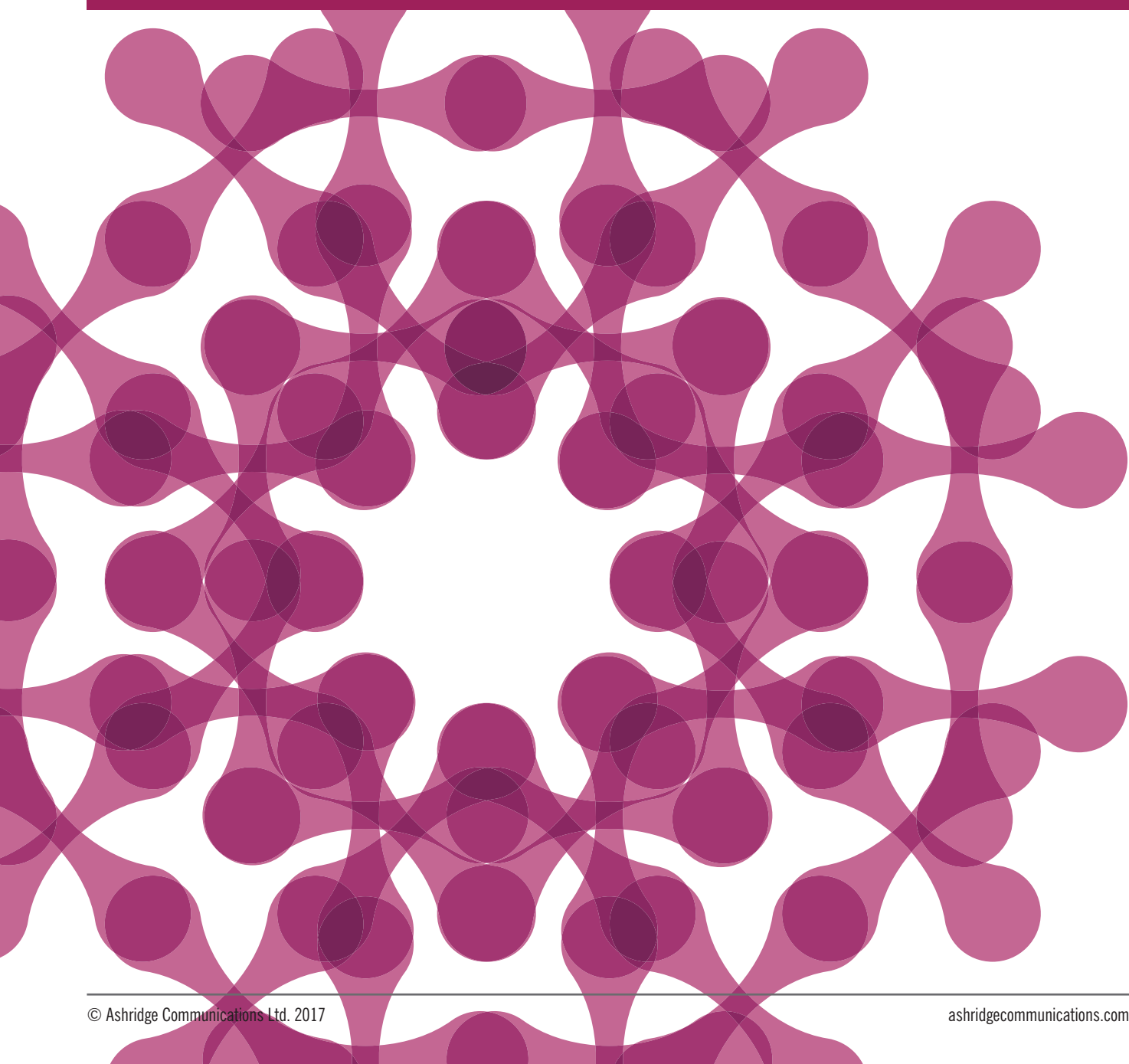


**INSIGHT, IDEAS
& INSPIRATION**

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CO-CREATION AND COLLABORATION



MEMBER ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CO-CREATION AND COLLABORATION

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INCREASING ENGAGEMENT THROUGH MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Most membership organisations have a strong focus on ensuring they provide the products, services and benefits that members need. But members are not just consumers of products and services. They are an integral part of the organisation with a wealth of highly valuable knowledge and experience. Inviting members to work with the organisation to create products they need and find solutions to problems they have not only increases engagement and sense of community, but also helps to build a membership body that provides exactly what members need.

Taking this kind of collaborative approach would be a step change for most, however the benefits to the organisation are not trivial. Any output from a process of creation that fully involves the end-user will be more accepted and have more value to that user and others in the organisation. Leveraging the skills, knowledge and experience of the people who are immersed in the sector, business or interest of the organisation will not only provide more resource, reduce uncertainty and increase productivity, but will result in outputs of high quality and relevance. Ultimately, the opportunity for members to work with each other and with the organisation will foster relationships that benefit both individuals and the organisation.

The aim of co-creation is to enhance organisational knowledge processes by involving the customer in the creation of meaning and value. Co-creation blurs the boundaries of the firm by outsourcing innovation and value creation to the customer. Co-creation transforms the consumer into an active partner for the creation of future value.

