

2019

ASSOCIATION ANNUAL SURVEY RESULTS



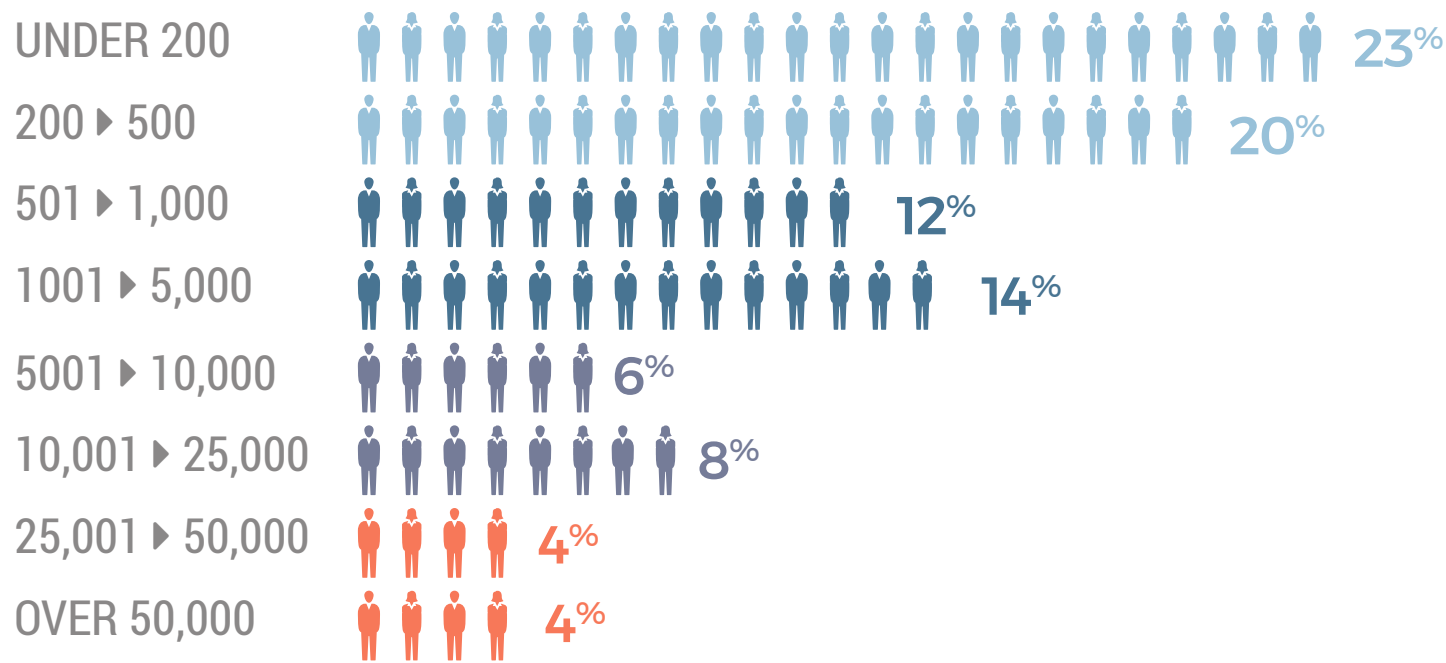
GrowthZone
smarter association software

GrowthZone surveyed association professionals across the U.S. and Canada. Topics included everything from employee-to-member ratio, to the most beneficial things their organizations have done in the past year, to satisfaction with their boards. The results showed a number of trends impacting today's associations.

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

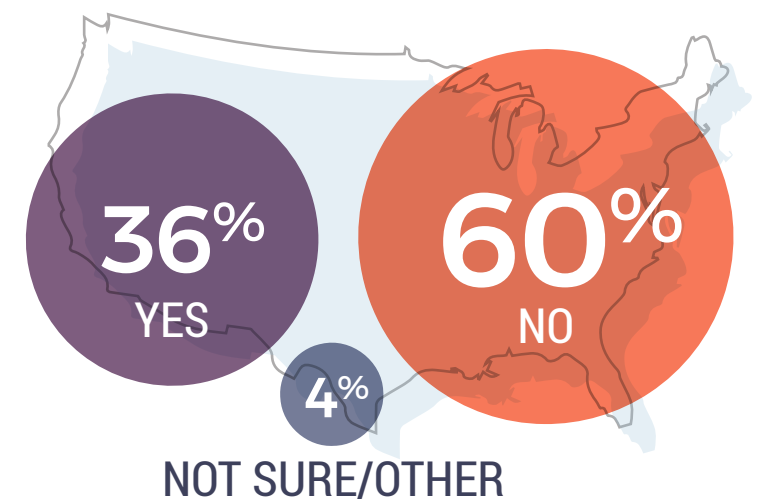
*Due to rounding and checkbox questions, percentages may exceed or not appear to add up to 100%.

NUMBER OF MEMBERS | PREDICTED MEMBER COUNT ON 1/1/2019



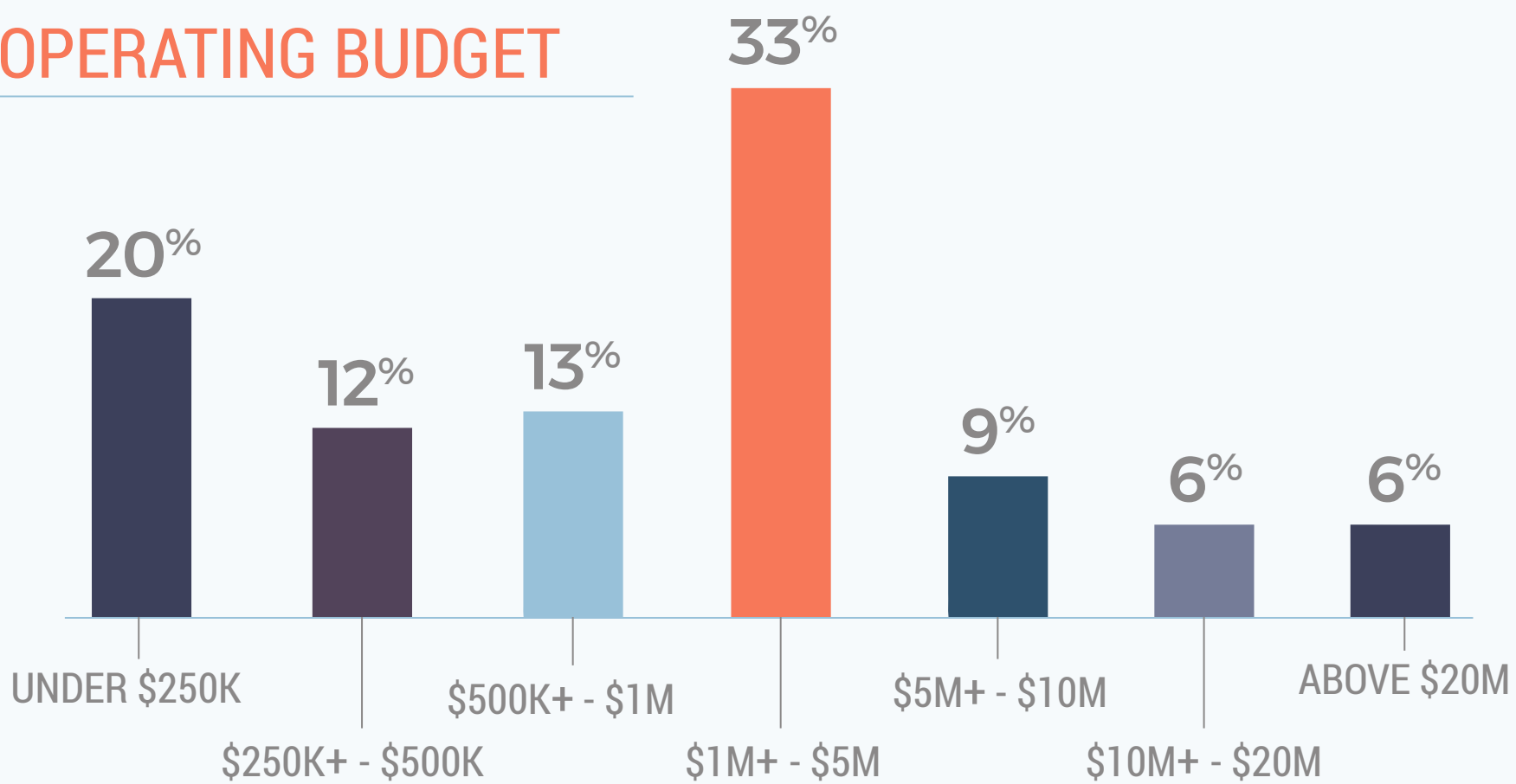
AFFILIATION

Is your association an affiliate/chapter of a state or national organization?



ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET

APPROXIMATE



NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

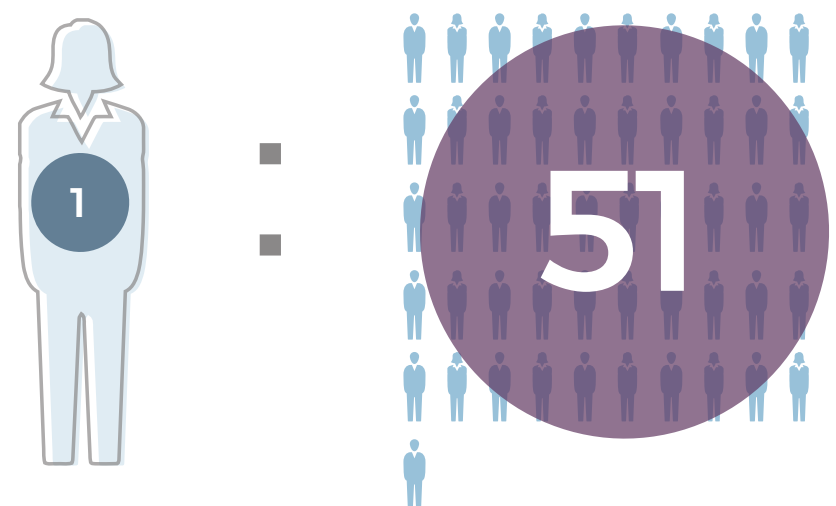
AVERAGE NUMBER OF FULL-TIME STAFF



AVERAGE NUMBER OF PART-TIME STAFF



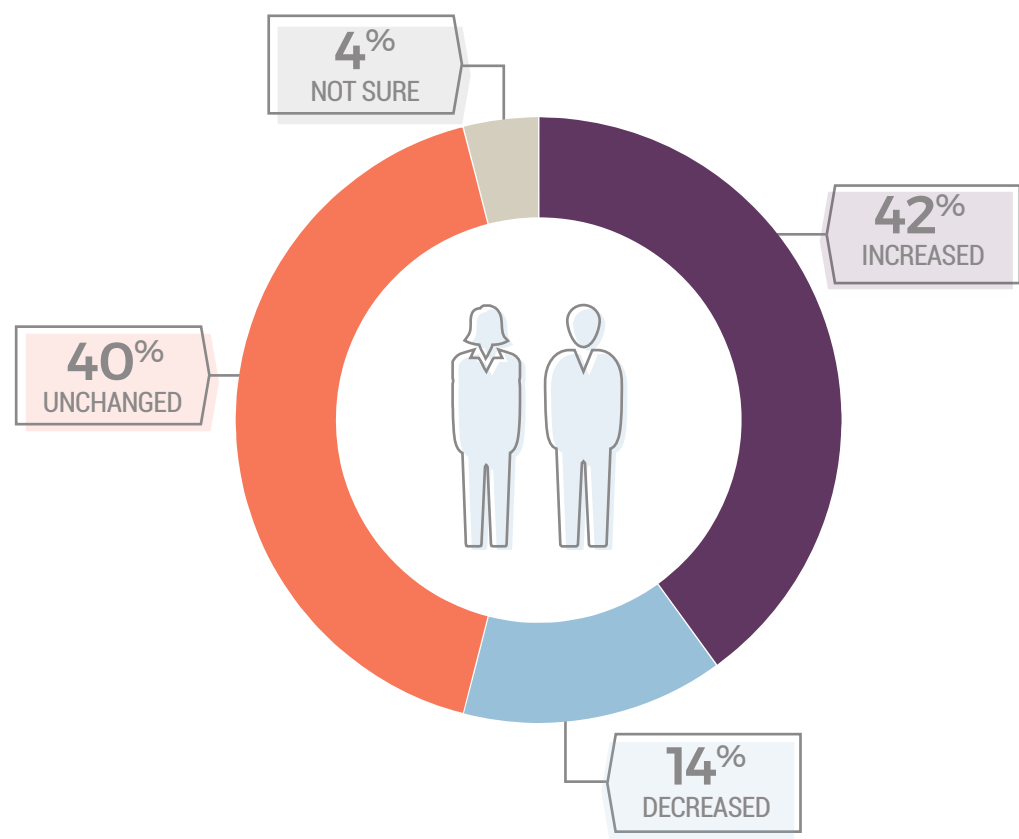
AVERAGE STAFF-TO-MEMBER RATIO



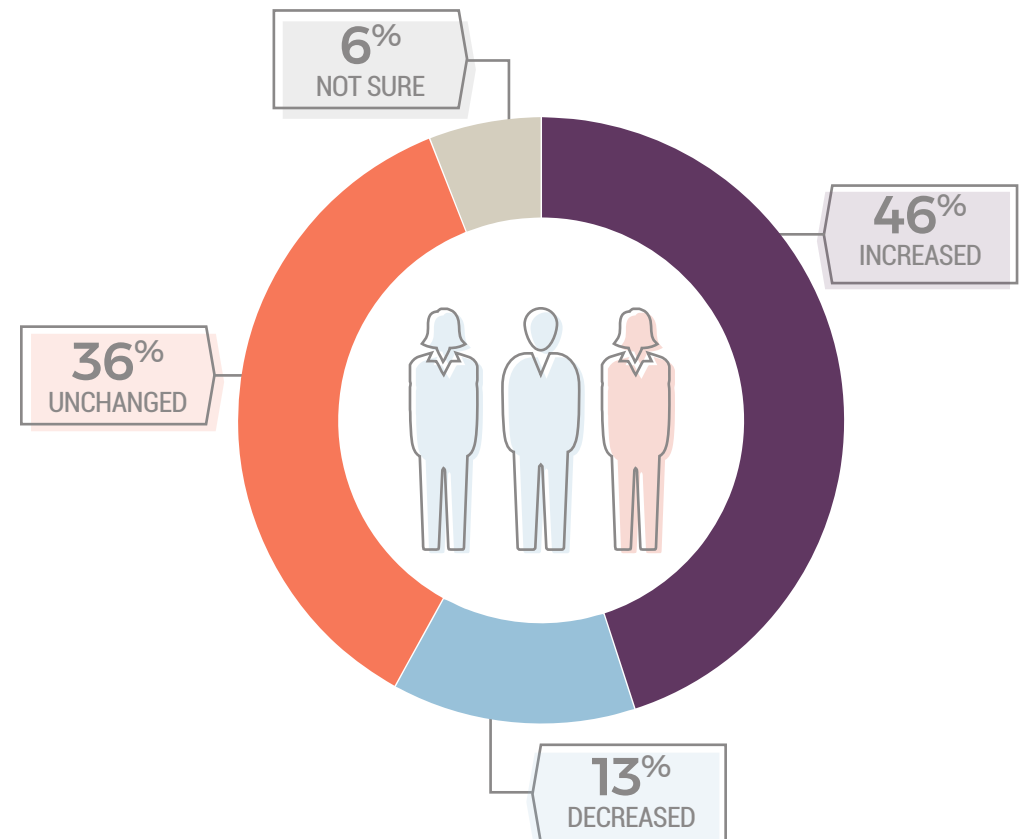
↓ Get 44 ideas to improve employee morale and reduce turnover, [The Association Staffing Solutions Playbook.](#) »

