

DIY Member Engagement at a Mid-sized Museum

4.12.16 11:15 – 12:15pm French Room

Engagement is a buzz word right now and a google search of member engagement brings nearly half a million pages of results. Social media likes, email opens, and member visits can all be included in engagement. Ansley will break down what engagement might mean for a smaller institution like an art museum and examine a variety of ways to measure it, including data metrics and anecdotal survey results. She will close with how this data on engagement can drive the retention and revenue rates at an institution.

Slide 1:

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Engagement very trendy right now

Sectors include human resources with employee engagement, showing engaged employees more likely to stay longer and work harder, take fewer sick days

Education, with parent involvement now being called parent engagement and student engagement

Engagement possibly biggest buzz word in cultural institutions, with visitor engagement, digital engagement, and donor and member engagement

Double edged sword

Positives – world where audiences for museums no longer expected to adapt to institutions

but intuitions adapt to visitors interests

way of looking at things, need for interactivity

This is a challenging, but overall positive shift

Ultimately helps us carry out our missions more effectively

Negatives – engagement is extremely vague

And using one word to describe very different ideas, Biases and expectations

I will

- talk a little bit about what engagement means generally and at cultural institutions specifically (here I include all of our work places, including zoos and botanic gardens in cultural
- talk about my perspective on member engagement, especially at small and mid-sized institutions- DIY approach
- Talk a little more about institution where I work
- then go in to how we might measure member engagement with some detailed examples on different angles and how to get the data
- wrap up with some overall thoughts hopefully can take home and put to use, both big picture and detail oriented

Defining Engagement:

Slide 2: BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE

“Engagement is a prototypical buzzword because it is so marvelously sublime that nobody can actually define what it means. Basically, it is a very vague way of pointing out that what you do should interest consumers and not bore them. It is, in essence, a value distinction and not a strategy.”

Agree and disagree- buzzword but can be useful. We must define...

Slide 3: TRADE ASSOCIATION PERSPECTIVE

(note on this as a resource)

“Knowing that engagement leads to retention, we exert a great amount of energy into getting members more engaged so they become more likely to renew. This works to get some members more involved, but others remain frustratingly aloof. Yet, we see some of those members continue to renew anyway, little engaged as they are. ... (“Mailbox members,” as they’re called.) Why? Well, because it’s not engagement that leads to renewal; it’s satisfaction.

So, our engagement mantra needs an edit: “Highly *satisfied* members are more likely to renew.”

-DISAGREE with this- they simply need to shift or to broaden their definition of engagement

mailbox members are engaged in some way or they wouldn’t be renewing

They are engaged with the importance of the work you are doing even if they are not engaged in the ways you are currently measuring

Satisfaction helpful, some will be less engaged in traditional role and still satisfied, but those are outliers and exceptions. We can’t read people’s minds. It is still helpful to measure engagement in a holistic but fairly traditional way.

Slide 4: CULTURAL INSTITUTION PERSPECTIVE

Helpful because it is broader and points to collaboration and larger picture necessary in development and membership. Used this quote at staff presentation on member engagement to get colleagues thinking about how member engagement ties in to what THEY DO

Still not membership specific...

Slide 5: WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT

Encourage to customize what visitor and member engagement means at your institution

Depends on audience- ours is more adults but zoo or gardens might have mostly families with children

Types of activities they do, mission, etc. will cover more

Slide 6: INTRODUCE SPECTRUM

Most all of our members are already engaged on some level by having joined the Museum.

They see this relationship as not just transactional but relational. They are a special part of the Museum.

How many times can I visit before my membership pays for itself? If I did not get my money's worth this year I am cancelling my membership.

I use my member benefits and attend events and programs. I like the unique experience of being a member and hope to remain a member in the future.

I will always be a member because this is a special place that needs to be supported and preserved for future generations. Even if I can't visit or move I will remain a member.

Had familial, but changed to relational due to Forbes article

As trade association notes, there are always outliers. But this spectrum is helpful in thinking about the behaviors of more or less "engaged" members and the impact of that on their renewal. Retention as one of ultimate goals.

Slide 7: DIGGING IN

Our job is to move people along this spectrum from purely transactional towards a relationship.

We do this by building a relationship with our members.

But how can we measure member engagement at my institution and how engaged are our members?

Slide 8: HOLISTIC VIEW

Member Engagement is an overall picture made up of many components, including quantitative and qualitative information:

- Member count and revenue
- Member retention rates
- Member upgrade rates
- Members bringing guests
- Members buying gift memberships
- Member visits
- Member program ticket purchases
- Member email open and click rates
- Membership event attendance
- Member café transactions
- Member parking transactions
- Member survey participation and results
- Member feedback and interaction

We are all already thinking about member interaction in these different ways, but our job is to bring it together in a bigger picture to understand the different ways members can be engaged

We also need to educate our colleagues about the different ways our members are engaged so that they do not have a limited view.