Co-creation: New pathways to value. An overview, Promise/LSE Enterprise 2009

In our 2015 survey we looked at how organisations were focussing their engagement activities on key member segments, engagement definitions and measuring, targets, and new initiatives and activities. We also captured organisations' data for 28 measures of engagement. We found that although assessment and understanding of members' emotional commitment to their organisation was increasing, transactional engagement was measured by more organisations than emotional engagement. Many of the definitions of member engagement at that time related directly to the types of activities being measured, and to those for which statistics were easily accessible.

INCREASING ENGAGEMENT THROUGH MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

This year, we have approached our study from two angles. Through an online survey, we invited membership organisations to share:

- **their engagement success stories and the data they've collected for over 30 engagement measures** – both behavioural (for example: event attendance, email open rates) and attitudinal (satisfaction ratings, recommendation, involvement)
- **information about the ways in which organisations work together with members** – including methods and examples of projects involving members and resulting in improvements to the membership offer. We also asked about the opportunities organisations provide for members to input to the organisation, and to meet, share and learn from each other.

This report enables membership organisations to compare their engagement data and consider how they can work more collaboratively with members to increase engagement and deliver outcomes that are valued by both the members and the organisation.

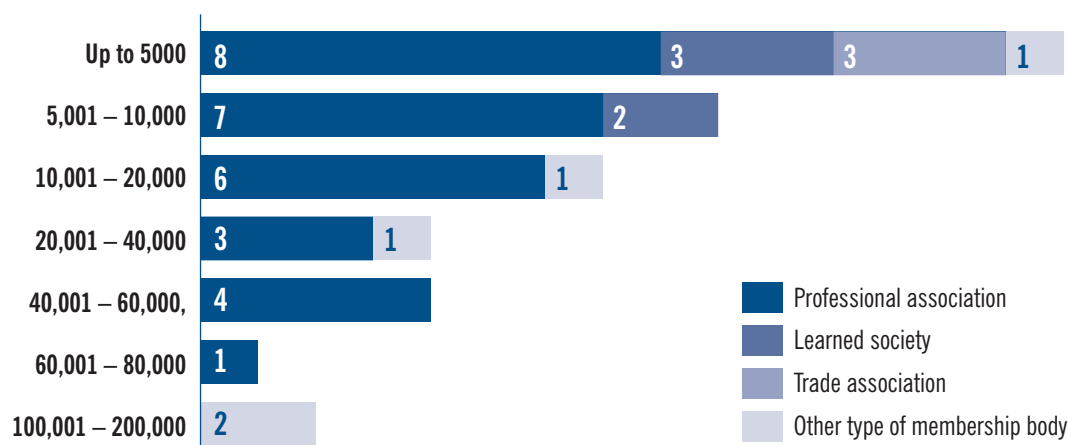
PROFILE OF SURVEY CONTRIBUTORS

Representatives from forty-three membership organisations took part in the survey, including professional associations (30), learned societies (5), trade associations (3), and other types of membership body (5). The 'other types' described their organisations as: both professional association and charity, unincorporated association, education and membership body, awarding organisation and membership body, and infrastructure and licensing body.

For all five learned societies and eleven of the professional associations, membership is not required but makes a small difference to employment and advancement prospects; for thirteen professional associations, it makes a big difference and for one, membership is compulsory to practice in some areas of the profession.

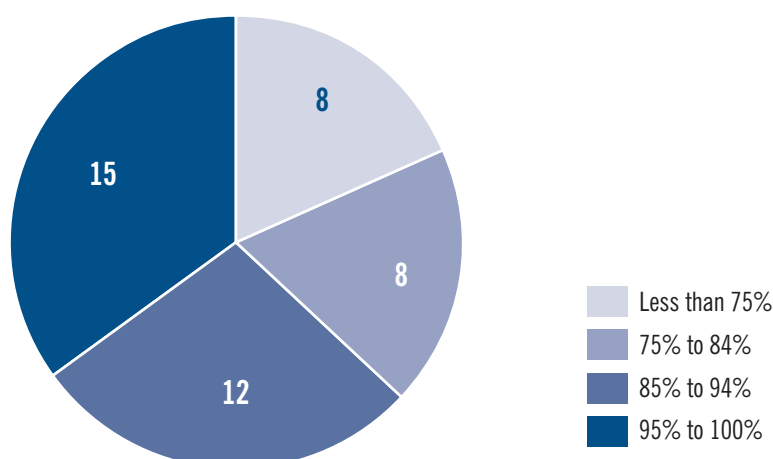
Participating organisations were of a range of sizes: twenty-four have up to 10,000 organisational or individual members, eleven have between 10,000 and 40,000 and seven have over 40,000.

Organisation size – number of members



The average distribution of members is 86% UK, 14% international. The proportion of UK members ranged from just over half (55%) for one organisation, to all (100%) for five organisations.

Proportion of membership in the UK



DEFINITIONS OF MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

A definition of member engagement is still eluding most organisations.

In 2013, 9 of 29 organisations (31%) were defining member engagement. In the 2015 survey, 13 of 36 organisations (36%) said they had a formal definition. This year just 8 of the 43 organisations that took part say they have an agreed definition of member engagement – that's 19%.

Some have clearly articulated definitions:

Member engagement represents the strong two-way relationship [the organisation] has with its members. It brings the organisation closer to members and vice-versa via a personalised value driven approach that makes [the organisation] the 'go-to' professional body for [specialism] in the UK and overseas.

Others don't have a statement to define engagement, but are clear about the measures or member activities that are used to assess engagement, sometimes using their own scoring methods.

