., e-newsletters, email blasts, blogs)	93.1%	92.7%	-0.4
SOCIAL MEDIA (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, private label platform)	82.8%	85.8%	+3.0
VIDEO (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, private label platform)	NA	21.1%	New

- Print is increasingly being used by associations to connect with members more than once per month.

○ Decrease
○ Increase
○ Minimal change

Percent of associations contacting members 20+ times per month by channel, 2014 vs. 2015

	2014	2015	CHANGE
PRINT (e.g., magazines, directories, direct mail)	1.2%	1.3%	+0.1
ONLINE/DIGITAL (e.g., e-newsletters, email blasts, blogs)	16.8%	15.4%	-1.4
SOCIAL MEDIA (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, private label platform)	26.8%	31.5%	+4.7
VIDEO (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, private label platform)	NA	1.7%	New

◯ Decrease
◯ Increase
◯ Minimal change

Percent of associations contacting members 11+ times per month by channel, 2014 vs. 2015

	2014	2015	CHANGE
PRINT (e.g., magazines, directories, direct mail)	3.0%	2.8%	-0.2
ONLINE/DIGITAL (e.g., e-newsletters, email blasts, blogs)	33.1%	31.0%	-2.1
SOCIAL MEDIA (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, private label platform)	43.6%	50.4%	+6.8
VIDEO (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, private label platform)	NA	3.2%	New

- Social media is increasingly being used to connect with members on a high frequency basis, while online/digital is being used somewhat less on a high frequency basis.

◯ Decrease
◯ Increase
◯ Minimal change

Association Adviser

Q32. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as they relate to the role of SOCIAL MEDIA within your organization?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	TOTAL
Content is cross-purposed between social media and other communication channels	40.6%	43.7%	15.7%	100%
One overall manager ensures we have a singular voice across all social networks and platforms	40.4%	34.7%	24.9%	100%
Still trying to figure out a social media strategy	32.5%	47.9%	19.6%	100%
High priority for 2015	32.0%	47.8%	20.2%	100%
Not sure if members find it valuable	30.5%	42.8%	26.7%	100%
Many of our channels/discussions are members only	16.9%	37.5%	45.6%	100%
Dedicated manager for each platform (i.e., one for Facebook, one for Twitter, one for LinkedIn, etc.)	9.2%	17.0%	73.8%	100%
Our discussions are highly moderated	7.9%	33.9%	58.2%	100%

N=592. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

○ Decrease
○ Increase
○ Minimal change

- Two out of five respondents strongly agree social media's purpose is to **integrate with their other content channels** (40.6%) and there should be a single overall manager overseeing all of their social networks and platforms (40.4%).

- Roughly one-third of respondents report they are still trying to formulate their social media strategy (32.5%), that social media is a high priority in 2015 (32.0%) and they're not sure if members find social media of value (30.5%).

- Only one in six respondents (16.9%) strongly agree the majority of their social channels and discussions should be for members only.

Q33. List the most important reasons your organization uses social media: (limit 3 choices)

Reason	Percentage
Event promotion/awareness	59.2%
News dissemination	42.6%
Building public awareness	38.9%
Driving attendance to events	36.3%
Connecting/engaging with young members/potential members	34.1%
Member engagement/volunteering	28.3%
Keeping up appearances (i.e., don't want to appear out of touch)	25.3%
Enabling members to connect with each other	20.9%
Member recruitment	17.1%
Making members aware of new articles we published	13.7%
Keeping non-attendees posted on what's happening at our events	11.8%
Making members aware of new videos we published	5.1%
Other (please specify)	3.6%

N=592. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly three out of five respondents (59.2%) say they use social media for **event promotion and awareness**.

- Roughly two out of five respondents say they use social media for either **news dissemination** (42.6%) or for **building public awareness** (38.9%).

- Approximately one-third of respondents say they use social media for either **driving attendance to their live events** (36.3%) or for **connecting with young members/potential members** (34.1%).

- Roughly one in four respondents say they use social media for either **member engagement and volunteering** (28.3%) or for **keeping up appearance (i.e. appearing cutting edge)** (25.3%).

Association Adviser

Q34. If your publishing/content creation team unexpectedly received a 50 percent increase in the annual budget, how would you recommend they spend it? (check all that apply)
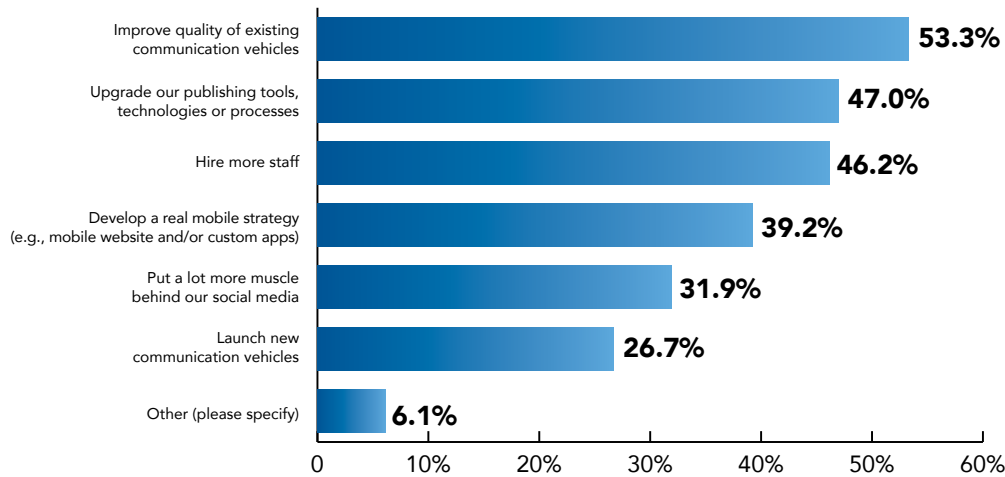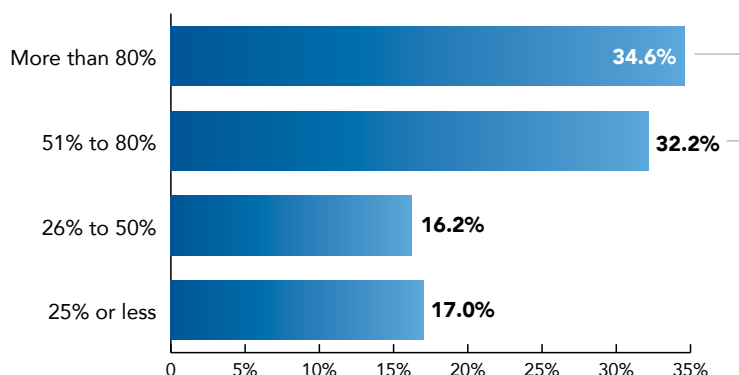

N=587. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- More than half of respondents (53.3%) said they would use an unexpected budget windfall to improve the quality of their existing communications vehicles.

- Nearly half of respondents said they would use the budget surplus to upgrade their publishing tools and processes (47.0%) or hire more staff (46.2%).

- Roughly one-third of respondents said they would use a budget surplus to develop a real mobile strategy (39.2%) or put a lot more muscle behind their social media (31.9%).