Slide 9: RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

- arts and cultural hub in New York City's vibrant Chelsea neighborhood
- mission is to stimulate learning, promote understanding, and inspire personal connections to the ideas, cultures, and art of Himalayan Asia
- only museum in the U.S. dedicated to the art of this region, its collection spans Chinese, Indian, Afghan, Bhutanese, Mongolian, Nepalese, Pakistani, and Tibetan art, as well as contemporary works and photography.
- diverse programming for multi-generational audiences—including tours, art-making, talks, films, and performances—to deepen visitors' understanding of Himalayan art
- receives over 170,000 visits annually and has welcomed over 1.6 million people through its doors since opening in 2004
- annual operating budget of between 14 and 15 million dollars

Slide 10: MEMBERSHIP AT THE RUBIN

Strengths of our program

Membership as old as museum

Niche topic and quality exhibits

Unique, respected programming

Loyal, enthusiastic members

Challenges of our program

Just 11 years old

Hidden gem

Extremely competitive market

Awareness of public who we are and that we are more than a Museum

Slide 11: SIZE MATTERS

The key here is not to get bogged down too far into data (for this purpose) and to provide reliable and useful data on a particular metric. Context also crucial.

LACMA peaked at about 90,000 pre-recession, while MoMA spiked 100,000 pre-recession

We have about 4,000, highest in our 10 year history

The Met has 40 people in Devo and 25 people in membership

We are lucky enough to have 2 people in membership and 7 in development total, including membership. Larger staff than some other peers.

Met is special place, love it, but we have to keep in mind how different our process is than larger places.

Struck 16 months ago at conference in St. Louis how many people were there from college and university museums, historic houses, community arts organizations, and other places that made my museum look downright mid-sized

Struck by how much of the presentation content focused around large institutions with large budgets

Inspiring but not always directly applicable

CRUCIAL to have Realistic expectation on how much staff and time we have to measure while also implementing and fulfilling our programs

Slide 12: A FEW TIPS

Keeping in perspective limitations but also positives- we know a good number of our members and they know us and have our direct lines to call us with questions. Small and mid-size institutions own category with own pros and cons

Time management key and figuring out short cuts to get basic info to analyze. Also enlisting help and time of other depts., for example café

One other point about being at a smaller institution is that all that large scale data analytics and pivot charts wouldn't be useful anyway, because a single gift or renewal would sway data

Small scale analysis useful here

Slide 13: TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT METRICS

What you're looking for in terms of engagement

Static engagement – something like 25% of our tour participants are members

Can sound good or not good, but really need context, such as comparable institutions?

Growth over time- comparing year to year or 1 year and 5 years later to show increased engagement

Still helpful to give context- example member visitation

A typical range of museum member visitation rates can be anywhere from 14% to 54%, depending upon the particular institution.

Factors affecting member visitation rates include exhibitions on view, other options in the area, and cost of membership compared to admission ticket.

Slide 14: MEMBER COUNT & REVENUE

Fairly straight forward, 14 month window

Depending on database and financial accounting set up, you can tie to simple report on unique gifts in certain fund in that time period

If being a member is engagement as some level, then increased membership is increased engagement of audience/visitors

Slide 15: MEMBER RETENTION RATES

Retention vs renewal

16 months ago in St. Louis many people wanted to hear about calculating retention rates

Sounds so simple to those at institutions not in membership, but actually complicated

As many ways to calculate retention rates as there are membership managers

Can argue for all those different ways

I can pull different ways and get higher numbers

I like this way, with the 14 month window (joke about 18 month) because it is tied to membership gifts only and doesn't include comps.

Consistency key

Simple way to calculate retention rate:

Gym membership formula

Retention Rate = $((C_E - C_N) / C_S) \times 100$

Slide 16: MEMBER RETENTION RATE EXAMPLE

Example for 2014- 2015 retention rate

$$\text{Retention Rate} = ((C_E - C_N) / C_S) \times 100$$

C_E = number of customers at end of period: Count on 2/28/15

C_N = number of new customers acquired during period: Aquisitions from 1/1/14-2/28/15

C_S = number of customers at start of period: Count on 1/1/2014

2014 member count – membership gifts between 1/1/14 and 2/28/15 = 3,478

2015 member count – membership gifts between 1/1/15 and 2/29/16 = 3,757

Acquisitions in 2015 14 month range = 1,272

$$((3,757 - 1,272) / 3,478) = (2,485 / 3,478) = 0.71449 \times 100 = 71.45\%$$

Context crucial, especially for sharing out of industry

Exact numbers depends on database, but reports can be helpful

Not get too complex

Consistency key, write thorough notes on process for next time

Slide 17: MEMBER RETENTION RATES

Very proud of these, speak to loyalty

Our retention rate then shows both static engagement compared to industry standard and growth over time

Slide 18: MEMBER UPGRADE RATES

Different ways to measure this depending on database and how you use it. Reports, membership reports and get numbers of upgrades in a year to compare years, can sort by category but can be time consuming.

With specific campaigns, like a Direct Mail campaign depending on database and coding can look at upgrades over time.