In one case, the organisation demonstrates that they have adjusted the definition to match other areas of organisational focus:

We've moved away from "any involvement with [the organisation]" to focus on internal community and external advocacy: Proactive involvement in either our communities (committees, volunteer groups, events) or advocate activity (member get member, event promotion, ambassadors etc).

Despite the rise in methods, models, tools and technology for monitoring and measuring, it seems that it is still difficult for membership bodies to pin-down exactly what engagement means.

An engagement definition doesn't have to be fixed for all time; it can be reviewed and refreshed as priorities within the organisation develop and change. And if a formal statement seems unachievable, organisations should focus on agreeing which member behaviours and attitudes are most important for the organisation to assess, the data or information that can be monitored and how different departments can contribute to build the picture.

But what if the organisation puts itself in the members' shoes: how would a member consider themselves to be 'engaged' with their organisation? Rather than assuming the ways in which members derive value from their membership, an organisation could focus on building relationships and personalising its interactions with members, to enable the creation of a more engaged community.

SUCCESSFUL ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

In our 2015 survey we observed that organisations were moving away from traditional membership functions, towards member engagement activities. The top three types of initiative, constituting half of those described, were related to member communications, development of a new or improved member benefit and professional development tools and resources.

Engagement now seems even more embedded into the everyday business of membership bodies: 88% of the organisations in this year's survey described one or more initiatives introduced in the past two years that have been successful and led to an improvement in member engagement. For four organisations, setting up new teams or recruiting new staff specifically for member engagement has been a priority.

A selection of successful engagement initiatives as described by the organisations that took part in the survey.

Type of initiative	Activities involved	Audience	Outcome
Communications	Postcards sent in the post.	Student members	Increase in number of student members upgrading to professional membership.
Increased the attendance at our Annual Conference	Member consultation and review of existing offering to identify what works and what doesn't. Introduction of new initiatives based on member feedback (including activities targeting early career/ fees increased/fewer free places offered).	Conference attendees – both members and non-members.	Delegates registered at 2016 Conference: 1500. Delegates registered for 2017 Conference: 1900, and registrations had to close early.
Communications	Quarterly affiliate newsletter.	All affiliate members	Formation of Affiliate Working Group and increase in affiliates responding to calls to action
Communications	Campaign around specific membership benefit – online career development/planning tool. Included email communications, website and social media activity, and face to face workshops/ roadshows with existing members.	Existing members	Use of the tool has doubled since engagement activity started in October 2016.
Welcome communications	Dynamic and personalised sequence of emails once a member joins to improve their use of various aspects of membership.	New members	Increased levels of uptake of membership, so more attending events, and more viewing video content.
Member engagement	Regular new content including videos – linked to via a new newsletter.	All members	25% increase in web traffic.

SUCCESSFUL ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Type of initiative	Activities involved	Audience	Outcome
Member magazine	As part of the new content strategy a new magazine was launched which explores [business sector], giving members ideas, insightful data, thought leadership and lively debate. Changes included moving from one edition to regional editions given that [business sector] is a global industry.	All members	Much more engagement with members, survey following the launch showed members were far more engaged and really liked the new approach, look, feel and content. International market relevance was what our members wanted and the new magazine addressed this.
Targeted communications	By analysing the engagement rate of members through email readership, we were able to collate a relationship between dis-engaged members and those who lapse. Ring fence these members ahead of their bill and communicate to them using direct mail to encourage them to make the most of their membership. SMS response with a telephone follow up.	Members who are dis-engaged, by reviewing their email engagement.	From the first cohort, we had a number of members contact us. We are waiting to see the lapsing rate. In the meantime, this is now a business-as-usual process.
Recognising and rewarding our volunteers	Showcasing two volunteers each month in our members' magazine Promotion via ezine and social media. Having a set of awards for volunteers. Sending thank you cards to all 1,000+ volunteers during Volunteer week in June. Introducing a volunteer hub on our website to promote vacancies, opportunities etc.	All members	Great volunteer recruitment, advocacy and increased number of members applying for roles.
Student engagement campaign	Visits to undergraduate institutions	Students	40% increase in student numbers
Communications	Weekly policy newsletter sent out to all members.	All members interested in policy developments and responses of the [organisation] and external bodies	Subscribed numbers increased from c.1,000 to c.16,000 with an open rate 44%.

Content and communication remains a key engagement focus: almost half of the initiatives described (23 of 53) were based around creation and delivery of content, including changes and improvements to e-newsletters, e-zines, social media channels, postcards and video. Nine initiatives were centred around the development or improvement of information or resources for members, with a further two comprising a full review or refocus of the available products and services.

MEASURING ENGAGEMENT

In our 2015 survey we invited organisations to share data for a number of measures of engagement. In response to feedback, we reviewed some of these measures and gathered together other ways in which engagement can be tracked or measured; in this year's survey, we again asked contributors to share their data with us. In 2015, we captured data from thirty-three professional bodies. Fifteen of those bodies also contributed data to this year's study.

Not all of the measures we listed are used by – or applicable to – all organisations, hence the number of organisations able to contribute data to any one measure varies (indicated by a base number). What we share here is a collection of figures that are commonly used to monitor engagement and against which other organisations can compare their own data.