- Only one in four respondents (26.7%) said they would use a budget windfall to launch new communication vehicles.
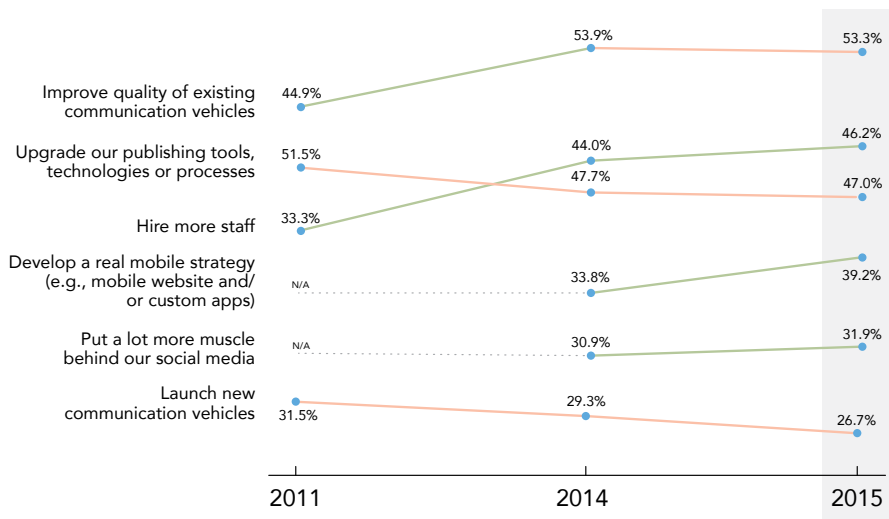
- Over the four-year history of our study, **improving the quality of existing communication vehicles** has supplanted the need to **upgrade tools, technologies and processes** as the No.1 priority.

- The need to invest in a **real mobile strategy** has gained the most attention since 2014, and the need to **increase staffing** has gained the most attention since 2011.

Q36. Approximately what percentage of your overall communications is for members only?

More than 80% — 34.6%
51% to 80% — 32.2%
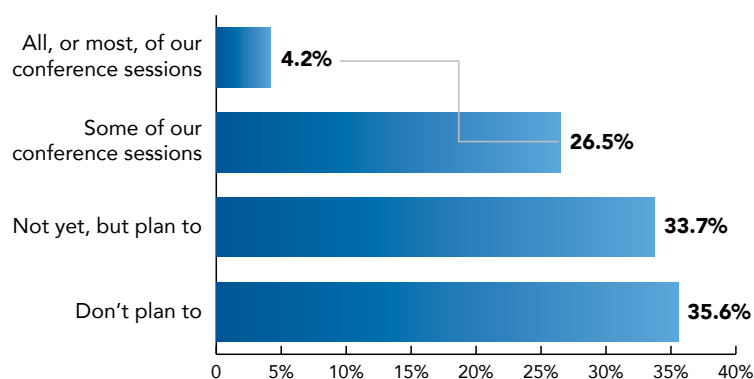26% to 50% — 16.2%
25% or less — 17.0%

N=593. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- As was the case in 2014, two-thirds of associations (66.8%) restrict at least half of their communications to members only – with nearly 35 percent designating most of their communications for members only.

- While historical data for this question does not go back to 2011, we do know that four years ago, nearly 35 percent of respondents told us that they did NOT restrict non-members from gaining accessing to **any** of their content.

Q37. To what extent does your organization provide the opportunity for its members to "virtually" attend your conferences or other live events?

(e.g., live streaming or recording/archiving for later viewing)

All, or most, of our conference sessions — 4.2%
Some of our conference sessions — 26.5%
Not yet, but plan to — 33.7%
Don't plan to — 35.6%

N=599. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Approximately one-third of associations (30.7%) are enabling members to access **at least some** of their live event content virtually – down slightly from 32.4 percent in 2014, but up substantially from 20.6 percent in 2011.

- Another one-third of associations (33.7%) are planning to offer virtual attendance options in the near future.

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Q38. On an annual basis, do you interview or survey your advertisers/sponsors to determine if they feel they are getting their money's worth with your organization?
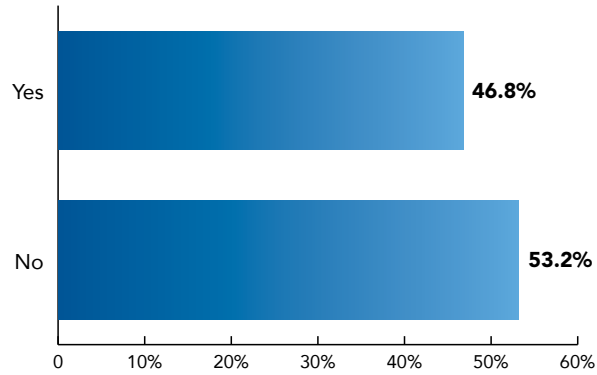
N=586. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- For the first time since we began this study in 2011, more than half of respondents (53.2%) said they are NOT asking their advertisers and sponsors consistently if they feel they are getting their money's worth – a trend that unfortunately has been continuing.

Percent of associations that ask advertisers/sponsors if they're delivering ROI

2011	2014	2015	1-year change	4-year change
55.6%	52.6%	46.8%	-5.8	-8.8

Q39. To what degree is advertiser/sponsor feedback incorporated into rates/pricing considerations, mix of media offerings or other sponsorship programs?
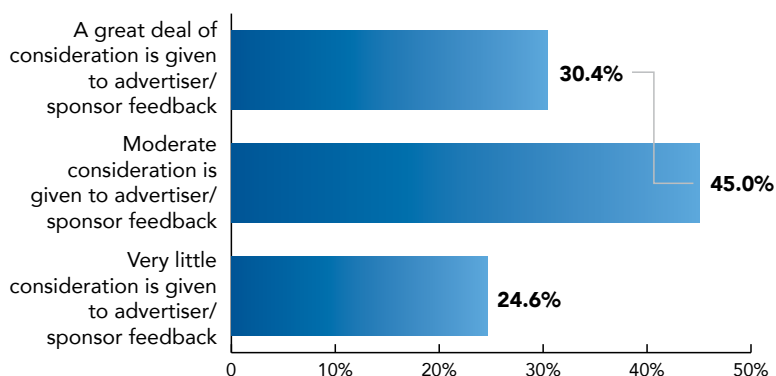
N=582. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Although fewer and fewer associations are asking advertisers and sponsors if they're getting their money's worth (see question 38 above), data suggests that associations ARE asking supporters about their ROI, and are increasingly putting that feedback to use.

- Three-fourths of associations (75.4%) said they are incorporating feedback to some degree into their rates, pricing and media offerings – up substantially from 59.9 percent in 2014 and 62.3 percent in 2011.

Q40. Which of the following best describes the way your organization sells advertising and sponsorship proposals?
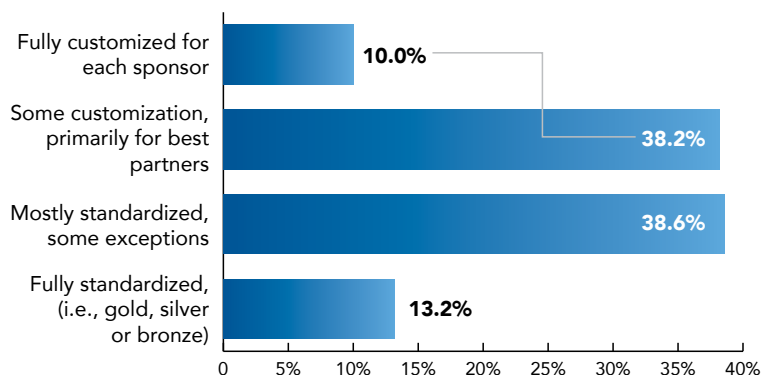
N=599.. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly half of associations (48.2%) are now adding at least some form of customization to their advertising and sponsorship proposals – up from 42.8 percent in 2014.