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

ANNUAL OVERALL NET MEMBERSHIP

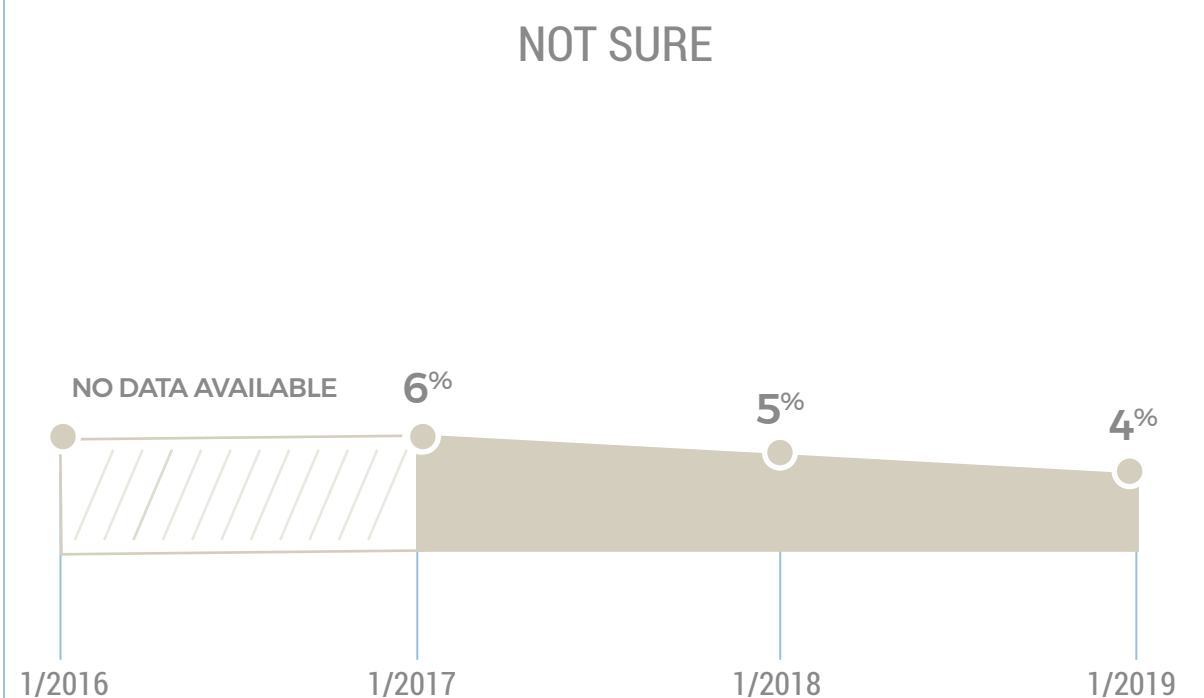
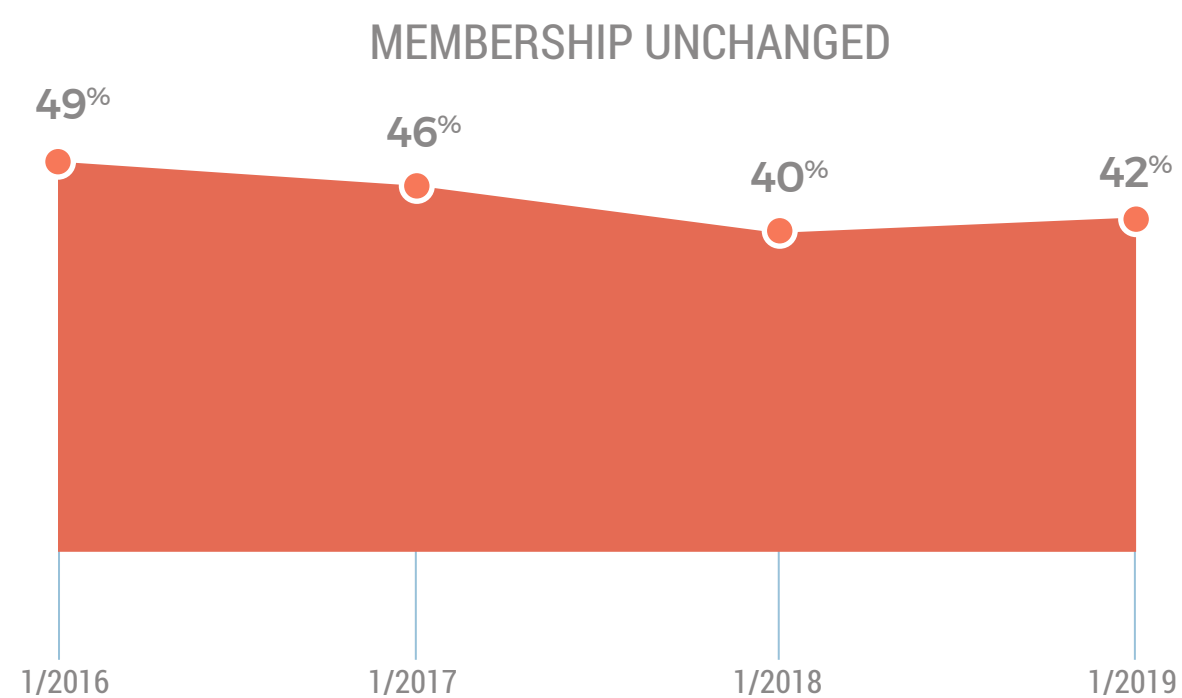
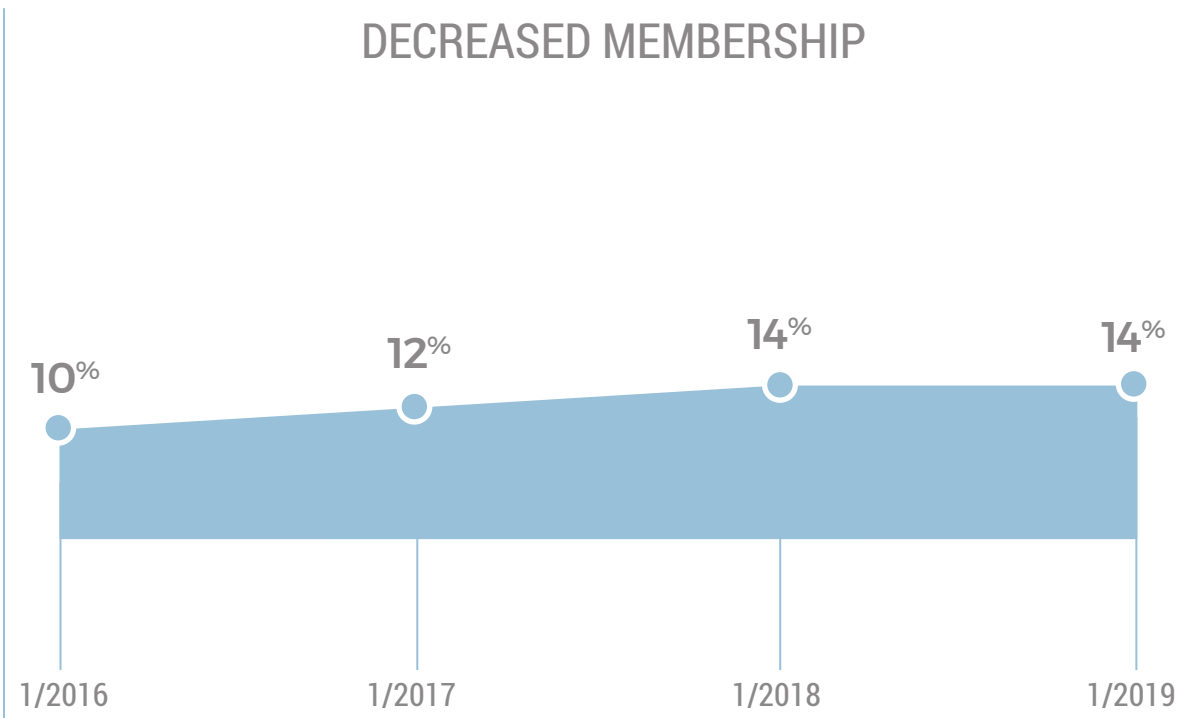
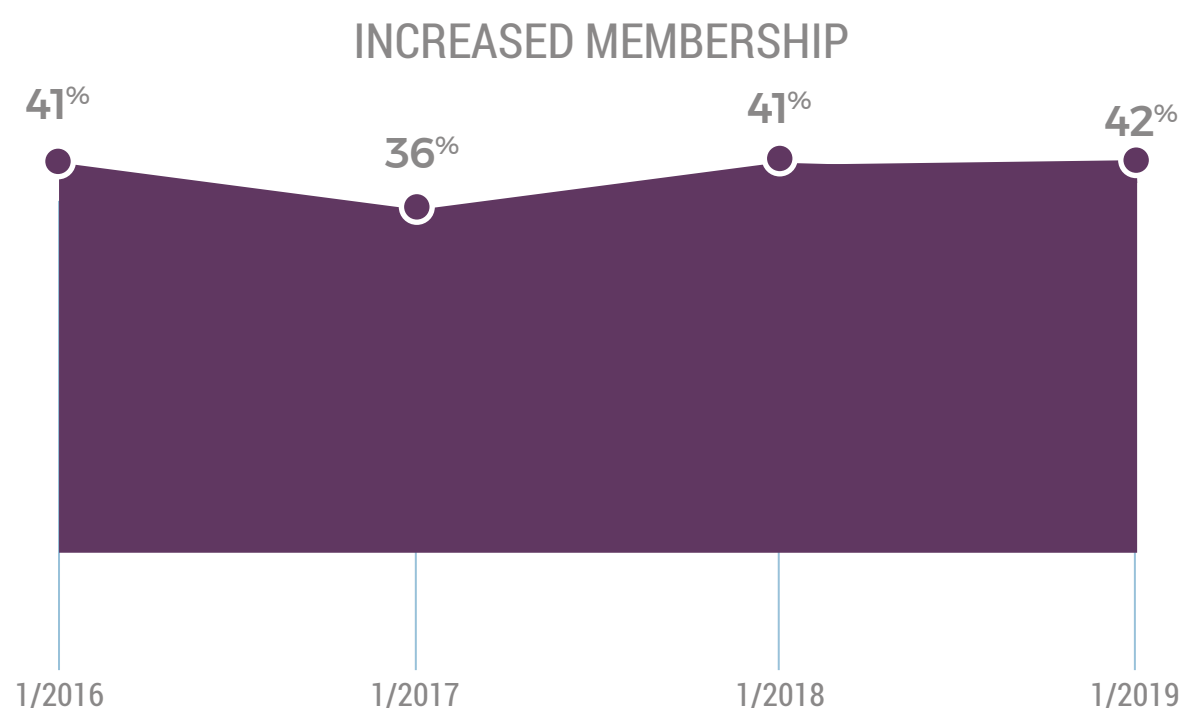


ANNUAL OVERALL NEW MEMBERSHIP



↓ Struggling with member onboarding? Download our [New-Member Onboarding Checklist and Schedule.](#)»