But easiest yearly comparison is average gift, which if RE can be calculated from a Campaign, Fund, And Appeal report to do automatically

2013	\$138.64
2014	\$143.62
2015	\$146.39

Have to factor in rate increases but can show real and tangible increase of engagement in a financial way

Slide 19: MEMBER GALLERY VISITS

Again, context crucial. NYC competitive, depend on exhibitions, location, admission ticket vs. membership price

Percentage of gallery visits can be measured include as part of total paid attendance, including membership ours

Slide 20: MEMBER PROGRAM TICKETS

Talks, lectures, education

strong indicator of member engagement at a high level

May have to calculate yourself depending on departments and may or may not be same software as fundraising database, but good to be able to pull out. Might not benefit anyone but your dept. attendance reports included?

Slide 21: MEMBER EMAIL OPEN AND CLICK RATES

Pretty straightforward to find with any simple system. Mailchimp, but did have to use excel to compile multiple months for a year and make average. Useful to see that members are interacting more than general public and what they click on the most. Can use this info pretty quickly and easily to make adjustments in program.

Static compared to general emails to full subscriber list or industry average

Show increased engagement or clicks over time

Slide 22: MEMBER EVENT ATTENDANCE

Good to look at what events are being well attended, probably something you already track and can measure year after year for any annual event or series.

Different factors, like too close to memorial day in 2015 but generally higher event attendance should lead to higher member retention

Slide 23: MEMBER CAFÉ, SHOP, PARKING TRANSACTIONS

Interesting data that can be added to overall picture of engagement.

Shows importance of members and revenue in other parts of operation

Café here doesn't compare year to year – challenge just getting one year, but shows institution revenue driven by membership, even for partner like third party catering or parking because brings business

Shop- got sales by customer type, depends on system, even though ours is separate shop staff took it upon themselves to provide it

Slide 24: MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

Tough to get responses, we did email and mail (crucial for most programs) and follow up with a gift card offer and drew four winners

Strong participation rate (have to work for it) is a good indicator of member engagement

Survey itself is engagement and a way to find out how to further engage members, obviously

Exhibitions, email and mail frequency to get to a 8.3% Participation Rate

Positives great for pull quotes and nice feedback – we asked permission to use as quotes in part of survey

Negatives helpful to, to some degree , always less than helpful comments

Participation rate and overall ratings most helpful for quantitative engagement, quotes for qualitative engagement

Plan to do every 2 to 3 years

Slide 25: MEMBER FEEDBACK AND INTERACTION

Favorite things about being a member & pull quotes:

“That I can enter and view any time I want for free! The Museum is a soothing haven for a busy metropolis. It is nice to step in and just center yourself.”

“I am a member of six museums in NYC, and the Rubin does so many nice events for members! The others could learn a lot from you!”

“Thank you for all you do to support making the resources of the Rubin available to enrich our lives.”

One of the best things about small and mid-sized institutions is interactions with members, those who you get to know or have positive feedback. Share with others!

Slide 26: MEMBER ENGAGEMENT & RETENTION

Holistic, qualitative, and quantitative analysis gives full picture of strengths and weaknesses of program

Moving people along spectrum

PURELY TRANSACTIONAL

What does this look like at your institution?

A family buying a zoo membership for free parking to visit 1 time a year and “get their money’s worth.”

TRANSACTIONAL AND RELATIONAL

What does this look like at your institution?

A member renew for their third year and always brings her sister to the annual spring garden talk.

PURELY RELATIONAL

What does this look like at your institution?

A member who is engaged at many levels and always enthusiastic. Can you think of an example?

Metrics on engagement can serve as audit of membership program

Where are our strengths? What can be improved?

Example is percentage of gallery visits made up of members- ours is a bit lower than I might expect

Even though our retention rate is high, our first year retention rate is lower than I would like.

Could we drive attendance to the galleries for first-year members to increase member visit percentage and increase retention rates?

Another example, survey results – members asked for daytime and weekend events. We did a daytime Senior level course and got great feedback.

Caveat is there are so many factors and this is not clear testing, so there’s no way to correlate a program change or campaign directly to increased retention rates. Overall picture of satisfaction, but that’s ok!

You are already measuring so many of these things independently, so really just filling in gaps and bringing together for a full picture of engagement

Slide 27: LIASON, TRAILBLAZER, AND ADVOCATE

Summary

Bring back to larger picture quote on member engagement

“The complex challenges that museums face today require an ability (and willingness) to combine typically isolated functions and departments, blending the boundaries between marketing and communications, education and curatorial, to further align the needs of the visitor (online and onsite) with the work and activity of the museum.”

Start to ask yourself following questions

- How can you begin to rethink and measure member engagement at your cultural institution?
- How can you bring this to the conversation about marketing and growing your institution as a whole?
- What metrics are helpful for measuring engagement at your institution?
- What factors outside the influence of Development affect these metrics?

This started for us when given a strategic plan of 3 years of measurements we hadn't seen before

Were able to use some and come back with others that were more appropriate for us and our work

Be proactive in educating your colleagues and executive staff about membership, about member engagement, and about how it ties in with the work that you all do!

Slide 28: REFERENCE LIST