- However, only one in 10 associations (10 .0%) offers fully customized proposals.

## Q41. To what extent do you believe your organization's member communication vehicles are integrated?

OUR DEFINITION OF INTEGRATION INCLUDES THREE KEY COMPONENTS:

1. Each communication vehicle has a well-defined frequency/message/audience/purpose.

2. Content is cross-purposed and cross-promoted as appropriate.

3. Advertisers have the ability to coordinate their "buys" across all channels.

Plan to be integrated within 12 months
10.6% in 2015 vs. 9.7% in 2014
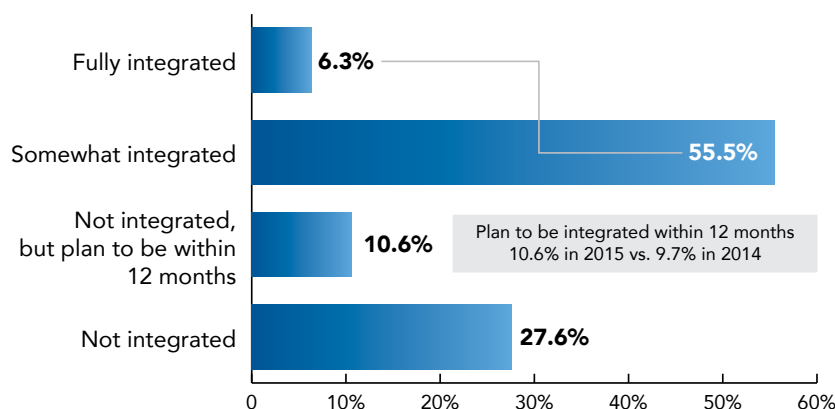
N=524 in 2011; 842 in 2014; 584 in 2015. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions.

- Just one in 16 associations (6.3%) claim to have fully-integrated communications programs – down from 10.4 percent in 2014 and 20.4 percent in 2011.

- Less than two-thirds of associations (61.8%) claim to have even "somewhat integrated" communications programs – down from 65.5 percent in 2014 and 70.8% in 2011.

- Data suggests association communications have become less integrated – not more – throughout the four-year history of this study.

	2011	2014	2015	1-year change	4-year change
Fully integrated	20.4%	10.4%	6.3%	-4.1	-14.1
Fully or partially integrated	70.8%	65.5%	61.8%	-3.7	-9.0

Section 4: Evaluation of Your Member Communication Vehicles

Q42. On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate how you value each of your organization's existing ONLINE/DIGITAL communication vehicles:

Member e-newsletter(s)	4.04
Online/digital media overall	3.94
Webinars	3.68
Member digital magazine	3.54
Member directory or online buyers guide	3.46
Online career center	3.36
Mobile media (e.g., apps, text messaging)	3.28
Video	3.14
Blogs	2.84
RSS feeds	2.43
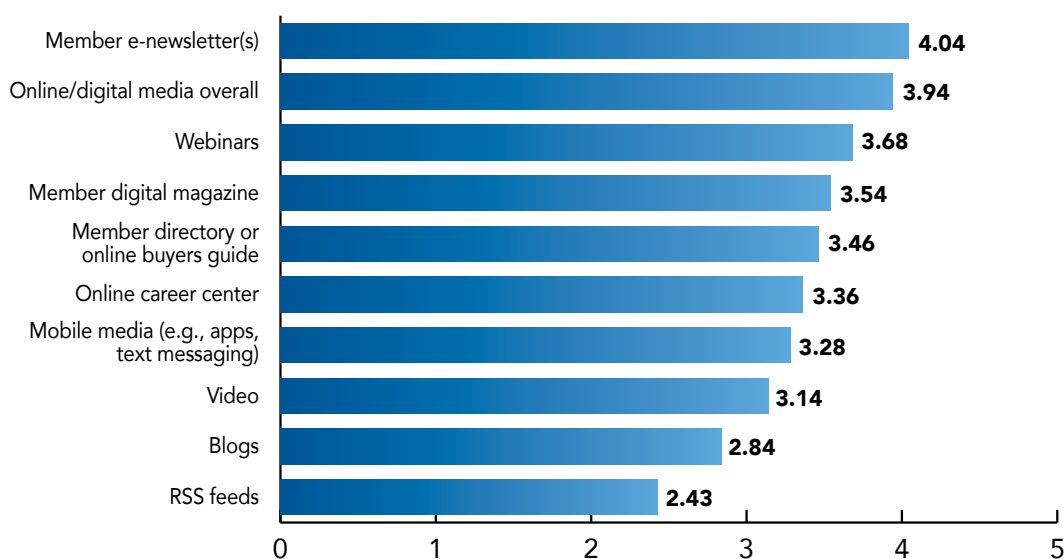
N=566. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Generally speaking, online and digital communication vehicles are considered slightly less valuable by association leaders today than they were in 2014.

- Survey respondents gave their **online/digital properties** an overall rating of 3.94 out of a possible 5 – still very respectable, but down slightly from 4.07 in 2014.

- As in previous years, **e-newsletters** remain the highest valued of association digital communication vehicles, with a rating of 4.04 out of 5 – down slightly from 4.17 in 2014 (see table on next page).

- As was the case in 2014, **webinars** (3.68), **digital member magazines** (3.54), **online buyer's guides/directories** (3.46) and **online career centers** (3.36) rounded out the top five.

- As was the case in 2014, **mobile media** (3.28), **video** (3.14), **blogs** (2.84) and **RSS feeds** (2.43) trailed other mainstream digital media channels in terms of perceived member value.

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Year-over-year change in perceived value of association online media

(ranked by 2015 most valuable)

	2011	2014	2015	1-year change	4-year change
ONLINE MEDIA OVERALL	3.95	4.07	3.94	-0.13	-0.01
E-newsletters	3.93	4.17	4.04	-0.13	+0.11
Webinars	3.78	3.72	3.68	-0.04	-0.1
Member magazine (digital)	3.63	3.60	3.54	-0.06	-0.09
Online buyer's guide/directory	3.65	3.69	3.46	-0.23	-0.19
Online career center	3.36	3.41	3.36	-0.05	NC
Mobile media (incl. apps, text messaging)	3.07	3.28	3.28	NC	+0.21
Video	3.14	3.16	3.14	-0.02	NC
Blogs	2.89	2.99	2.84	-0.15	-0.05
RSS feeds	2.70	2.69	2.43	-0.26	-0.27

⬤ negative trend
⬤ positive trend

Q43. Which of the following accurately reflects your association's approach to how VIDEO is used within your communications program?

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	N/A	TOTAL
YouTube is the primary distribution channel for our video communications	28.0%	16.4%	4.8%	15.4%	35.4%	100%
We capture video at our largest events	22.3%	23.2%	6.8%	13.8%	33.9%	100%
Video is part of our overall content strategy	13.5%	24.4%	9.6%	19.4%	33.0%	100%
Haven't introduced video yet, but plan to	10.6%	13.5%	6.3%	22.9%	46.6%	100%
We offer pay-per-view or on-demand video to our members	6.7%	4.9%	2.0%	38.2%	48.3%	100%
We deliver video via a private, association-branded platform	6.5%	9.4%	6.7%	32.7%	44.8%	100%

N=568. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Posting to YouTube and capturing video content at live events are the two most common approaches to association video.

- Less than two in five associations (37.9%) agreed to any extent that video is part of their overall content strategy.