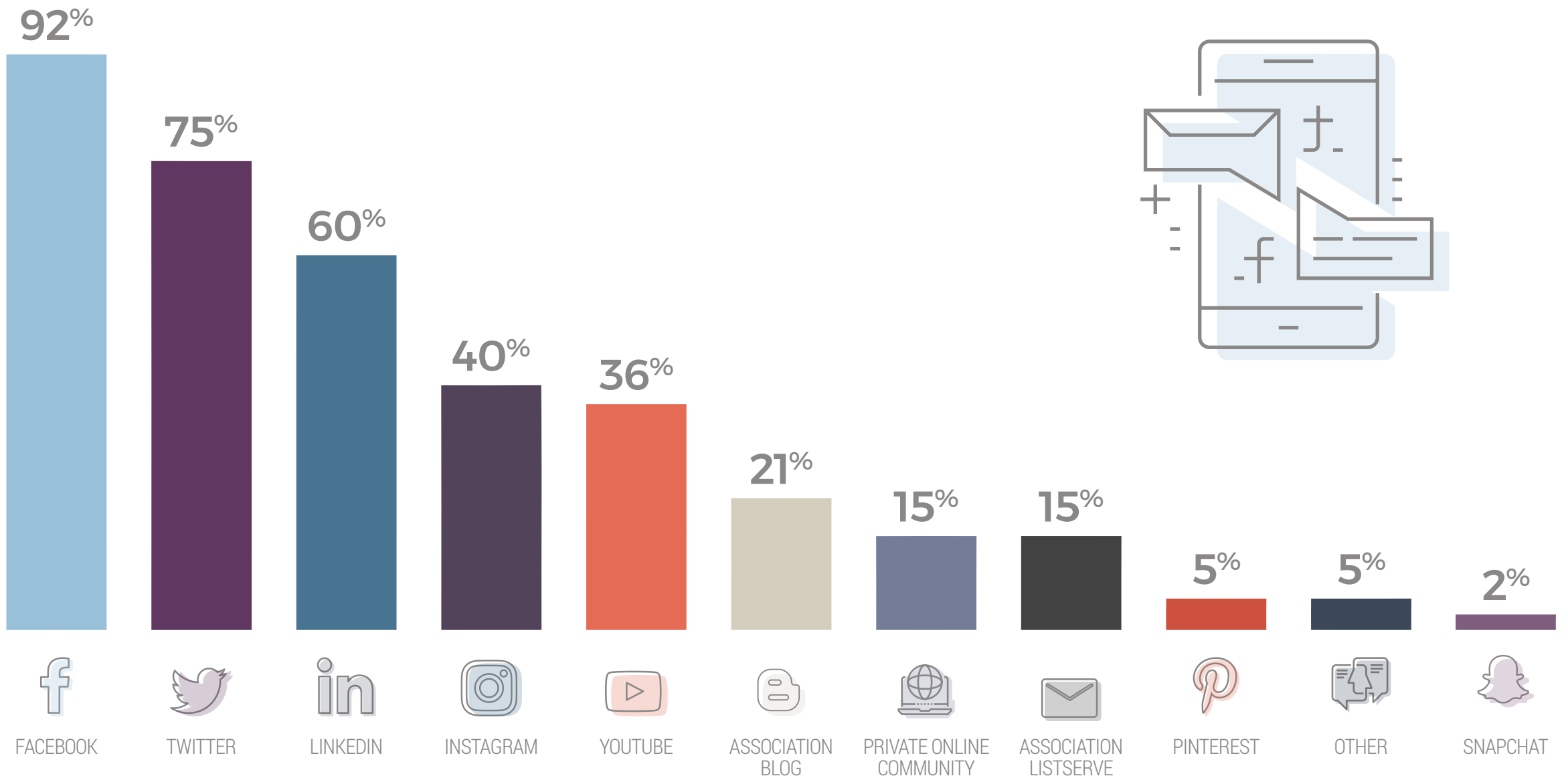
HISTORIC MEMBERSHIP TRENDS



Source: GrowthZone AMS Association Trends Surveys 2016-present

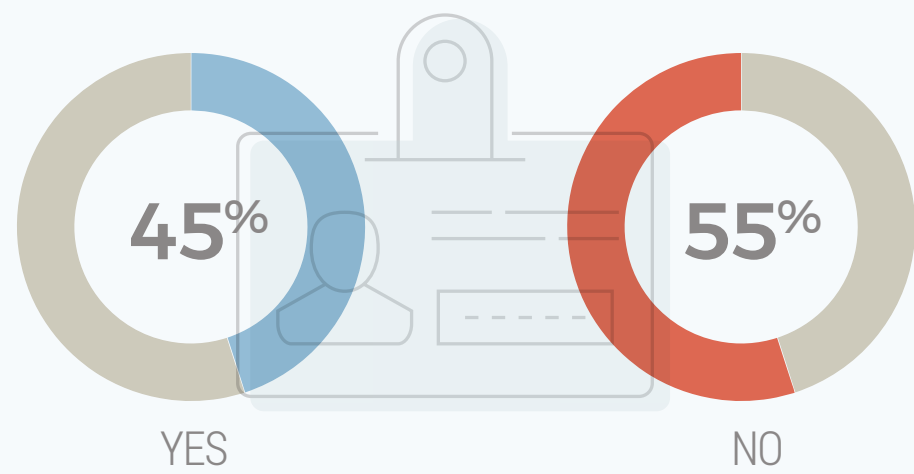
MARKETING

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS | ACTIVELY USED



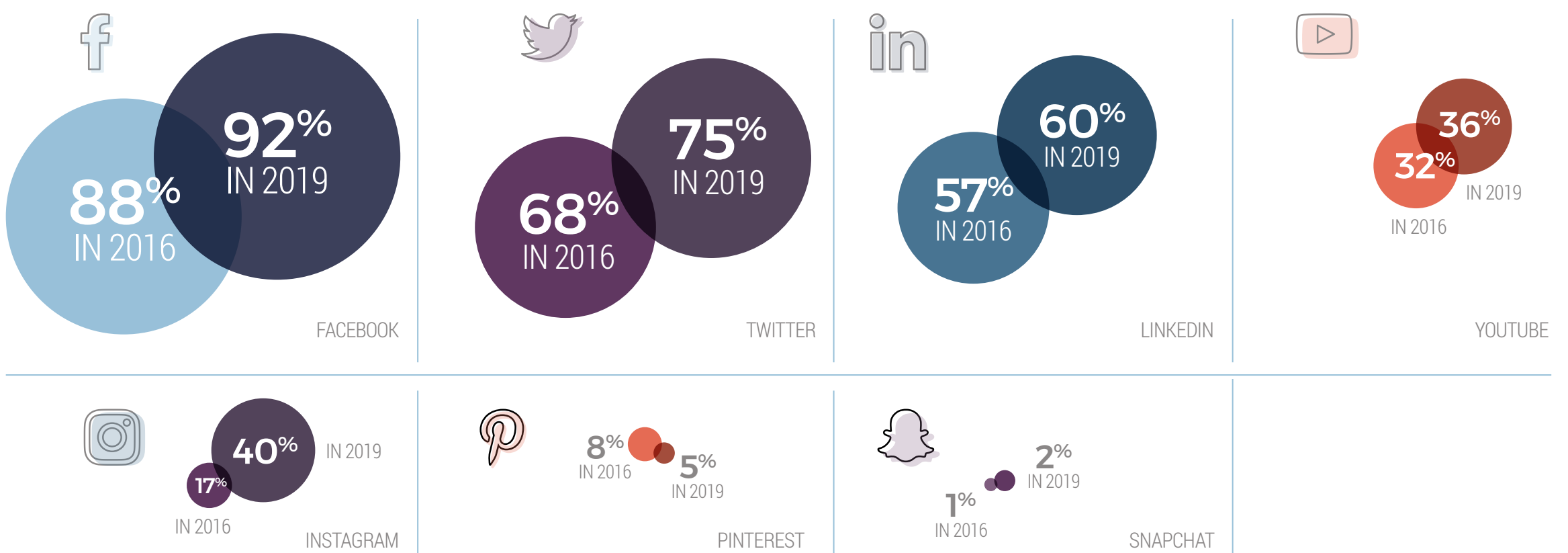
MEMBER IDENTIFIERS

Does your organization distribute member identifiers (e.g., membership card, certificate, window cling, etc.)?



↓ Get dozens of #MondayMotivation social media posts in the handy tip sheet, [Quote Notes for Associations.](#) »

SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS | USED BY ASSOCIATION INDUSTRIES

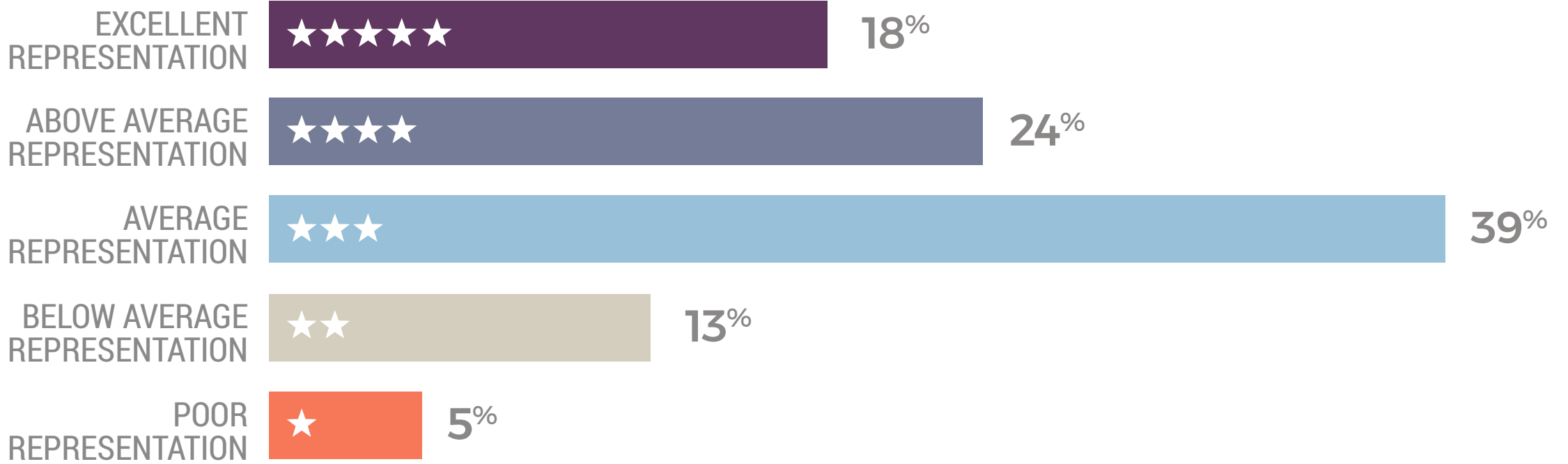


BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BOARD DIVERSITY

AVERAGE RATING: ★★★★★ 3.38

Does your board proportionately represent a cross section of your membership?
(e.g., experience, blue-collar/white-collar, education, etc.)