Key to table:

Blue	lowest figure given
Purple	mean
Green	highest figure given
Base	number of data points contributing to the mean

ENGAGEMENT MEASURE	2017 ALL Organisations	2017 Professional Associations	2015 Professional Associations
Overall member retention (not including those lapsing due to retirement, death or students changing grades) – percent retained	90% 70 99 Base: 30	89% 70 99 Base: 23	88% Base: 30
Retention of students once completed study and eligible for higher grade of membership – percent retained	46% 10 95 Base: 14	39% 10 95 Base: 9	65% Base: 20
Acquisition: percentage of current whole membership that are new members (joining in 2016/2017)	13% 1 60 Base: 31	15% 1 60 Base: 22	not asked
Percentage of members' emails held	93% 67 100 Base: 35	93% 80 100 Base: 25	90% Base: 29
Percentage of members subscribed to main members' e-newsletter	90% 52 100 Base: 34	88% 52 100 Base: 23	not asked

MEASURING ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT MEASURE	2017 ALL Organisations	2017 Professional Associations	2015 Professional Associations
Average open rate for main member e-newsletter (average for last 12 months)	35% 20 70 Base: 32	37% 20 70 Base: 22	34% Base: 24
Proportion who click through from member e-newsletter (average click-through rate for last 12 months)	11% 1 30 Base: 29	12% 2 30 Base: 12	14% Base: 20
Percentage of members who took part in all types of face-to-face events in the last 12 months (unique attendances; do not count repeat attendances by the same individual)	28% 5 70 Base: 13	25% 5 70 Base: 8	15% Base: 17
Percentage of members who took part in special interest groups (physical or virtual) in the last 12 months (unique participants; do not count repeat participation by the same individual)	19% 5 62 Base: 9	20% 5 62 Base: 7	10% Base: 12
Percentage of members enrolled in your organisations' CPD scheme ¹	30% 2 100 Base: 7	41% 14 100 Base: 5	not asked
Highest number of visitors to the members' area of your website in one month (in last 12 months, as percentage of all members)	42% 20 92 Base: 6	45% 20 92 Base: 5	28% 2 Base: 16
Lowest number of visitors to the members' area of your website in one month (in last 12 months, as percentage of all members)	13% 1 30 Base: 6	15% 1 30 Base: 5	13% Base: 15
Percentage of members registered in your organisation's own online forum(s)	54% 8 100 Base: 8	53% 8 100 Base: 7	45% Base: 11
Percentage of members actively contributing to your organisation's own online forum(s)	12% 2 46 Base: 6	5% 2 11 Base: 5	6% Base: 10

MEASURING ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT MEASURE	2017 ALL Organisations	2017 Professional Associations	2015 Professional Associations
Percentage of members supporting the organisation as a volunteer – not including governance functions (e.g. involved in running events, local societies, delivering training, involved in campaigns or working groups)	5% 1 20 Base: 19	6% 1 20 Base: 13	4% Base: 20
Percentage of members supporting the governance of the organisation (e.g. involved in regional or central committees, council, board, trustees) ²	6% 1 60 Base: 27	4% 1 30 Base: 20	3% Base: 20
Percentage of members who participated in policy consultations in last 12 months (all channels e.g. email and focus groups)	14% 1 40 Base: 12	12% 2 20 Base: 8	12% Base: 6
Percentage of members taking part in latest full member survey	19% 1 45 Base: 34	17% 3 30 Base: 23	18% Base: 17
Member satisfaction with services, benefits and resources offered – percentage indicating they are quite satisfied/satisfied/very satisfied (or equivalent using your own rating scales)	79% 66 95 Base: 14	80% 66 95 Base: 9	75% Base: 24
Member satisfaction with the way the organisation represents their interests – percentage indicating they are quite satisfied/satisfied/very satisfied (or equivalent using your own rating scales)	81% 70 91 Base: 7	83% 78 91 Base: 5	73% Base: 17
Member satisfaction with how the organisation handles their enquiries – percentage indicating they are quite satisfied/satisfied/very satisfied (or equivalent using your own rating scales)	85% 65 98 Base: 11	88% 76 98 Base: 6	81% Base: 14
Members who say they will recommend membership – percentage indicating they are quite likely/likely/very likely (or equivalent using your own rating scales)	76% 30 97 Base: 10	73% 30 88 Base: 7	62% Base: 17
Your organisation's Net Promoter Score	13 -53 40 Base: 10	9 -53 36 Base: 8	6 Base: 11

MEASURING ENGAGEMENT

Notes to table:

1. Enrolled in CPD scheme: CPD is mandatory for three of the seven organisations. For these three, the percentage of members enrolled is 33%, 40% and 100%.
2. Where members are organisations or companies and fewer in number, representation on governance boards and committees is relatively higher compared to membership bodies that have individual members. The median figure for this measure is 2%, mode is 1%.

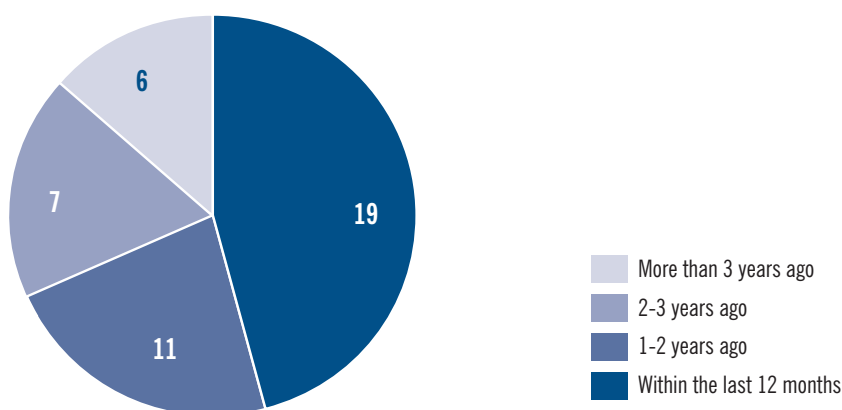
When we investigated the data that was submitted, we found that some measures were interpreted in different ways. This was particularly true for data related to social media engagement. Facebook and Twitter each offer the user a variety of statistics related to an account, including the platform's own engagement scoring or engagement calculation. Hence the variation in the data provided for engagement metrics related to social media accounts didn't allow effective calculation of an appropriate mean, and is thus not reported here.

