

# Put More Than a Digital Stamp On It: How Postcards Increased Attendance at Chapter Events

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## Purpose

Membership attendance and engagement at chapter sponsored functions had been a struggle for the local chapter of Sigma. Attendance at events routinely consisted of chapter board members and faculty from the three colleges that comprised the chapter, which ranged from 20-25 individuals per event. Attendance from these dedicated stakeholders was strong and professional networking occurred, but the board was perplexed as how to entice new members to attend. Board members wanted improved communication and membership engagement.

## Design

Communication development project where the Chair of Publicity established a chapter Facebook page, enhanced chapter communication through the use of The Circle, and created and mailed postcards for annual general meetings.

## Setting

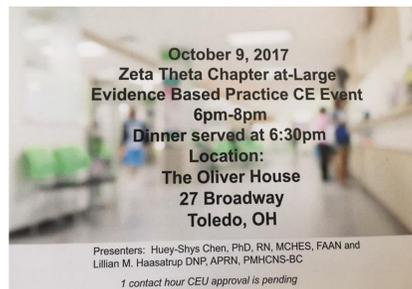
Toledo, OH

## Participants/Subjects

All active members of Zeta Theta Chapter at-Large.



the circle



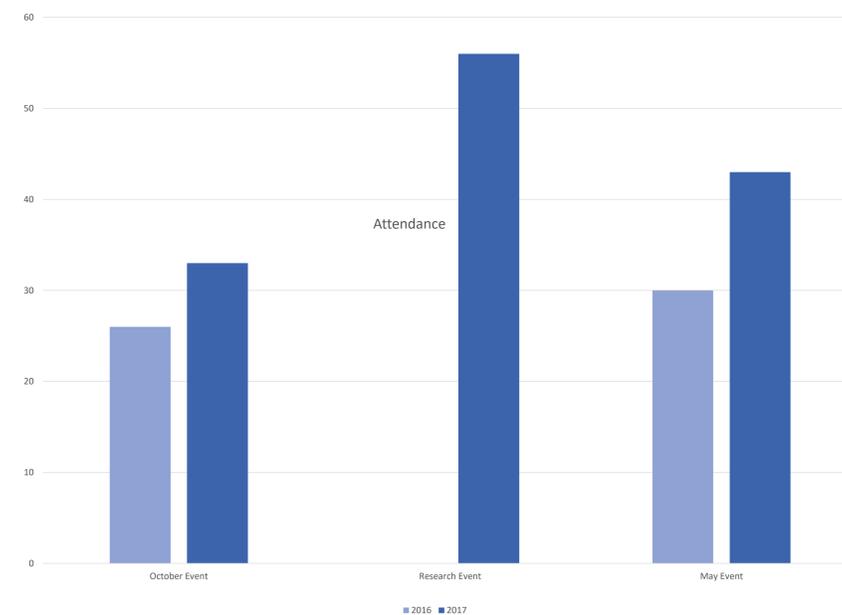
## Methods

A case study design was used to study how the community of Zeta Theta members heard of the various programs offered. Information gathered from attendees at each event was collected on program evaluation forms. A survey monkey was then sent to all members to judge member perception on improvements in various areas of communication. Based on a 5-point Likert scale, questions measured the satisfaction of members in the domains of: Communication of Upcoming Events; Communication of Meetings; and Attendance at Zeta Theta Events. Various strategies were deployed to enhance membership engagement such as a new and improved chapter website in 2009, full integration of The Circle in 2016, and creation of Facebook and Twitter accounts. Due to the cost of quarterly newsletters, the board approved the Chair of Publicity's proposal to scrap the newsletter mailings and transition to an annual brochure as well as postcards for each of the three general meetings. Best practices for communicating with chapter members included sending a postcard that highlighted the upcoming event 4-6 weeks prior to the event date to each active member of the chapter. Furthermore, weekly reminders were sent to active members through a discussion prompt in The Circle. To round out the trifecta of communication, Facebook events were created as well as weekly reminder postings.

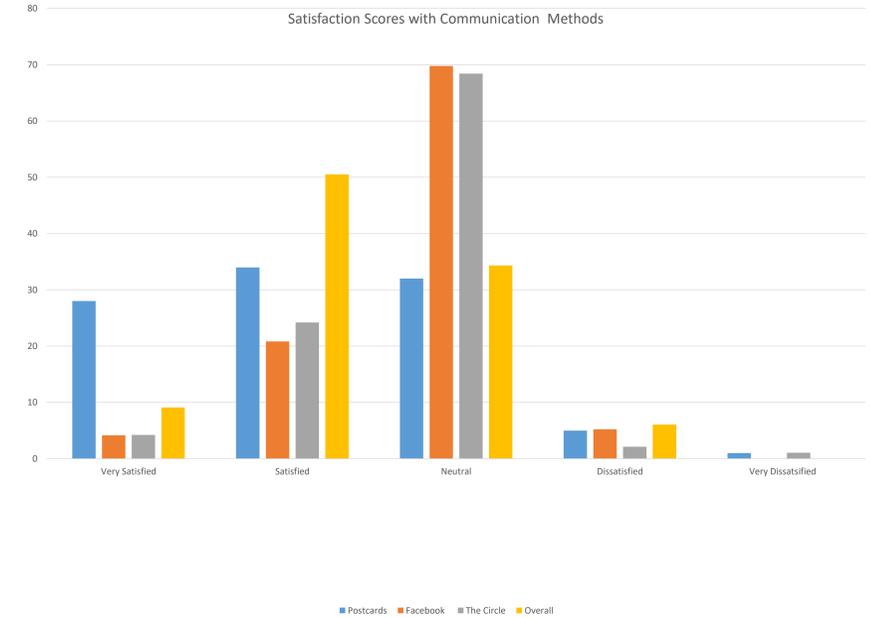
## Results

A modest increase in attendance has been noted in 2017 events compared to 2016. The fall event yielded a 1.4% increase in attendance while the spring event yielded a 2.6% increase in attendance. Data collection from 2018 events is ongoing and under review. The evaluation forms indicated that over 80% of attendees heard of chapter events through The Circle, Facebook, and/or the postcards.

The survey monkey that was sent to active members (N=435) yielded a response rate of 25%. The majority of respondents (77%) indicated they preferred to be notified of chapter events by email, while 20% preferred the mailed postcard and 4% preferred Facebook invites. Mailed postcards had the highest overall satisfaction rating, followed by The Circle and Facebook respectively. The majority of respondents indicated they were satisfied with communication methods. Seventy-five percent of members indicated they would attend chapter events if they were offered free of charge.



Attendance at 2016 and 2017 Chapter Events



## Implications

Through the trifecta of communication, membership attendance has increased at chapter events. This is attributed to communication methods that utilized both the digital stamp as well as the US postal stamp. Chapter events are traditionally held in various locations within the Lucas County area which may also impact attendance, as well as varying weather conditions. At the current time, there are more than 300 likes for the chapter on the Facebook page which highlights chapter events, available grants, induction photos, and election information. Twitter was trialed but resulted in little to no membership engagement, therefore this social media platform was discontinued. The Circle houses all chapter information, events, documents, discussions, and updates. The plan is to continue the use of both the digital and postal stamp method to entice members to attend and engage in chapter events, while being consciousness of cost. Furthermore, board members need to re-evaluate the cost of attendance at events as the majority of respondents indicated they would attend if the events were held for free. Moral of the story, do not underestimate the power of snail mail or how cost can impact attendance.

## References

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