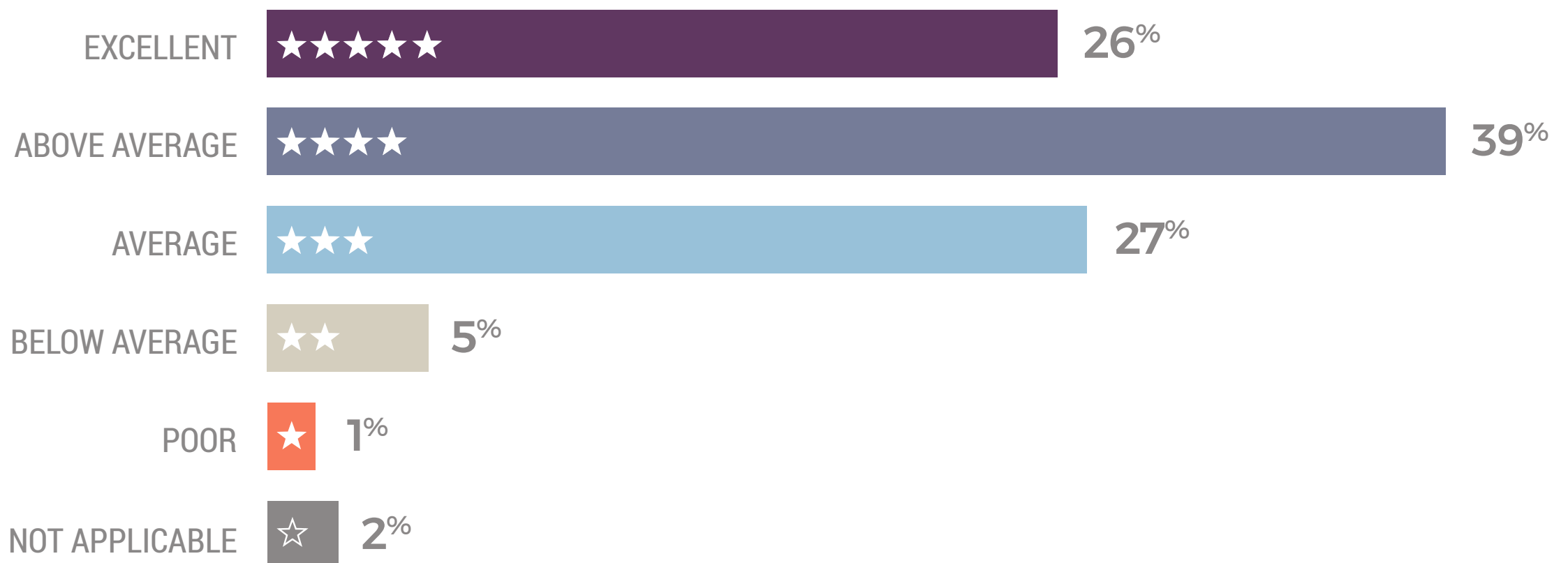


↓ Set up your board members for success with [The Field Guide to Association Board Orientation.](#) »

BOARD PERFORMANCE

AVERAGE RATING: ★★★★★ 3.42

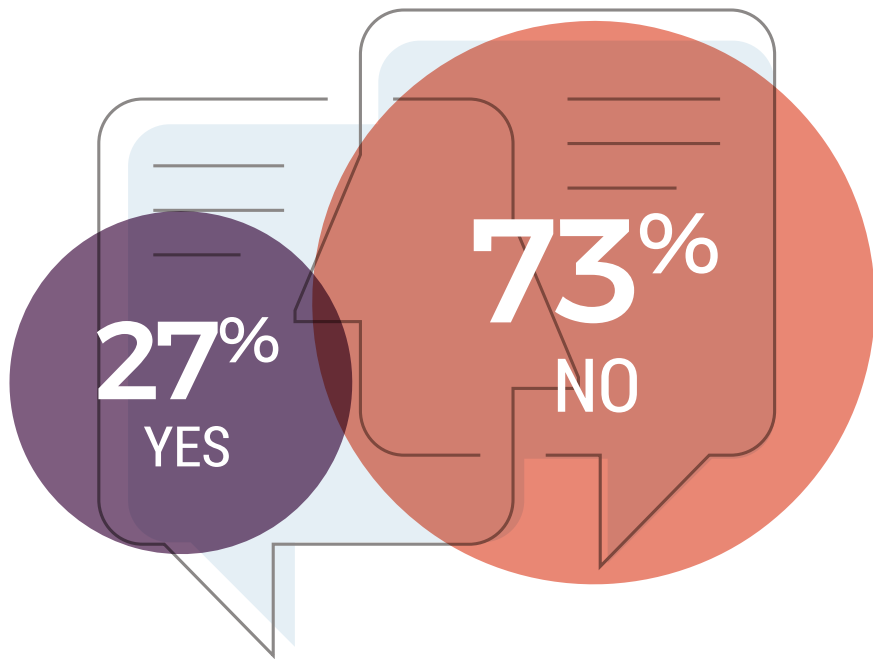
How would you rate your organization's board performance?



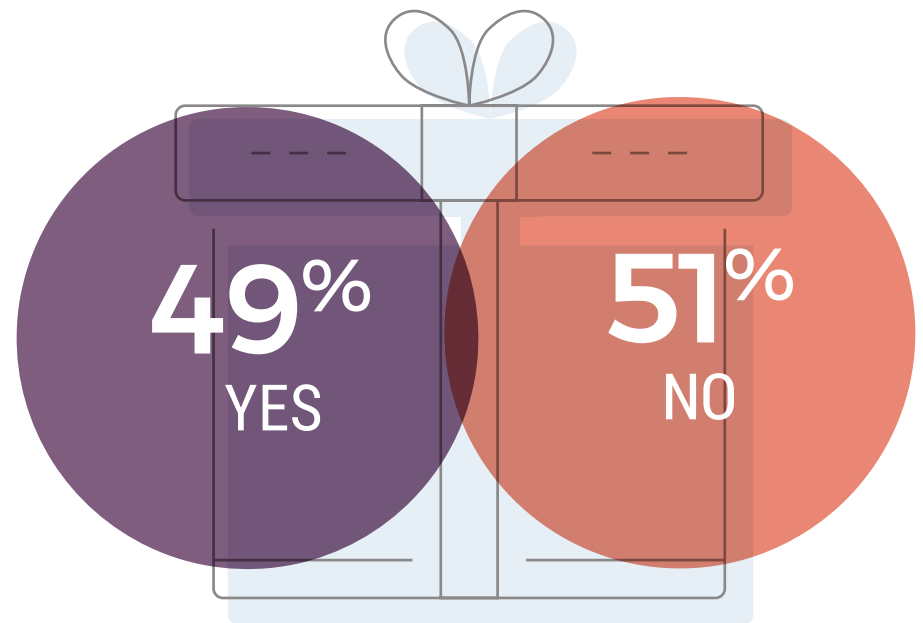
RECRUITMENT & RENEWALS

REFERRAL PROGRAMS & INCENTIVES

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION OFFER A MEMBER REFERRAL PROGRAM?