OBTAINING AND ENABLING MEMBER INPUT

Membership surveys and feedback surveys are the most common methods that organisations use to ask their members about the products and services on offer: 72% include questions in membership surveys (e.g. questions about use and value of products/services) and 70% send a feedback survey.

Almost three quarters of the organisations in the study (30 out of 43) have carried out a full membership survey within the last 2 years.

When was the last full member survey carried out?



Processes that require more involvement or time from the organisation are less commonly used: just over half (52%) arrange face-to-face meetings with individuals or small groups, and around a third (35%) send personal emails to individual members/users. Just under a fifth (23%) make telephone calls to individual members.

Asking members about products and services



OBTAINING AND ENABLING MEMBER INPUT

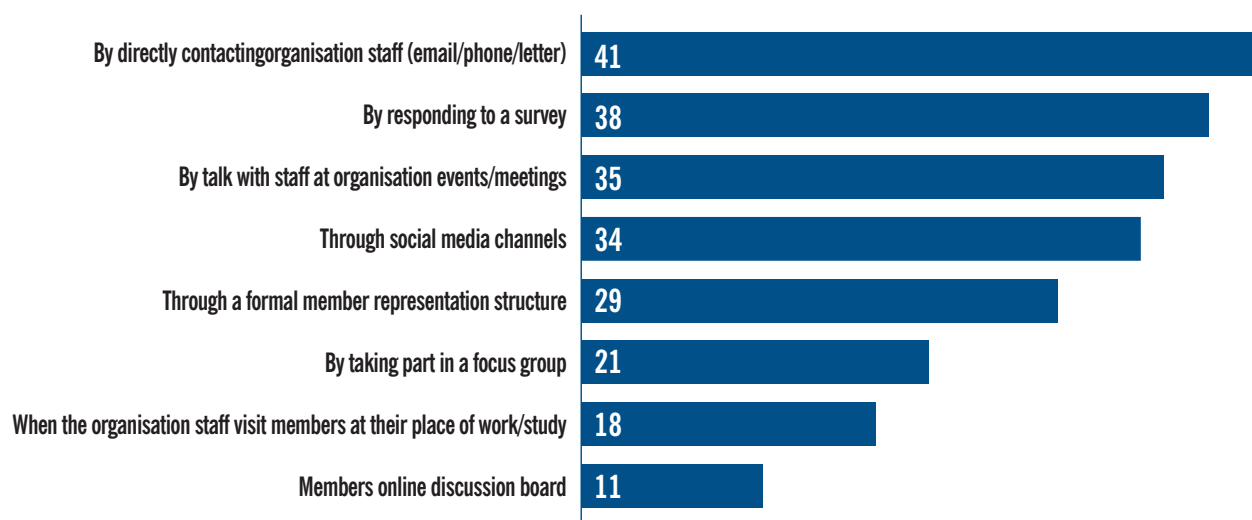
On average, organisations are using 3 to 4 of the 8 methods we described in the question. Three organisations describe other ways of collecting input as: “Annual Conference”, “Ad-hoc conversations with relevant members – gather intuitive and anecdotal information” and “Collect evaluations at face-to-face events and with venue hire clients.”

Surveys are the most popular methods for asking members about products and services, perhaps due to their ease of execution and reach, but organisations are also investing their time in more personal interaction – individual emails, telephone calls and face-to-face meetings – to invite input from members.

An organisation asking for input when it’s needed is one thing, but how about the ways in which members can contact the organisation when they need to – about new or different things they would like from the organisation?

Almost all of the participating organisations – 95% – indicate that members can contact them directly by email, phone or letter. Surveys and in-person at meetings are common options: 88% tell us that members can respond to a survey, and 81% say their members can talk to staff at organisation events.

How members can tell the organisation about something new/different they’d like.



On average, organisations enable members to tell them about something new or different they’d like in 5 or 6 of the 8 ways we described. This is hugely positive: contribution of ideas is the first step to working collaboratively. The next step is to take the ideas and select those that work for both the organisation and the members in terms of value, ease of implementation and return. A risk is that organisation and member see viability and value quite differently – careful handling required to avoid disengagement!