- One in 10 associations (10.6%) plan to introduce video soon. Very few are offering pay-per-view to members or delivering video via a private branded platform.
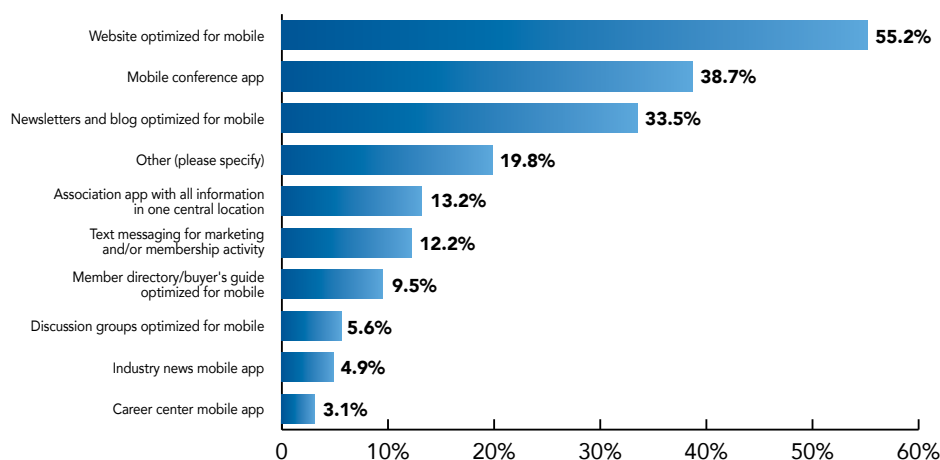
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Q44. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	N/A	TOTAL
Our member engagement is significant with video	6.7%	21.3%	11.5%	24.7%	35.7%	100%
I am pleased with the ROI we see from video	5.5%	16.5%	12.5%	14.5%	51.0%	100%

N=564. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Less than three in 10 respondents (28.0%) agree to any extent that they currently have significant member engagement with their video efforts.
- Less than one in four respondents (22.0%) agree to any extent that they are pleased with the ROI they see from video.

Q45. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about your mobile capabilities?

N=576. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Generally speaking, associations lag the general marketplace in terms of mobile capabilities.
- Just half of survey respondents (55.2%) indicated their websites are optimized for mobile.
- Nearly two in five respondents (38.7%) have a conference mobile app.
- Only one-third of respondents (33.5%) have optimized their newsletters and blogs for mobile devices.
- Less than one in six respondents have any of the following advanced communication offerings for members: association apps with all information in one place (13.2%), text messaging for marketing and member activity (12.2%), member directory opitmized for mobile (9.5%), discussion groups optimized for mobile (5.6%), industry news mobile app (4.9%) and career center mobile app (3.1%).

Q46. On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate how you value each of your organization's existing SOCIAL MEDIA platforms:

Platform	Value
Social media overall	3.6
Facebook	3.4
Twitter	3.3
Group email lists	3.3
LinkedIn	3.2
Blogs	2.9
Private social network	2.4
Other	2.3
Instagram (or other photo-sharing site)	2.3
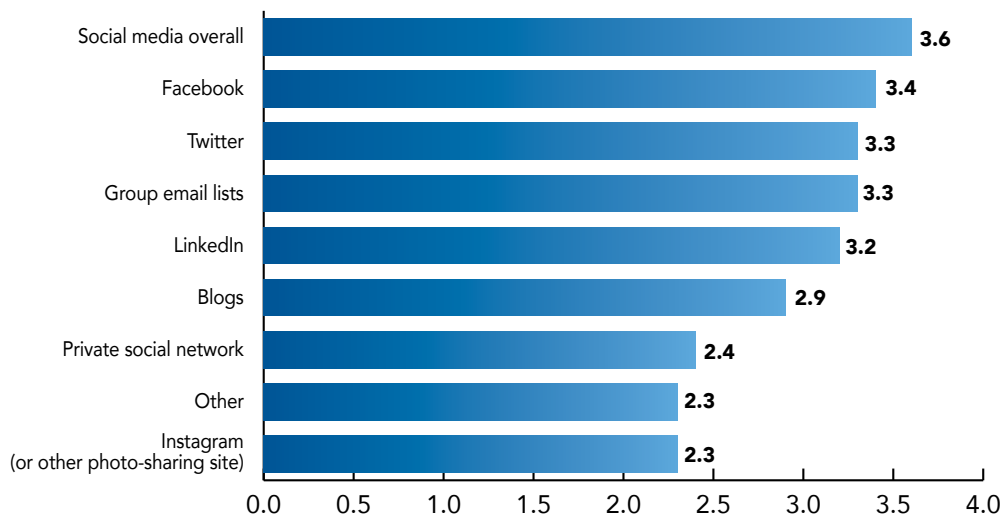
N=569. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- While Facebook, Twitter and other social media channels are gaining traction in the association marketplace, social media overall is not as highly valued as print, live event and online/digital by association leaders… but the gap is closing.

- Among social media channels used by association professionals, Facebook (3.4), Twitter (3.3) , group email lists (3.3) and LinkedIn (3.2) seem to have the most traction.

- Blogs (2.9), private social networks (2.4) and Instagram (2.3) appear to be lagging behind other channels.

Year-over-year change in perceived value of association social media

(ranked by 2015 most valuable)

	2011	2014	2015	1-year change	4-year change
SOCIAL MEDIA OVERALL	3.35	3.54	3.57	+0.03	+0.22
Facebook	2.96	3.33	3.44	+0.11	+0.48
Twitter	2.67	3.28	3.35	+0.07	+0.68
Group email lists	3.41	3.37	3.29	-0.08	-0.12
LinkedIn	2.87	3.25	3.21	-0.04	+0.34
Blogs	2.89	2.99	2.88	-0.11	-0.01
Private social network	2.77	2.94	2.47	-0.47	-0.3
Other	2.79	2.66	2.35	-0.31	-0.44
Instagram	NA	NA	2.30	NA	NA

● negative trend
○ positive trend

Q47. On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate how you value each of your organization's existing PRINT communication vehicles:

Print media overall — 3.8
Member magazine — 4.1
Member newsletter (print) — 3.6
Member directory (print) — 3.7
Show guide — 3.7
Other — 3.2

N=563. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Print media continues to be highly valued by association leaders (3.8 out of a possible 5 overall).
- Printed member magazines continue to be highly valued, even in the digital age, with an average rating 4.1 out of 5.
- Printed versions of the member newsletter, member directory and show guide all weighed in between 3.6 and 3.7 out of 5.
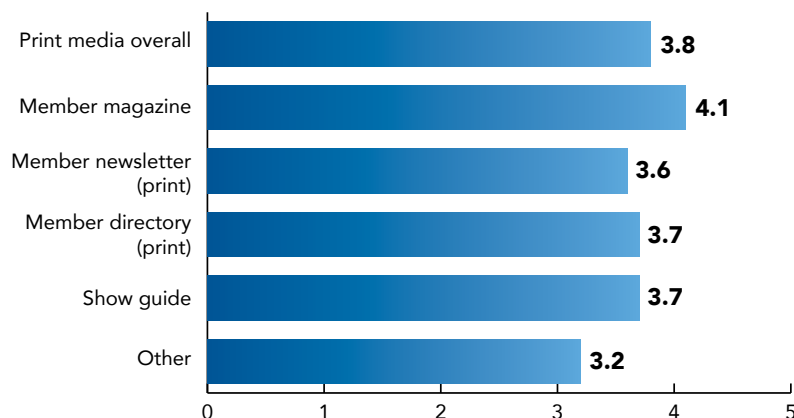
Year-over-year change in perceived value of association print media

(ranked by 2015 most valuable)