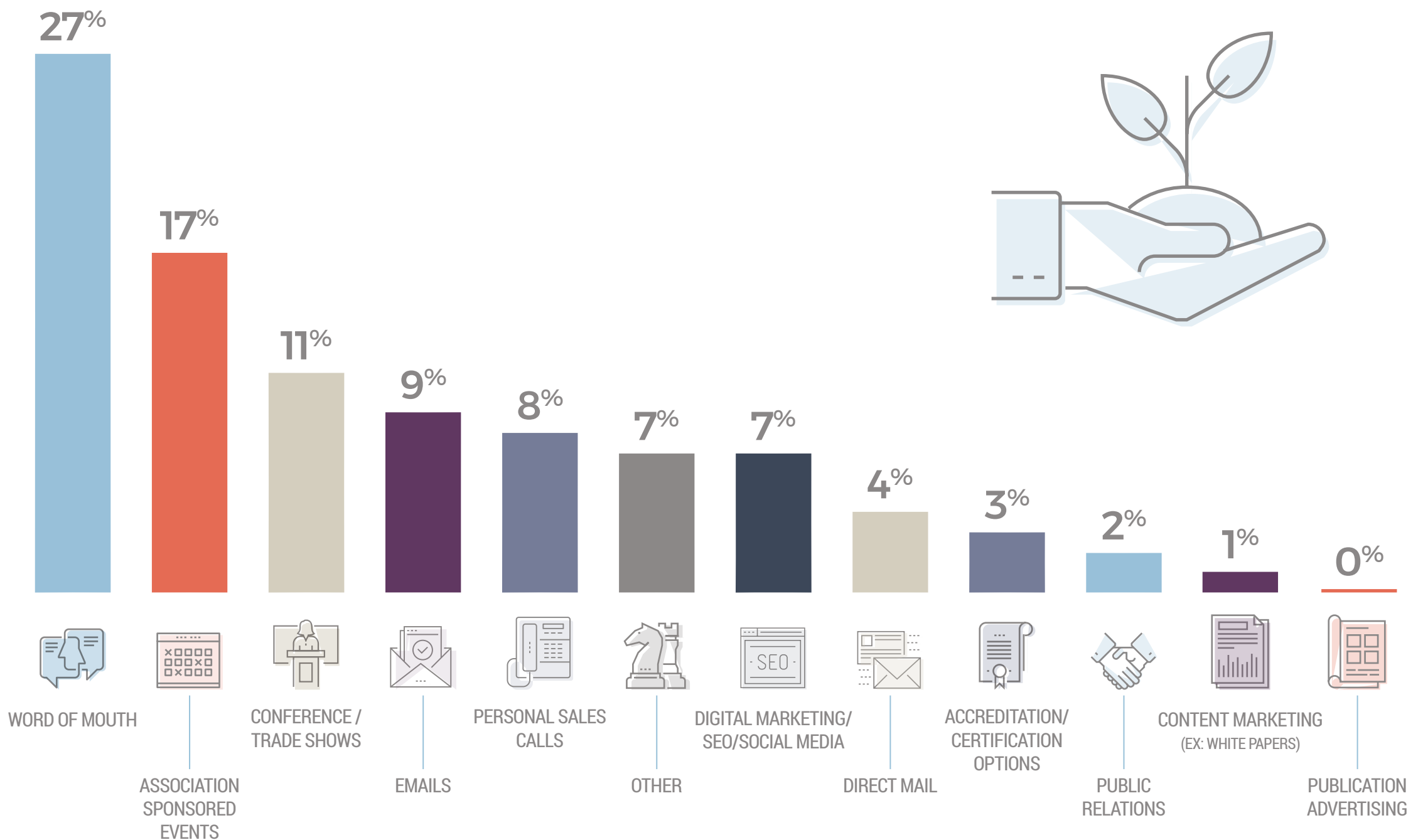


DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION PROVIDE TANGIBLE INCENTIVES TO JOIN OR FOR MEMBER RENEWALS? (e.g., 2 YEARS FOR THE PRICE OF 1, FREE GIFTS, ETC.)



↓ Rethink your renewal process with the free guide, [Membership Renewals: The Secret Sauce Revealed.](#) »

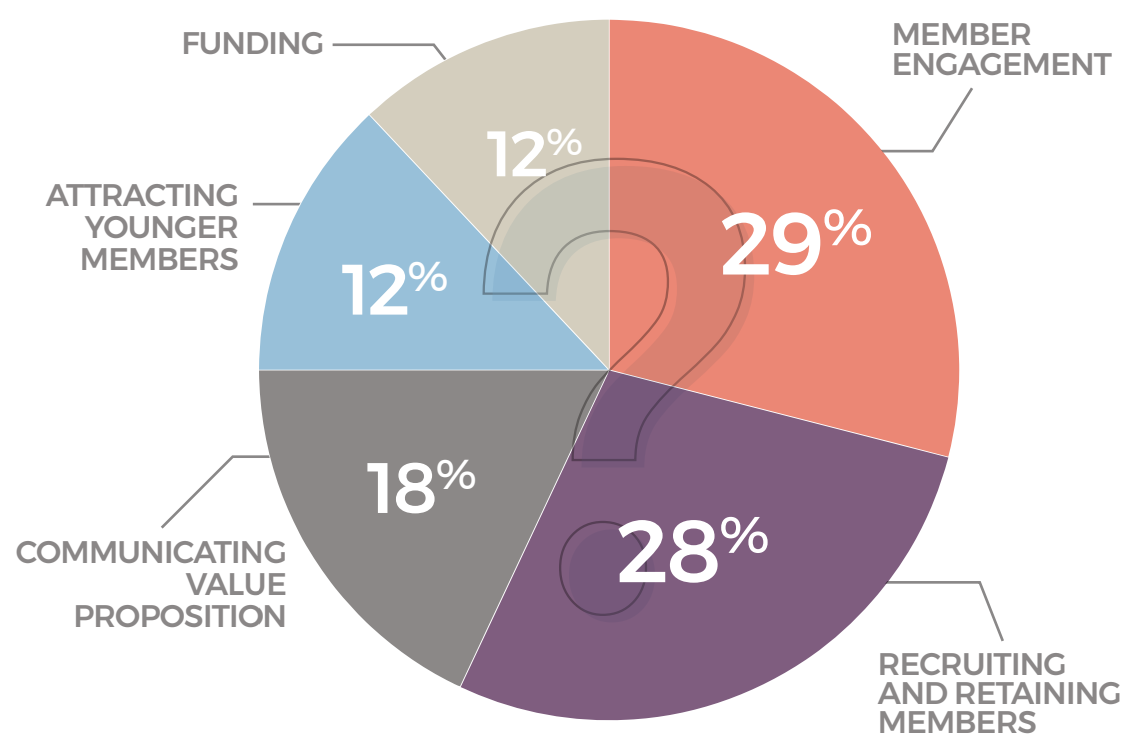
MOST EFFECTIVE TACTICS FOR GROWING MEMBERSHIPS



ADDITIONAL TRENDS

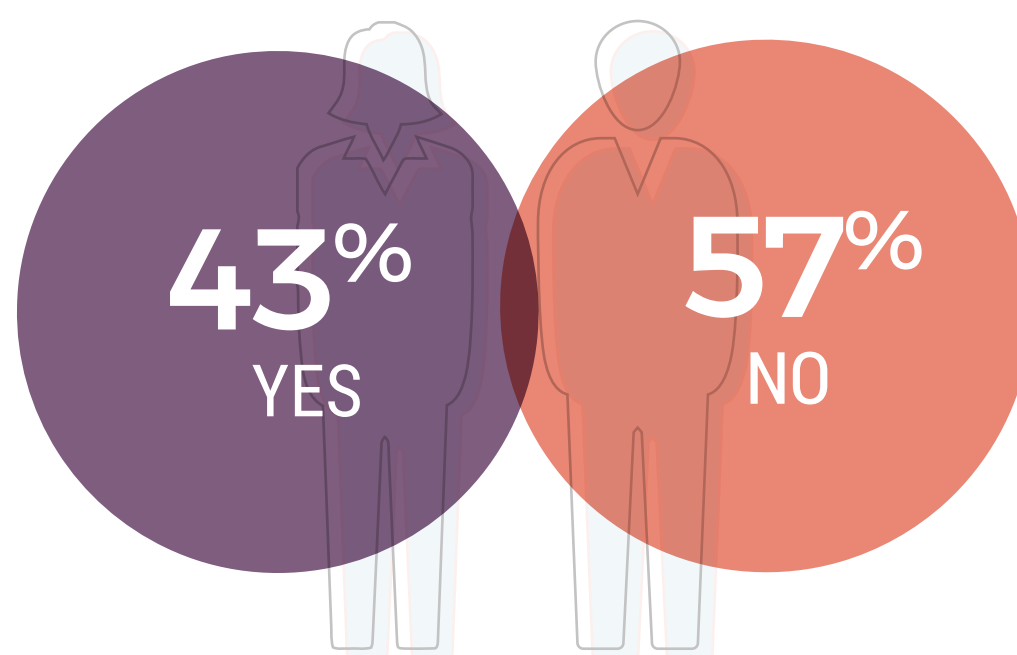
CHALLENGES

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY WILL BE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN THE COMING YEAR?



YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

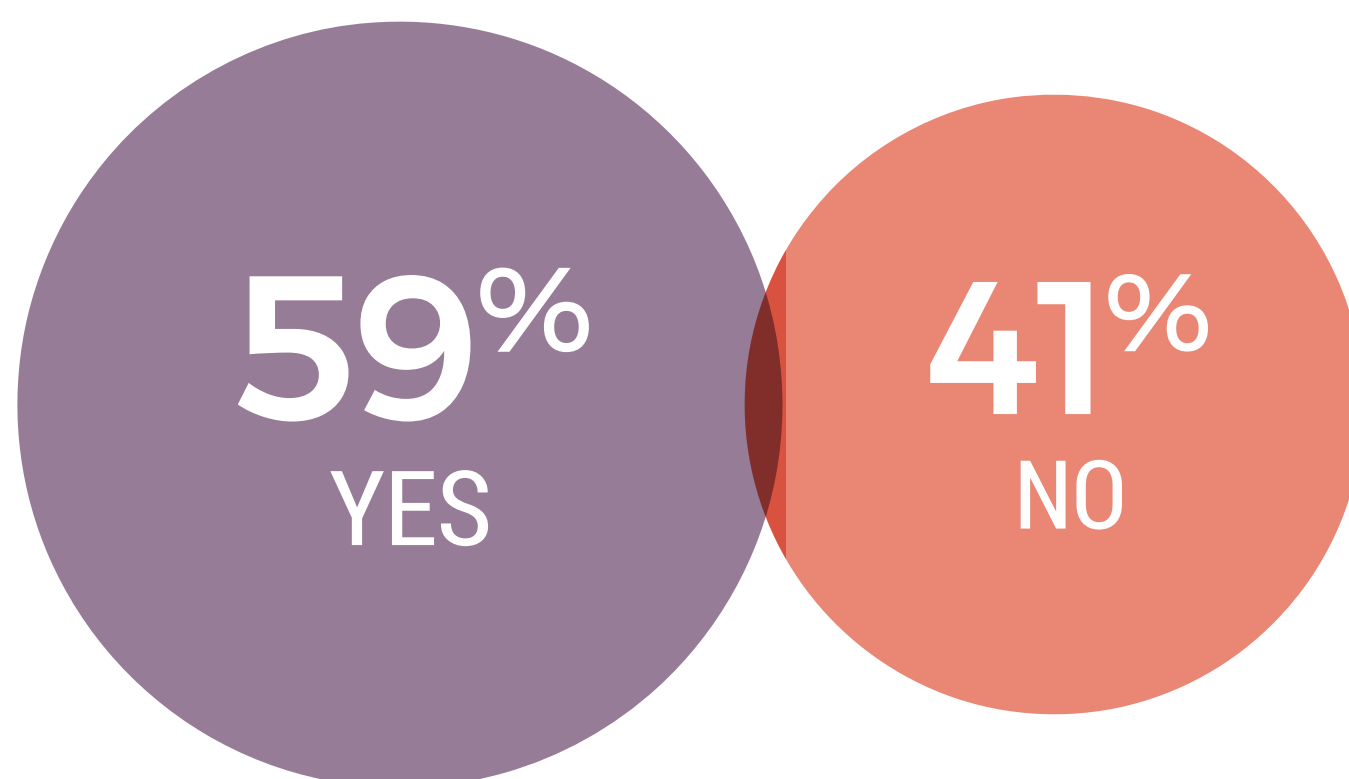
DO YOU HAVE A YOUNG PROFESSIONALS GROUP OR PROGRAM?



↓ For ideas to get young members to engage, read [The Power of Young Professionals](#). »

ADVOCACY & LOBBYING

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS (I.E., TAKE A POSITION ON SPECIFIC ISSUES, ENDORSE CANDIDATES, LOBBY DECISION-MAKERS, ETC.)?



CHANGE IS GOOD

WE ASKED: What is the most beneficial change your association has made within the past year?

TOP CHANGES

1. Staffing
2. Technology
3. Marketing
4. Organizational Structure
5. Education / Certification
6. Organization Strategy
7. Social Media/Online Interaction
8. Young Professional/Student Engagement
9. Website Updates
10. Board of Directors
11. Events
12. Programs + Benefits

COMMENTS FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS

= What respondents said

STAFFING CHANGES

- Hiring a new Executive Director who expanded the vision of the organization.
- Changes to make positions more competitive with private industry.
- Hired professional staff to address material weaknesses.
- Fired Executive Director and all staff. Hired Association Management Company. Stay tuned....
- Hired a government affairs rep with ties to our industry to build our network, leading to more companies being involved in the association.



TECHNOLOGY CHANGES

- Outsourcing IT.
- Stronger reliance on data and business intelligence to articulate our value proposition.
- Technologically upgrading many outdated systems/processes.
- Making the move to online-only publications.
- Online invoicing.
- E-voting.
- New AMS and updated website.
- Added an LMS to our membership offerings.
- Implementing a new mobile app.
- Online meeting registration capability.
- Offering an online community.



MARKETING CHANGES

- Reviewing our value proposition and considering how to modify how we market ourselves.
- More specific and targeted marketing to both members and non-members.
- Embraced more paid advertising.
- Re-branded to become more relevant.
- A campaign to more clearly express ROI to members (specifically about the associations advocacy on behalf of our industry).



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE CHANGES

- Stronger focus on collaborative, proactive planning across departments.
- Disaffiliated from national organization to keep money and services local.
- Changed our governance structure, which had been in place for over 89 years.
- Began operating like a real association instead of a good old boys club.
- Have Board focused on bigger picture vs. trying to manage operations.



Drive participation and engagement with the ultimate guide, [Why Member Engagement No Longer Means Face-to-Face.](#) »

COMMENTS FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS (CONTINUED)

 = What respondents said

EDUCATION CHANGES

- Developed a certification program for members' employees.
- Lowering dues and offering free courses.
- Offering education content via online streaming instead of paying instructors to travel.
- Major focus on online educational and resource materials.
- Providing free webinars and podcasts.
- Requiring certification maintenance.



STRATEGY CHANGES

- Taking advantage of the weaknesses and miscues of competing associations.
- Hiring an outside market research firm to find out what our members want, need and expect.
- Learning more about strategic planning specifically for small-staff organizations.
- Diversifying the Board and regularly surveying membership.
- Developed a long-range plan and created a task force on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion.
- Putting an emphasis on analyzing our data to inform the decision-making process.
- Stopping what is not working by strictly focusing on programs that meet our mission.
- More lobbying on the national level.



SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGES

- Effectively using LinkedIn to promote national events and reach prospective members.
- Expanding overall social media presence.
- Using social media to recapture lapsed and inactive members.
- More paid social media advertising/activity.



YOUNG PROFESSIONALS CHANGES

- Changing events to attract younger members to attend.
- Increasing opportunities for students.
- Recruiting younger staff with fresh ideas to attract a younger crowd.
- Adding a YPN to our association.
- Added a young professional membership rate.
- Increased support for student and young professional members through extended education, certification, membership, and volunteer opportunities.
- More relevant blogs and content to engage young professionals.



WEBSITE CHANGES

- Upgraded to a mobile-friendly, responsive website.
- Consolidation of benefits into one area on the website.
- New easier-to-use website with a single system login.



EVENTS CHANGES

- Offering onsite renewals at annual meeting.
- Livestreaming events.
- Engaging affiliated industries in our trade show.
- Not renewing contract with our conference partners and creating a brand new conference experience.
- Decreased registration fees at events.
- "Unplugged" meetings where discussion and networking take place instead of a presentation.



PROGRAMS/BENEFITS CHANGES

- Added a "members only" health insurance option.
- More diverse programming.
- Benefits for members that impact their day to day activity.
- Revamped new-members onboarding program.
- More member benefits for the same cost.
- Starting a diversity initiative.



ON THE HORIZON

WE ASKED: What do you think is the next major trend for the association industry?

TOP PREDICTIONS

1. Move to Digital Memberships and Online Interaction
2. Technology Changes
3. Increase Pressure to Recruit Young Professionals
4. Virtual Events Replacing In-Person
5. Online Training/Education
6. Changes to Membership Structure
7. Consolidation of Organizations
8. Challenges in Demonstrating Value
9. Growth of Social Media
10. Innovation/Evolution of Associations
11. Declining Membership
12. Prioritizing Diversity and Inclusion

COMMENTS FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS

= What respondents said

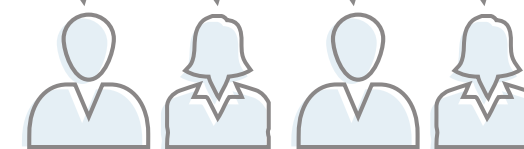
DIGITAL MEMBERSHIPS/INTERACTION PREDICTIONS

- More "in name-only" memberships, less in person participation.
- Entirely online membership.
- Online Communities.
- Membership experiences that are completely virtual.
- Gaining new members digitally.
- Need for physical office becoming obsolete.



TECHNOLOGY PREDICTIONS

- Incorporating VR into education and conferences.
- Accepting Bitcoin payments.
- Big data. How to use it, how to sell it.
- Abandoning phones for association business.
- Incorporating AI into engagement and recruitment.



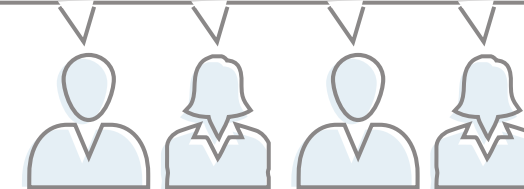
YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PREDICTIONS

- Letting go of the status-quo to adjusting for incoming new generations.
- Reevaluating association's purpose in order to remain/become relevant to the next generation.
- Changing the way associations communicate, specifically the language we use as we appeal to younger members.
- The exodus of owners/senior managers from the industry creating an extreme challenge gaining and retaining new younger members.
- More focus on helping younger generations get mentors in their fields and increasing their experience base.
- Increasing involvement of next generation as major donors/funders.



VIRTUAL EVENTS PREDICTIONS

- More e-Conferences and learning.
- Online forums, conferencing, and discussion boards.
- Virtual networking.
- Digital conferences more like TED Talks instead of physical conferences.
- Moving away from expensive, in-person meetings.