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

The types of questions that a membership body asks its members can be indicative of how member-focused and engaging the organisation is. We asked our forty three contributing organisations to tell us which of the following questions (same or very similar) they had asked their members using any channel of communication in the last 12 months:

Questions asked of members	Number of organisations asking this type of question
Why won't you be renewing /why did your membership lapse?	31
Which products/services/elements of membership do you value most?	29
How satisfied are you with your membership?	28
How likely are you to recommend this organisation to friends or colleagues?	26
Why did you join this organisation?	23
What could this organisation improve/do better for you?	20
What is the one thing this organisation could do for you that it doesn't do now?	19
How likely are you to renew your membership?	15
Has membership met your expectations?	13
What problem/issue do you need to solve right now?	10
What is your biggest personal/professional challenge?	9
What obstacles or barriers are preventing you from achieving your aims?	6
What is the main thing you want to achieve in the coming year?	3

Around three quarters of the membership organisations use questions to find out about reasons for leaving (31 out of 43) and just over half are investigating reasons for joining (23 out of 43). Two thirds (29 out of 43) ask questions that tell them about membership products and services. Member satisfaction and likelihood of recommending membership to others – often used to provide a temperature check of how well the organisation is doing – are also asked by around two thirds of organisations.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Less commonly asked are questions that aim to understand members' individual situations. Ten of our organisations have asked about problems or issues members need to solve, nine have asked about personal or professional challenges and six have asked about obstacles or barriers that prevent members from achieving their aims. Only three of the forty three organisations have asked what members want to achieve in the coming year.

It is important for a membership organisation to assess its own performance and understand how well it is doing in its endeavours. Understanding members' reasons for joining and leaving also ensures the offer can be better tailored to their needs and problem areas can be addressed. To increase engagement, and guarantee the organisation can make members an offer they can't refuse, it is crucial to find out what problems members would like to solve, what they want to achieve and the obstacles that are getting in the way of that achievement.

Many businesses still view customers as data-points and sales targets rather than as people with whom to build authentic relationships. Businesses are comfortable analysing their customers, but shy away from more challenging, meaningful conversations which could yield deeper insights.

To achieve a breakthrough in current thinking, models and method, businesses must be prepared to break something. They must stop focusing only on selling to generate revenue. Investing in customer insight is one thing, but investing in genuine customer relationships to drive business growth is an entirely new ball game.

Do you really get me? UK Customer Quotient Report, c-space 2016

WORKING TOGETHER

To find out how organisations are working collaboratively with their members, we asked them to tell us how they've worked with members to update or change an element of the membership offer, or make other improvements within the organisation.

Twenty-six projects were described by twenty-three different organisations. In terms of methods, focus groups, surveys and member feedback predominate, with some projects offering multiple ways of getting involved. A number of the projects use existing structures (for example, committees or regional groups); others involve the creation of new groups specifically for the task.

A selection of projects described by the survey participants that involve working with members.

What was the product/service/benefit you changed?	Why was a change needed?	How did you involve members collaboratively?	What was the outcome/what improvement have you seen?
Topic-specific newsletter.	Lack of communication on a key part of our benefits.	Sub-group set up to provide input to the newsletter.	Good open rate and spontaneous feedback on receipt of newsletters.
Regular comms via our monthly ezine.	Only one section of the office was communicating to members, a widespread overview was required for members to know about services, resources and news across the organisation Low engagement and open rates.	Worked with a reference group of committee members .	40% open rates monthly 50% click through rate Members respond to opportunities and engage with the regular comms positive feedback on how they like the ezines.
Website.	Needed to be more member focussed and have more locked member-only resources, toolkits and usable documents online. It also needed to provide better public facing resources Needed to capture more member data via CRM/CMS integration.	Focus groups. Steering Group Committee as a reference.	Newly launched integrated website New member data being captured and used across teams. Huge growth in member use of the website – 80% of members regularly using and logging in to our website. [Also won a sector award for the website.]
Member [product] accreditation scheme. (A quality scheme for manufacturers of [products]).	Poor quality standards in the industry.	Established working groups and a task force.	Established a new scheme with minimum standards and an associated quality mark.
Built a complete business strategy around member response from an independent survey.	To meet the needs of members and to focus our offering for the future.	Full member survey and focus groups.	Work in progress from January 2017.

WORKING
TOGETHER

What was the product/service/benefit you changed?	Why was a change needed?	How did you involve members collaboratively?	What was the outcome/ what improvement have you seen?
Mentoring scheme.	The scheme wasn't widely used, members felt it would be of value but was currently outdated compared to other similar schemes in the sector.	Discussed ideas/potential changes with regional board members; tested new online resources to support the scheme with members at each stage of the development process.	New mentoring scheme was launched in January this year – we have already established more new mentoring partnerships this year than we did in the whole of 2016.
Co-creation of content to influence other professionals and [stakeholders].	Existing content was criticised by some for its messages and effectiveness.	Identified experts, especially those vocal in opposing existing content. Challenged them with producing more effective messages, with the by-product of increasing their engagement.	Increased engagement from previously critical vocal members. General appreciation for providing improved content. No specific impact figures yet for effectiveness of the content.
Revised processes around product development ensuring all products are customer focused.	With a significant rise in competition and the rapid pace of change in the [sector], [professionals] have access to more content and services than ever before. Combined with a change in behaviour driven by digital and social we need to ensure that any products are driven by the customer and their needs / wants.	When building the new process for how we bring / develop a new qualification, we worked closely with our educational partners and spoke to studying members about the topics. We engaged through focus groups, telephone interviews and face to face discussions.	Enables us to develop and launch new products and services with our customers at the forefront of everything we do. A closer working relationship will then lead to stronger and more positive member engagement.
Increased volumes of membership magazine from 4-6 per year.	Members value the biologist as their top member benefit but wanted to receive it more frequently	Member feedback on survey and inclusion on editorial board to discuss content and feedback on frequency and paper quality, size etc to keep the standard high but keep increased costs to a minimum	Members continue to rate the magazine highly and it has over the last 2 years won multiple awards for design and editorial content. Members have commented on the positive step towards increased frequency.
Advice and support for improvements to diversity, equality and inclusion by their organisation	Professional bodies are, by their nature, exclusive. While outreach programmes were having some effect, there were fundamental aspects of our members' business that did not encourage a diverse approach (e.g. governance, awards).	A selection of members took part in a pilot programme to develop a framework they can use. Since the framework was launched, we have delivered workshops for members to find out more and ask as many questions as they need to.	None specifically yet, as it will take years for the effect to be felt. However, actual take up of the framework has been positive.