	2011	2014	2015	1-year change	4-year change
PRINT MEDIA OVERALL	3.97	4.01	3.81	-0.2	-0.16
Member magazine (print)	4.16	4.20	4.13	-0.07	-0.03
Show guide (print)	3.78	3.83	3.75	-0.08	-0.03
Member directory (print)	3.89	3.83	3.69	-0.14	-0.2
Member newsletter (print)	3.79	3.85	3.64	-0.21	-0.15
Other	3.18	3.71	3.20	-0.51	+0.02

● negative trend
● positive trend

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Q48. Which of the following accurately reflects your views about your MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY:

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	N/A	TOTAL
It is a valuable resource for associate members	32.3%	27.1%	5.5%	2.8%	32.3%	100%
It is a valuable resource for supplier members	31.6%	22.0%	4.4%	3.7%	38.2%	100%
It includes industry-related content/data that positions us as a valued resource	16.2%	18.0%	8.7%	13.3%	43.8%	100%
It is used to promote other products/services (e.g., events, bookstore, etc.), which makes it a great marketing tool	11.9%	14.2%	9.4%	19.2%	45.2%	100%
Outdated technology hampers our ability to produce in an efficient manner	11.7%	18.1%	8.4%	23.8%	37.9%	100%
Staff time required to produce the directory is disproportionate to the value we get from it	11.3%	14.5%	10.1%	26.0%	38.1%	100%

N=567. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- Nearly three in five respondents (59.4%) agree to a certain extent their membership directory is a valuable resource for association members — with one-third (32.3%) strongly agreeing.

- More than half of respondents (53.6%) agree their membership directory is a valuable resource for supplier members – with one-third (31.6%) strongly agreeing.

- Approximately one-third of respondents (34.2%) agree their membership includes valuable industry-related content or data – with one in six respondents (16.2%) strongly agreeing.

- Approximately one-fourth of respondents agree their membership directory is a great tool for promoting their bookstore, events and other products (26.1%).

- However, approximately one-third of respondents (29.8%) believe outdated technology hampers their efforts to produce directories in an efficient manner, and one-fourth of respondents (25.8%) believe directories require too much staff time to produce.

Q49. On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate how you value each of your organization's existing EVENTS:
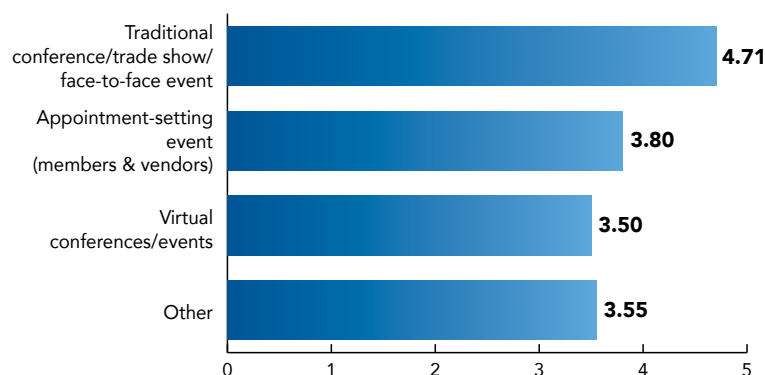
N=569. Source: Association Adviser and Naylor Association Solutions, 2015.

- As has been the case every year since 2011, traditional conferences and live events are the highest rated association communications offerings (4.71 out of a possible 5), up from 4.68 in 2014 and 4.39 in 2011.

- Member-vendor appointment setting events (also referred to as "speed dating") did not change measurably in perceived value, holding at 3.80 in 2015, versus 3.85 in 2014, but up from 3.68 in 2011.

- Virtual conferences and events continue to drop in perceived value to a level of 3.50 in 2015, from 3.65 in 2014 and 3.80 in 2011.

Year-over-year change in perceived value of association events (maximum 5.0)

	2011	2014	2015	1-year change	4-year change
Traditional conferences/live events	4.39	4.68	4.71	+0.03	+0.32
Member-vendor appointment setting events	3.68	3.85	3.80	-0.05	+0.12
Virtual conferences and events	3.80	3.65	3.50	-0.15	-0.3

Section 5:
Top Recommendations

Top recommendations for associations from the
Association Adviser **2015 Communications Benchmarking Report**

This year's research suggests that while associations are making great strides in their fight for member engagement, they still struggle greatly with content relevancy, communication integration and using data advantageously to learn more about their members. And while staffing has increased slightly, it does not seem to be increasing sufficiently to handle the ever-increasing communication workload at today's association. With so many association initiatives tied to communication staff, creating and executing a formal and fully integrated strategy can be a daunting task.

But it doesn't have to be if you implement a simple Take AIM (Assess, Integrate, Measure) approach.

Assess

1. **To build better content and greater engagement, you must start by asking** *what* **they want and** *why.*

    Assessment through surveys and face-to-face interactions is a very basic content strategy step, yet it is often overlooked. In an already-cluttered communication space, associations fear they're asking too much of members and don't want to add a survey request that requires a decent bit of time and attention. But with communications strategy in a membership-based organization, how can you give members what they want if you don't ask? Remember, members live and work in the industry every day and are your best subject matter experts. Administering a survey also involves them in your process, giving them a real sense of association ownership.

    It's important to ask detailed questions that garner the best opportunities for communication and content improvements. For example, it's simple to ask members if they prefer print or digital. But if you add just one more step and ask *why* they prefer one method over another, you will be armed with information that helps deliver top-notch products for both. Ditto for content ideas. Don't assume members want an upcoming trends story every December. Ask specific questions that give an opportunity to rank topics most important to them; then deliver more of that content.

2. **Take a closer look at who your stakeholders are and what they are telling you–and what they're not–to uncover areas for improvement and set your goals.**

    Members, staff and advertisers are all stakeholders when it comes to an association's communications program. An assessment that takes all these audiences into consideration can provide your team with an opportunity to uncover previously unidentified areas for improvement.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64.6%) believe that engagement with their communications would increase if they really understood the types of content members expect.

Something as simple as looking at your membership demographics can help you make more informed decisions on the best ways to provide information consumption choices. If you were to ask which competitive publications your members read on a regular basis and the one competitor your staff expected to find is hardly mentioned, you've just uncovered an important factor that will help refine your future strategy.

Assessment is the most important piece of content strategy creation. Reviewing your current program and then surveying staff and members (don't forget vendors!) not only provides data to guide your strategy, but that same data may support an opportunity to hire additional staff.

3. If you don't have a social media strategy, get one.

Particularly with small associations, the question remains: Are we employing a social media program just because?

Social media gives your association exposure, helps cement your status as an industry thought leader and offers a simple (and free) content integration opportunity. The real beauty of social media is that once an individual makes the basic choice to like your page or follow your feed, you have control. While your members spend personal time on Facebook, you can be in the midst of those family photos and status updates, pushing valuable industry information. It's worth your while.

Use your survey to learn more about members' level of social media adoption. Again, stay away from general questions about whether or not they use it; learn *why* they use it, which channels are most important to them, and build strategy around their preferences.

> Associations are communicating more frequently through social media than any other communication channel, yet roughly one-third of respondents report they are still trying to formulate their social media strategy (32.5%).

4. When it comes to your digital communications, make every message count.

Enewsletters held their perch again this year as the most highly valued digital communication opportunity. And, while associations feel they are making progress in combatting information overload and cutting through the clutter to gain members' attention (this was cited by only 66 percent of respondents in 2015 vs. 70 percent in 2014), this has been the most frequently cited communication challenge since 2011. This is why it's imperative that you have a plan, and avoid a "fire drill" approach when it comes to your enewsletter and email communications.