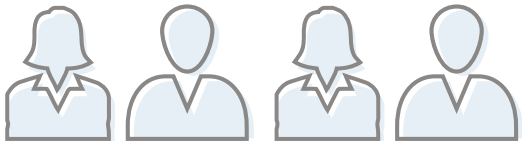


COMMENTS FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS (CONTINUED)

= What respondents said

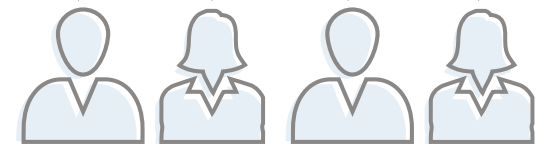
ONLINE TRAINING/EDUCATION PREDICTIONS

- Providing training through webinars and social media to reach more members.
- On-demand education.
- Abbreviated programs and format for the next generation.
- Micro-learning and micro-mentorship = "small bites and quick wins".
- Greater incidence of online-only education.



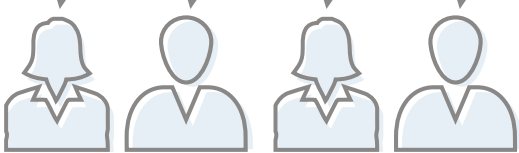
MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE PREDICTIONS

- Subscription membership models. (e.g., Netflix)
- Free Memberships with a la carte payments for benefits.
- Rolling memberships with virtual everything.
- Membership segmentation and personalization.



CONSOLIDATION PREDICTIONS

- Mergers with other associations to create efficiencies and greater member value.
- Smaller niche organizations will push out broader trade associations.
- Mergers/Acquisitions/Dissolutions of associations.



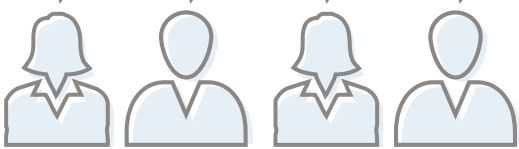
DEMONSTRATING VALUE PREDICTIONS

- Increased focus on the member experience.
- Coming up with creative ways to counter for-profit options.
- Delivering value in the face of abundant free online offerings.



SOCIAL MEDIA PREDICTIONS

- Using social media to promote and take registrations for events.
- Virtual communities.
- Creative use of social media to tell a story that relates to a targeted audience.



INNOVATION/EVOLUTION PREDICTIONS

- Continue to keep the pulse on the changing needs of the membership and deliver.
- Disruptive innovation. Just doing the same things over and over again ensures that decline will continue.
- Being thought leaders instead of reacting to situations.
- Wherever attention goes, the money will follow. We strive on trying to find the "latest and greatest".



EVENTS PREDICTIONS

- Upgraded to a mobile-friendly, responsive website.
- Consolidation of benefits into one area on the website.
- New easier-to-use website with a single system login.



DIVERSITY PREDICTIONS

- Increased Board diversity.
- More focus on female empowerment.
- Effort to appealing to a more broadly racially diverse demographic to increase membership in untapped and underserved communities and groups.



INDUSTRY DECLINE PREDICTIONS

- The market will take a downturn, so membership will eventually decrease.
- Decline in professional associations and trade associations.
- Doing more with fewer members.



Need a mission statement makeover?

Get the tip sheet. »

KEYS TO SUCCESS

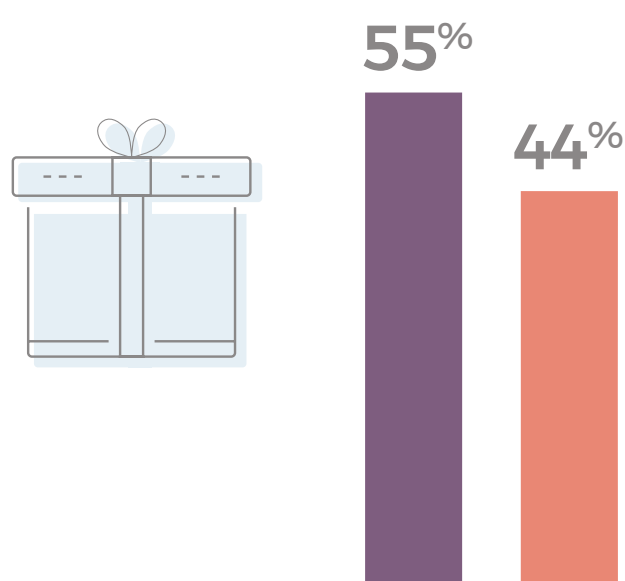
Regardless of their size, budget, or mission, the survey results show that most associations are facing similar challenges. However, there were some notable differences reported by growing organizations vs. those that reported decreased or stagnant membership numbers.

GROWING ASSOCIATIONS

■ GROWTH
■ NO GROWTH

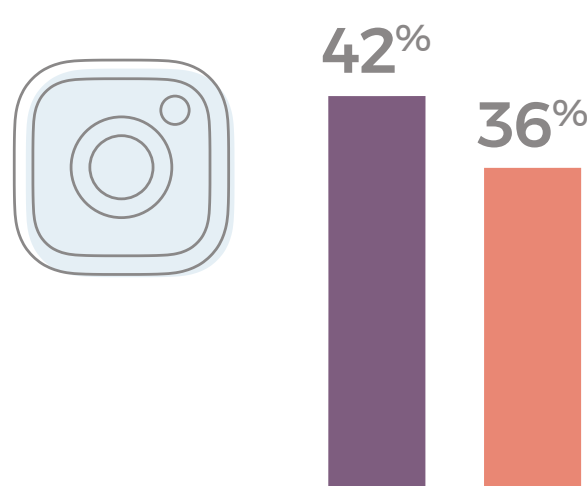
OFFER MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES

55% of growing organizations offer membership incentives (tangible offers to join or renew such as 2 years for the price of 1, free gift, discounted conference registration, etc.) whereas only 44% of those reporting no growth offer incentives.



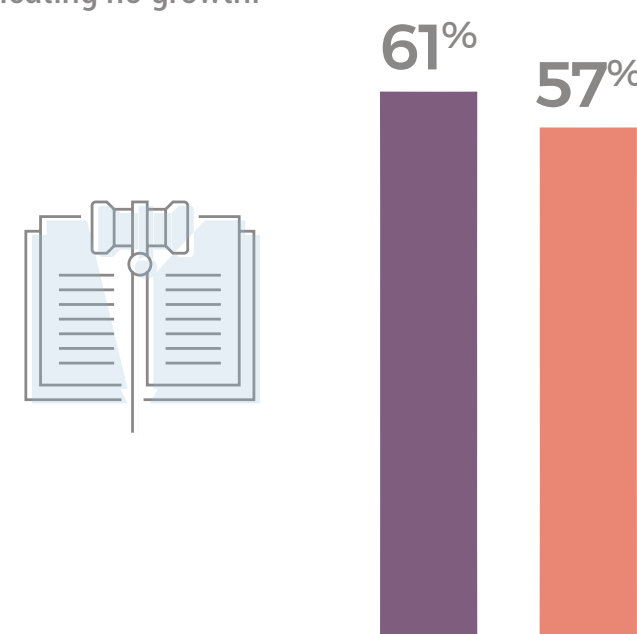
ACTIVELY USE INSTAGRAM

42% of growing associations regularly post to Instagram vs. only 36% of those reporting no growth regularly using it.



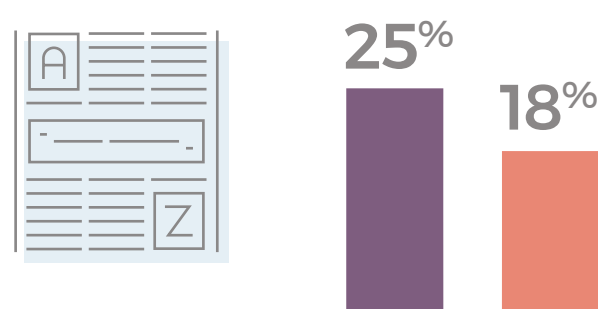
PARTICIPATE IN LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

61% of growing associations participate in the legislative process (i.e., take a position on specific issues, endorse candidates, lobby decision-makers, etc.) compared to 57% of associations indicating no growth.



BLOG REGULARLY

25% of growing associations report actively blogging vs. 18% of those reporting no growth.



SAY THEIR BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS:

Growing associations ranked "Member Engagement" as their #1 challenge whereas those with no growth report "Recruiting and Retaining Members" as their top challenge.



HAVE STRONG BOARDS OF DIRECTORS:

Growing associations rate their board of directors an average of 4.02 out of 5 stars for performance vs. the 3.76 star rating non-growing associations give their board of directors.



* Only categories with notable statistical differences were included in these survey results. In some cases, due to rounding or questions that use checkboxes, total response percentages may not add up to or may exceed 100%.

THE TAKEAWAY

In summary, there are three strategies consistently utilized by growing associations:

1. They keep fresh and relevant content in front of prospects and members.
2. They provide value by offering incentives to new/renewing members as well as advocate on behalf of members and prospects.
3. They maintain an engaged, open-minded, performance-oriented Board of Directors.



For simple blogging ideas and tactics, get the guide, [How to Write an Association Blog People Will Read.](#) »



At GrowthZone, we pride ourselves on listening to and focusing on associations and the people who make them run. In order to provide the best possible product to industry professionals, we regularly seek data on the trends and issues facing associations.

Thank you to the association professionals that took the time to respond to the survey.

ABOUT GROWTHZONE

GrowthZone is the first Association Management Software fully integrated with sales funnel management. It's a smarter solution designed for efficiency and growth. The cloud-based system is powerful, easy to use, and designed to manage all the day-to-day operations of your organization.



Download a free copy of our Association Management Software Buyer's Workbook

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