WORKING
TOGETHER

What was the product/service/benefit you changed?	Why was a change needed?	How did you involve members collaboratively?	What was the outcome/ what improvement have you seen?
To improve the range of training courses we offer our members to support their CPD.	Our technical training wasn't training; it was more of a briefing. We also were looking to expand the range of training courses we could offer.	We conducted surveys online of our Young Persons Network and Industrial Affiliate (company) members. We held a focus group with some of our company members . We invited members who were also training providers to tender for potential business.	The quality of our training has improved as judged by delegate feedback. Whilst the research suggested topic areas that we should expand into, this has not proved successful to date in terms of uptake.
Introduction of early career focus, and Affiliate Working Group, to work with Society staff to ensure services and activities are focused on progressing early career members.	Activities were focused towards more career established members, who require less support to develop.	Members were asked to volunteer to join working group , provide ideas for initiatives and feedback on activities.	More focus of activities for early career members, introduction of affiliate development events and meetings.

Other collaborative ventures were described that are in early stages and have not yet had time to fully deliver:

We have set up a "membership engagement panel" of 1700 members (about 10% of the membership). These members volunteered to be on the virtual panel when they completed the 2016 survey. We will be sending them a series of surveys on various themes and programmes of work to get their feedback. Previously, the [organisation] has never proactively asked its members their thoughts or input into key programmes of work or ideas, that will then go on to shape future strategy.

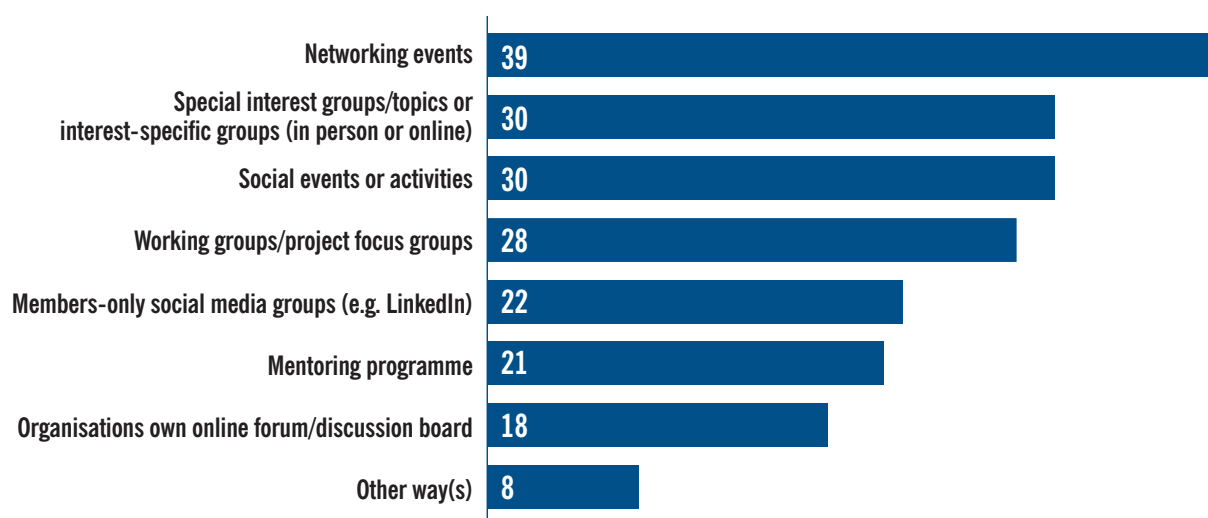
We are changing the membership grade structure. There were too many categories, previously 9, soon to be 3. They distorted member journeys and made it hard for members to see an easy route in and to stay for the long term. Geographical criteria disadvantaged some members. Grade eligibility was used as a de-facto method of managing the grants budget. Members (and former members/ non-members) have been invited to contribute via an online survey, attending a number of road show events around the country, direct feedback to the membership team, focus groups at conferences and meetings, and a membership working group (internal and external people).

Many of the twenty-six projects describe ways in which members are asked to input, feedback or contribute their opinions to developments or ideas. Some of the projects go further, demonstrating how the expertise of members is harnessed in ways that ensure full involvement. Encouraging and enabling ownership helps the creation of successful outputs and drives continued engagement through the creation of long-term relationships between the organisation and members.

MEMBER-TO-MEMBER CONNECTIONS

Opportunities to meet, share and learn from each other is a benefit of membership that frequently scores highly with members. All of the organisations that took part in the survey provide at least one of these opportunities and, on average, 4 to 5 of the 7 ways described in the question.

Ways in which members can meet, share and learn from each other



Other ways described were: CPD events, annual congress/conference, scientific meetings/conferences, a member directory, lectures and dining, non-member social media groups, direct contact with subject specialists via staff.

For sector knowledge and experience, members are an organisation's most important commodity. Places where members can connect and interact – physically and virtually, socially and professionally – are the ideal environment for members to generate, share and discuss ideas that can benefit the whole organisation.

THE ORGANISATION'S FOCUS ON MEMBERS

We asked contributing organisations to tell us how much they agree with statements about a number of elements that contribute to enabling member engagement.