Subject lines are no different than headlines; you need to grab attention and draw readers to click. Once they click, what will they find? Is the design attractive? Are the sources reputable? Are there content takeaways? How often do you include photos, graphics and video? Ask members what they think about the content.

Assessment also gives you an opportunity to learn more about segmentation opportunities. Ask members if they opt out of communication because information is too broad. What do they consider to be a just-right frequency? If you send several sector-specific enewsletters, would the general membership want to see everything in a weekly digest?

5. Stop under-utilizing video. Yesterday.

According to Forrester Research, 74% of all Internet traffic will be video by 2017.

Although, according to our research, just 37.9 percent of associations stated that video is part of their overall content strategy. Nonetheless, continuing education, event memorialization, live streaming and integration opportunities make video an incredibly viable communication tool. Sponsorship and advertising opportunities also fit well into this vehicle, providing your trusted vendors an opportunity to have considerable branding time in front of members.

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Integrate

6. Designate an Ambassador of Integration.

Effective integration remains a pain point for associations of all sizes, with a paltry 6.3 percent of respondents claiming to have a fully integrated communications program. Small associations feel they need to be more consistent; midsize associations want to know how to best utilize content across all channels; and large associations have trouble engaging new members, which can be improved by better communication integration.

No matter what your current integration challenge is, establish someone who can interact with all other departments to ensure your integration efforts are not in vain. A properly executed communication-integration plan not only delivers content across a broad spectrum, but it gives members that consumption choice mentioned in the assessment phase. Having one member of the team who can promote the benefits of integration while also overseeing that it is happening on a daily basis will keep your goals top of mind for everyone.

7. Review available communication vehicles and consider how much more powerful a message can be if it's repurposed across different channels.

For instance, your pre-conference magazine is mailed to members well in advance to serve the dual purpose of enticing members and driving registration. How much more powerful is that effort if you create a video that brings the magazine to life and then use social media and your enewsletter to push that video to members? Within the video, you can tease to stories in the magazine, talk up conference speakers and encourage viewers to follow you on social media. That one example gives members an opportunity to consume information several different ways and gives you an opportunity to drive home your key messages and most important content.

8. Make sure your content and communication vehicles are ready for consumption on the go.

Integration also helps solve the mobile strategy issue many associations identified as a major hurdle this year. A mobile strategy doesn't have to be a difficult task–just keep members' mobile habits in mind as you create your strategy. However, with just half (55.2%) of respondents indicating their websites are optimized for mobile and one-third (33.5%) optimizing newsletter and blog content for mobile, the challenge seems to lie with technology and cost. Again, a proper assessment with the right questions (how often do members access information on the go?) provides you data (vs. assumption) to support potential financial investments.

Only 6.3% of associations report that their communications are fully integrated, and 5.5% of respondents view their communications as best in class.

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Measure

9. Don't wait to measure–incorporate it as an everyday practice.

So often, associations put a plan in place and run full throttle toward an end goal of better engagement. We advise that you look at this Take AIM approach holistically, and continually look back at the goals you set in the assessment phase. Did email open and click-through rates increase at a solid rate? Did you customize communications to the degree that opt-outs decreased? What was your goal for better social media engagement (followers, likes, retweets, etc.) and did you reach that goal?

Measure early and often, and chart how your different communication vehicles are performing so you'll know what's working best. If you see a high open rate on a weekly digest enewsletter but low rates on daily blasts, consider removing the daily blasts. Your magazine's digital edition metrics should reflect where readers spend the most amount of time, giving you an opportunity to provide more of that type of content.

10.Track your results, and if you didn't perform well in a certain area, ask for help.

Associations are notorious for running lean. The great thing about having data that identifies members' wants and needs in comparison to what your staff is able to deliver is that you can make a case for a budget that includes vendor resources and/or additional staff. So, although it may feel cumbersome at first, the more comfortable you get with making measurement a part of your process, the more likely you are to get the help you deserve.

As we said in our 2014 recommendations, avoid "shiny-object syndrome" and the temptation to be all things to all people. Consider how relatively simple a communications strategy can be with a Take AIM approach. Gather member feedback, deliver great content, monitor results, and watch engagement levels rise.

BEST PRACTICE TIP:
Measuring your results against your goals is a critical component of a world-class communications program. Skip this step, and you risk losing your position as your industry's leading source for information—not to mention missing an opportunity to increase your communications budget next year.

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Appendix 1 – Small Association Stress Points

Most likely to feel publishing/content team is understaffed

	Understaffed	Just right	Overstaffed	TOTAL
Under 1,000 members	**44.4%**	54.6%	1%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	43.7%	55.8%	0.5%	100%
Over 5,000 members	41.8%	56.2%	2%	100%

Most likely to feel social media team is understaffed

	Understaffed	Just right	Overstaffed	TOTAL
Under 1,000 members	**47.4%**	52.6%	0%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	43.0%	56.5%	0.5%	100%
Over 5,000 members	36%	63.4%	0.6%	100%

Single-Greatest Communication Challenges

	Create more relevant content	Understanding reader/ member/ advertiser needs	Leveraging data for optimal engagement	Engaging new/ younger members	Social media engagement	Utilizing content across all channels	Measuring effectiveness	Generating NDR	TOTAL
Below 1,000 members	**22.0%**	11.0%	9.7%	12.0%	5.3%	**17.3%**	11.7%	11.0%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	14.1%	13.1%	14.1%	13.6%	3.7%	17.3%	13.6%	10.5%	100%
Over 5,000 members	22.2%	12.6%	17.8%	10.4%	3.7%	13.3%	9.6%	10.4%	100%

- Small associations are most likely to say their single-greatest communication challenge is either (a) creating more relevant content or (b) utilizing content more effectively across all channels.

	Excellent (best in class)	Above average	Average	Below average or poor	TOTAL
Below 1,000 members	5.7%	49.7%	**35.3%**	**10.0%**	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	6.8%	47.1%	38.2%	7.8%	100%
Over 5,000 members	5.9%	52.6%	38.5%	3.0%	100%

- Small associations are more likely than other associations to feel their communications are below average or poor relative to their peers.

	Significantly better	Somewhat better	Stayed the same or worse	TOTAL
Below 1,000 members	33.7%	**49.3%**	**17.0%**	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	29.8%	55.5%	14.7%	100%
Over 5,000 members	35.6%	51.1%	13.3%	100%

- Small associations are more likely than other associations to feel their communications have shown little or no improvement over the past three years.

What would it take to get the member engagement percentage higher at your organization?
(ref Q19)

	More staffing	Knowing more about our members	Developing a mobile strategy	Communicating less frequently	Really understanding what type of content our members expect	Better engagement on social media/mobile	Integrate messaging consistently across all communication channels	Enhance our ability to collect/ use data	TOTAL
Less than 1,000 members	**21.5%**	31.5%	**23.8%**	9.4%	60.7%	**38.9%**	**43.0%**	44.3%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	20.9%	35.1%	19.4%	9.9%	65.4%	32.5%	38.7%	40.3%	100%
Over 5,000 members	14.2%	38.8%	20.1%	20.1%	70.9%	29.1%	36.6%	47.0%	100%

Small associations are more likely than other associations to face the following member engagement challenges:

- The need to develop a real mobile strategy.
- The need for better social media engagement.
- The need to integrate messaging consistently across all communication channels.

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The quality of our content is stronger today than it was three years ago.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	TOTAL
Under 1,000 members	**44.60%**	50.70%	4.70%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	46.56%	50.26%	3.17%	100%
Over 5,000 members	53.73%	42.54%	3.73%	100%

- Small associations are less likely than other size association to feel strongly that their content quality has improved in recent years.

