Building Sustainability: Membership Strategies for Backbone Organizations

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ChangeScale advances the cohesiveness, effectiveness, and prominence of the environmental education field in the San Francisco and Monterey Bay Areas.

Our mission is to ensure that every generation is inspired with the environmental know-how to create healthy communities and a healthy planet.
Objectives

To provide recommendations to ChangeScale’s membership approach specifically around the fee structure, benefits and growth projections. Other objectives include:

• Determine membership fee structures of similar organizations
• Determine common membership growth patterns for similar organizations
• Understand how similar organizations communicate their value to their audience
Methods

- Nonprofit infrastructure organizations
- Membership development

**Literature Review**
- Analyzed macro data in for profit and nonprofit fields

**Membership Trends Analysis**
- Analyzed macro data in for profit and nonprofit fields
- Expert interviews with 4 professionals

**ChangeScale Secondary Analysis**
- Analyzed membership plan, business plan, market data

**Landscape Analysis of Membership Models**
- 8 backbone organizations
## Data & Results

### Current ChangeScale Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Budget</th>
<th>Original Membership Dues (July 2015)</th>
<th>Revised Membership Dues (Oct 2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $100,000</td>
<td>$250</td>
<td>$125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,001 – $250,000</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250,001 – $500,000</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>$750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500,001 - $1,000,000</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000,001 – $2,500,000</td>
<td>$3,500</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$2,500,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Market Analysis

50% of potential ChangeScale members in the region earn less than $1M and 75% earn less than $2.5M
Data & Results

Membership Landscape of Eight Backbone Organizations

What to stood out:

- A membership strategy was rare
- Pricing models and goals were not strategic
- Capacity is a challenge for backbone organizations
- Is membership still relevant?
## Membership Landscape of Eight Backbone Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th># of Organizational Membership Levels</th>
<th>Factors Used to Distinguish Btwn Levels</th>
<th>Pricing Models for Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Type of Organization</td>
<td>$75 - Organization; $500 – Corporate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3 Washington</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Number of Employees</td>
<td>$250 - Small (1-49 employees) $500 - Medium (50-99 employees) $1000 - Large (100+ employees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Education Association of Illinois</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Umbrella</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Type of Organization, Number of Employees, Organizational Budget</td>
<td>$100 - Small Business less than 50 employees $250 - Medium Business 50-500 local employees $500 - Large Business 500+emp $50 - Education School K-12 $250 - Education College, university, school district $50 – Organization, NPO budget under $100K $100 - Budget $100K-$500K $250 – Budget $500K-1M $500 - Budget over $1M $100 - public sector</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data & Results

Membership Landscape of Eight Backbone Organizations

Common Advertised Membership Benefits

- Work with other leaders in field through committees or initiatives
- Discounts on events
- Discounts on conference
- Access to job board and posting jobs on website
- Receive newsletter

Ave. Budget Covered by Membership Revenue

Ave. annual growth in membership revenue

SOM School of Management
Analysis

- ChangeScale’s current membership model is not realistic for at least 50% of its audience
- Members’ needs unknown
- Challenge in communicating their value
Recommendations for Membership Strategy

- Membership Model – Incorporate more flexibility to various type of organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Budget</th>
<th>Business/Public Agency</th>
<th>Nonprofit</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $100,000</td>
<td>$250</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,001 – $250,000</td>
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<td>$250</td>
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<tr>
<td>$500,001 – $1,000,000</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$250</td>
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<tr>
<td>$1,000,001 – $2,500,000</td>
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<td>$625</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;$2,500,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Recommendations for Membership Strategy

Involve Stakeholders
- Survey stakeholders about benefits they want/need & plan to continue to survey their needs in the future

Engage to Join Now
- Offer 16 months for the price of 12 months'
  - Offer early bird discounts
  - Referral discounts
- Make a membership pitch & ability to join at each event

Communicate Value
Conclusion

If we really want to build collective impact to tackle the largest problems in society....

- Need for cross sector learning about membership
- Need to communicate the value of backbone organizations to increase funding
References


Questions? Comments?