Organisations' agreement with statements about their focus on members.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
All staff have opportunities to interact directly with members.	6	30	3	4	0	0
Members tell us that they are proud to be members.	7	25	9	1	0	1
We regularly debate and discuss members needs throughout the organisation.	7	24	7	4	1	0
Members tell us that they think we are working in their best interests.	3	25	12	2	0	1
In our organisation, a focus on member experience is part of everyone's job regardless of function or level.	12	16	6	8	1	0
The membership experience is enhanced by efficient storing of and access to data.	3	23	6	7	4	0
We have a thorough understanding of our members' needs.	2	19	17	4	1	0
Members tell us that they feel their views are listened to.	0	20	18	3	0	2
All staff are empowered to make decisions that benefit members.	1	19	9	11	2	1
We have a customer service policy so that when members contact us, we can ensure a high-quality member experience.	9	11	10	11	1	1
Our member service teams have the technology and tools they need to meet members' needs.	1	14	10	11	7	0

It is clear that a focus on members is prevalent across the organisations. The statement with which most organisations agree/strongly agree is that *all staff have opportunities to interact directly with members* (36 of 43). Almost two thirds agree/strongly agree that *a focus on member experience is part of everyone's job regardless of function or level* (28 of 43). However, just under half indicate that *we have a thorough understanding of our members' needs* (21 of 43). And it may be that tools and technology are hampering their efforts: just under one third agree/strongly agree that *Our member service teams have the technology and tools they need to meet members' needs* (15 of 43).

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

Below are some of the commonly used phrases used in the mission statements – statements of core purpose and focus – provided by our survey participants. All of these expressions capture ways in which membership bodies bring value to their members and to other stakeholders.

- provide education, support and guidance
- represent the industry at the highest levels, run outstanding CPD and produce universally respected journals
- pursue a wide awareness and understanding of
- education and training and high standards of practice
- a profession that demonstrates excellence
- delivering excellence across all areas of professional functions, business operations, and social life
- the internationally recognised authoritative voice of
- empowering our members and exerting our influence
- to support and help them better serve their clients
- campaign on behalf of members
- facilitating the sharing of expertise
- raise and maintain standards
- supporting a vibrant community

Above all, a fundamental purpose of any membership organisation is to bring together individuals with a common interest. Mission statements that not only describe the value of the organisation and what it offers, but also demonstrate a shared purpose – what organisations are doing with members, not just for members – can be even more engaging.

Customers are no longer just consumers; they're co-creators. They aren't just passive members of an audience; they are active members of a community. They want to be a part of something; to belong; to influence; to engage. It's not enough that they feel good about your purpose. They want it to be their purpose too.

Mark Bonchek, Shift Thinking. Writing for Harvard Business Review, March 2013.

TO THINK ABOUT...

Member profiling and categorising individuals as particular engagement types helps with product development and delivery and with setting appropriate targets. Measuring engagement helps track progress and establish success.

However, engagement types and targets are often based on the organisations' perception of what makes good engagement, rather than on what members say is most valuable. Every member will know exactly how much and how frequently they want to be involved or engaged – irrespective of what the organisation wants of them – and all kinds of factors will mean that the level and intensity of that involvement fluctuates over time.

Think about how engaging your membership organisation appears to your members:

Are you engaging them in the things that matter most to them, or just promoting the services, benefits and resources you think they need?

- Members will be most engaged by the few big things that they need or want most at any one time, not by the myriad of little things you offer.

What are you doing to reach out, build relationships and involve all members in working with you?

- Being part of a community and playing an integral role in the creation of value drives stronger relationships – between members and between members and the organisation – and increases engagement.

How well is a focus on membership embedded within the whole organisation, and does everyone understand how to bring value to both members and the organisation?

- For every department, business operation, plan and strategic decision, staff should be able to provide credible answers to the question of why do members need this as well as why does the organisation need this.

How are you becoming an integral part of your members' lives as they seek to be successful?

- To be a truly engaging organisation, the focus needs to shift away from only asking questions that determine how well the organisation is doing, towards listening to members' needs and finding out what they are trying to accomplish. Working together with members around a shared purpose – to solve problems, develop products and improve services – will result in shared value that increases engagement and ultimately leads to the creation of the ideal membership body.

CONTRIBUTORS

Our thanks to the following for taking part in the survey and contributing to the sharing of data and insight:

Association of Accounting Technicians	International Association of Bookkeepers
Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland	International Compliance Association
Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers	Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years
Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers	Royal College of Anaesthetists
Association of University Chief Security Officers	Royal College of Chiropractors
BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT	Royal College of General Practitioners
Biochemical Society	Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy	Royal Society of Biology
British Dietetic Association	Royal Society of Chemistry
British Equine Veterinary Association	Royal Town Planning Institute
British Fluid Power Association	Science Council
British Institute of Facilities Management	Society of Occupational Medicine
Chartered Institute of Credit Management	The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn
Chartered Institute of Housing	The Institution of Engineering and Technology
Chartered Institute of Marketing	The Institution of Gas Engineers and Managers
Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals	The Microbiology Society
Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys	The Organisation for Professionals in Regulatory Affairs
Chartered Quality Institute	The Physiological Society
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy	The Royal College of Ophthalmologists
Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management	The Royal Society of Medicine
Institute of Fundraising	The Royal Statistical Society
Institute of Legacy Management	

Membership bodies contributing to this study were not charged for their participation.

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