Which type of member is most highly engaged with your content?

	Members less than 2 years	Members 2-5 years	Members 5-10 years	Members 10+ years	No difference	TOTAL
Under 1,000 members	8.7%	17.4%	**17.8%**	**16.1%**	40.3%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	6.9%	16.4%	23.3%	21.2%	32.3%	100%
Over 5,000 members	5.2%	13.4%	25.4%	26.9%	29.1%	100%

N = 622

- Smaller associations are more likely than other associations to have difficulty engaging longer-standing members.

To what extent do you customize communications for key member subgroups?

	Student members				
	Highly customized	Somewhat customized	Not customized yet, but plan to	No special customization	TOTAL
Under 1,000 members	**2.8%**	**12.0%**	10.9%	74.3%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	12.2%	19.6%	13.2%	55.0%	100%
Over 5,000 members	14.3%	36.1%	18.0%	31.6%	100%

N = 606

- Smaller associations appear to have more trouble than others with customizing their communications for student members **(above)** and young professionals **(next page).**

Young professionals					
	Highly customized	**Somewhat customized**	**Not customized yet, but plan to**	**No special customization**	**TOTAL**
Under 1,000 members	**5.6%**	**19.2%**	18.1%	57.1%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	6.8%	28.3%	20.9%	44.0%	100%
Over 5,000 members	13.4%	29.9%	25.4%	31.3%	100%

N = 606

What steps are you taking to engage young professionals?

	Young professionals groups with social media component	**Specific, targeted communication to get them more involved**	**Involvement with communications committee and/or staff**	**Seat on the board**	**Other (please specify)**	**TOTAL**
Under 1,000 members	**22.8%**	**16.7%**	25.0%	19.1%	16.4%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	27.8%	22.7%	21.4%	15.3%	12.9%	100%
Over 5,000 members	29.7%	28.4%	23.3%	11.4%	7.2%	100%

N = 569

- Smaller associations are less likely than others to have young professionals groups within their social media, and to have other targeted communications specifically for young professionals.

To what extent has the effectiveness of the following marketing tactics changed in recent years?

Social media marketing					
	Increased	**Decreased**	**Stayed about the same**	**Don't know**	**TOTAL**
Under 1,000 members	**60.5%**	3.0%	28.0%	8.5%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	70.4%	2.1%	20.1%	7.4%	100%
Over 5,000 members	70.7%	2.3%	19.5%	7.5%	100%

N = 619

- Smaller associations are less likely than others to say their social media marketing has improved.

Appendix 2 – Midsize Association Stress Points

Single-Greatest Communication Challenges

	Create? Provide? more relevant content	Under-standing reader/ member/ advertiser needs	Lever-aging data for optimal engage-ment	Engag-ing new/ younger members	Social media engage-ment	Utilizing content across all channels	Measur-ing effec-tiveness	Generat-ing NDR	TOTAL
Below 1,000 members	22.0%	11.0%	9.7%	12.0%	5.3%	17.3%	11.7%	11.0%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	14.1%	13.1%	14.1%	**13.6%**	3.7%	**17.3%**	**13.6%**	10.5%	100%
Over 5,000 members	22.2%	12.6%	17.8%	10.4%	3.7%	13.3%	9.6%	10.4%	100%

- Midsize organizations are more likely than other size associations to be challenged with:
  a) Engaging new and younger members,
  b) Utilizing content across all their channels, and
  c) Measuring the effectiveness of their communications.

Communications our members receive are more targeted to their preferences

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	TOTAL
Below 1,000 members	25.6%	51.2%	23.2%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	28.2%	44.7%	**27.1%**	100%
Over 5,000 members	26.3%	57.1%	16.6%	100%

- Midsize associations are more likely than other associations to be challenged with delivering content to members targeted to their preferences.

Overall Organization				
	Understaffed	**Just right**	**Overstaffed**	**TOTAL**
Less than 1,000 members	42.2%	56.3%	1.5%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	**43.4%**	55.1%	1.5%	100%
Over 5,000 members	39.6%	55.8%	4.6%	100%

N = 691

- Midsize associations are most likely to feel understaffed across all departments.

What percentage of your overall communications do you believe members are reading/engaging with on a regular basis? (ref Q18)

	76% or more	**51% to 75%**	**26% to 50%**	**Less than 25%**	**TOTAL**
Below 1,000 members	5.1%	40.9%	46.6%	7.4%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	4.2%	34.6%	**55.0%**	6.3%	100%
Over 5,000 members	3.7%	33.6%	47.0%	15.7%	100%

- Midsize associations are more likely than other size associations to say that between one-fourth and one-half of what they send to members is actually read.

The design (look and feel) of our communications is better today than it was three years ago.

	Strongly Agree	**Somewhat Agree**	**Disagree**	**TOTAL**
Under 1,000 members	60.7%	33.6%	5.7%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	**58.7%**	36.5%	4.8%	100%
Over 5,000 members	65.7%	30.6%	3.7%	100%

- Midsize associations are less likely than other size associations to say the design of their communications has improved in recent years.

What steps are you taking to engage young professionals?

	Young professionals groups with social media component	Specific, targeted communication to get them more involved	Involvement with communications committee and/or staff	Seat on the board	Other (please specify)	TOTAL
Under 1,000 members	22.8%	16.7%	25.0%	19.1%	16.4%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	27.8%	22.7%	**21.4%**	15.3%	12.9%	100%
Over 5,000 members	29.7%	28.4%	23.3%	11.4%	7.2%	100%

N = 569

- Midsize associations are less likely than others to offer young professionals access to their communications staffs or committees.

Appendix 3 – Large Association Stress Points

Single-Greatest Challenges

	Create more relevant content	Under-standing reader/member/advertiser needs	Lever-aging data for optimal engage-ment	Engag-ing new/younger members	Social media engage-ment	Utilizing content across all channels	Measur-ing effec-tiveness	Generat-ing NDR	TOTAL
Below 1,000 members	22.0%	11.0%	9.7%	12.0%	5.3%	17.3%	11.7%	11.0%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	14.1%	13.1%	14.1%	13.6%	3.7%	**17.3%**	**13.6%**	10.5%	100%
Over 5,000 members	**22.2%**	12.6%	**17.8%**	10.4%	3.7%	13.3%	9.6%	10.4%	100%

- Larger associations are more likely than other size associations to be challenged with:
  a) Creating content that's more relevant to member needs, and
  b) Leveraging data for optimal engagement with members.

What percentage of your overall communications do you believe members are reading/engaging with on a regular basis? (ref Q18)

	76% or more	51% to 75%	26% to 50%	Less than 25%	TOTAL
Below 1,000 members	5.1%	40.9%	46.6%	7.4%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	4.2%	34.6%	55.0%	6.3%	100%
Over 5,000 members	3.7%	33.6%	47.0%	**15.7%**	100%

- Larger associations are more likely than other associations to say less than one-fourth of what they send members is read.

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What would it take to get the member engagement percentage higher at your organization? (ref Q19) {select up to 3}

	More staffing	Knowing more about our members	Developing a mobile strategy	Communicating less frequently	Really understanding what type of content our members expect	Better engagement on social media/ mobile	Integrate messaging consistently across all communication channels	Enhance our ability to collect/ use data	TOTAL
Less than 1,000 members	21.5%	31.5%	23.8%	9.4%	60.7%	38.9%	43.0%	44.3%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	20.9%	35.1%	19.4%	9.9%	65.4%	32.5%	38.7%	40.3%	100%
Over 5,000 members	14.2%	**38.8%**	20.1%	**20.1%**	**70.9%**	29.1%	36.6%	**47.0%**	100%

- Larger associations are more likely than other size associations to say they have the following members communication challenges:

  a) We need to know more about our members.

  b) We're communicating too frequently with members.

  c) We really need to understand the type of content our members expect.

  d) We need to do a better job of collecting and using data.

We know what kinds of information/content our members want.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	TOTAL
Under 1,000 members	20.4%	33.6%	5.7%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	21.7%	36.5%	4.8%	100%
Over 5,000 members	**11.9%**	**30.6%**	3.7%	100%

N = 617

- Larger associations are much less likely than other size associations to be in touch with the information/content needs of their members.

Which type of member is most highly engaged with your content?

	Members less than 2 years	Members 2-5 years	Members 5-10 years	Members 10+ years	No difference	TOTAL
Under 1,000 members	8.7%	17.4%	17.8%	16.1%	40.3%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	6.9%	16.4%	23.3%	21.2%	32.3%	100%
Over 5,000 members	**5.2%**	**13.4%**	25.4%	26.9%	29.1%	100%

N = 622

- Larger associations appear to have the most trouble engaging newer members.

The technology solutions (or lack thereof) we have in place make it difficult to customize member communications. (percent agree)

Under 1,000 members	29.9%
1,000 to 5,000 members	31.6%
Over 5,000 members	44.0%

N = 622

- Larger associations are more likely than other associations to blame technology shortcomings for their inability to customize communications for members.

What steps are you taking to engage young professionals?

	Young professionals groups with social media component	Specific, targeted communication to get them more involved	Involvement with communications committee and/or staff	Seat on the board	Other (please specify)	TOTAL
Under 1,000 members	22.8%	16.7%	25.0%	19.1%	16.4%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	27.8%	22.7%	21.4%	15.3%	12.9%	100%
Over 5,000 members	29.7%	28.4%	23.3%	**11.4%**	**7.2%**	100%

N = 569

- Larger associations are less likely than others to offer young professionals a seat on their boards or other considerations.

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To what extent has the effectiveness of the following marketing tactics changed in recent years?

Event marketing					
	Increased	**Decreased**	**Stayed about the same**	**Don't know**	**TOTAL**
Under 1,000 members	**61.1%**	3.7%	32.2%	3.0%	100%
1,000 to 5,000 members	62.8%	2.1%	31.9%	3.2%	100%
Over 5,000 members	**49.6%**	5.3%	40.6%	4.5%	100%

N = 619

- Larger associations are less likely than others to say their event marketing has improved.

Appendix 4 – Integrated vs. Non-Integrated Communications

NOTE : Our definition of "communications integration" has three key components:

1. **Each communication vehicle has a well-defined frequency/message/audience/purpose.**
2. **Content is cross-purposed and cross-promoted as appropriate.**
3. **Advertisers have the ability to coordinate their buys across all channels.**

Associations that claim to have fully-integrated communications programs are more than three times as likely as other organizations to say they're utilizing content effectively across all their communication channels. Organizations with integrated communications strategies are also far more likely than other organizations to say members would rate their communication programs "best in class" relative to peer associations. They are also more likely to believe members are reading at least half of all communications efforts sent to them. Organizations that claim to have fully-integrated communication programs are less likely than other associations to say they need to create more relevant content for members or do a better job of understanding reader/advertiser needs or generate more non-dues revenue. Also, they're less likely to say they need to engage with new or younger members of their profession, or to say they need to improve their ability to measure their overall member communication effectiveness.

What is the single-greatest communication challenge your organization faced in 2015?

	Have fully-integrated communications	Communications NOT integrated	VARIANCE supporting benefits of integration
Utilizing content across all of our channels	16.2%	48.4%	32.2
Content needs to be more relevant	18.9%	44.3%	25.4
Understanding reader/ member/advertiser needs	8.1%	24.3%	16.2
Measuring communication effectiveness	8.1%	20.4%	12.3
Engaging new/young members	8.1%	17.2%	9.1
Generating NDR	13.5%	18.2%	4.7

N = 579

How do you think members rate your overall communications relative to your peer associations?

	Have fully-integrated communications	Communications NOT integrated	VARIANCE supporting benefits of integration
Excellent (best in class)	16.2%	3.6%	12.6
Average or below	24.3%	62.3%	38

N = 579

How do you think members would assess the following attributes of your overall communication vehicles over the past three years?

	Have fully-integrated communications	Communications NOT integrated	VARIANCE supporting benefits of integration
They have gotten significantly better	48.6%	22.2%	24.4
Quality of content is better	63.9%	34.9%	29.0
Our design (look and feel) is better	75.0%	51.4%	23.6
Communications are more targeted to member preferences	31.4%	17.8%	13.6

N = 579

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What percentage of your overall communications efforts do you believe members are reading/ engaging with on a regular basis?

	Have fully-integrated communications	Communications NOT integrated	VARIANCE supporting benefits of integration
Half or more	51.3%	32.5%	**18.8**

N = 579

To what extent do you customize communications for the following member subgroups?

	Have fully-integrated communications	Communications NOT integrated	VARIANCE supporting benefits of integration
Customized for new members	64.9%	37.0%	**27.9**
For young professionals	51.4%	19.3%	**32.1**
For student members	51.3%	9.8%	**41.5**

N = 579

About the Researchers

(listed alphabetically)

Jill Andreu, vice president of content strategy and development, is responsible for the overall strategy, leadership and management of Naylor's content department. Jill is also responsible for execution of Content 360, a fee-based program that provides content strategy and leadership to the association marketplace. Jill started her Naylor career in 2003 as an editor after working as a news desk copy editor at *The Gainesville Sun*. From 2006-2014, Jill moved through the ranks from managing editor to association account manager to publisher to group publisher, managing editors, client relationships, inside sales and business growth.

Hank Berkowitz, MBA, M.A. is moderator in chief of the *Association Adviser eNews*. He has more than 20 years of experience as an online editor, publisher and content strategist. Prior to joining Naylor, Hank co-founded and ran day-to-day operations of the CPA Insider™ e-newsletter group at the 365,000-member American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). Earlier he founded the SECrets e-newsletter group at EDGAR Online, Inc. (1.2 million weekly readers), and he has held editorial and management positions with *Pensions & Investments Magazine*, CFO.com/Economist Group and CCH, a Wolters Kluwer Company.

M. Sean Limon, Ph.D., is an oral communication coordinator in the Center for Management Communication at the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business Administration. Dr. Limon has taught and consulted in the communication field for more than 10 years. He has taught courses and workshops for students and professionals in the areas of presentation skills, teamwork, leadership, organizational culture and conflict.

Dana Plotke is marketing manager for Naylor Association Solutions. instead. Dana has been a core part of the development team for the association communications benchmarking study since 2011. She has more than 20 years of experience in B2B marketing, communications and research working with brands including Pfizer Pharmaceutical, Cisco Systems and Citrix. Her focus has been on trade and professional associations since 2002, and includes a wide array of clients from grass-roots political organizations to international trade associations.

Dana has spoken at numerous national and regional association events on the topic of association publishing and integrated marketing and communications – including conferences held by Association Media & Publishing (AM&P), the Texas Society of Association Executives (TSAE), California Society of Association Executives, National Bankers Association and the National Association of Trial Lawyer Executives.

Dana was responsible for launching Naylor's marketing services' division, the Association Marketing & Design – or AMD – Group. In this role, she oversaw the marketing, promotion and audience development for associations that were wanting to grow revenue associated with membership, events, education and certifications.

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