

Leadership Connection 2018 (15-18 September)

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.

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. At the current time, a survey monkey is pending in which all members will be surveyed to judge member perception on improvements in various areas of communication. Based on a 5-point Likert scale, questions will measure 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/Outcomes: An increase in attendance has been noted in 2017 events compared to 2016. In 2016, 26 members attended the October Evidence-based Practice General Meeting and CE event while 33 attended in 2017, which was a 1.4% increase in overall membership attendance. Data from the 2016 Annual Research Meeting is unavailable but in 2017, 56 members attended the event while 52 members attended in 2018. This was a -0.8% reduction in overall membership attendance. It is important to note that 66 members registered for the 2018 event which shows a 2% increase in interest. The 2016 May General Meeting and CE event had 30 members attend while 43 members attended in 2017. This was a 2.6% increase in overall membership attendance. The evaluation forms indicated that over 80% of attendees heard of the event through The Circle, Facebook, and/or the postcards. Through the trifecta of communication, membership attendance has increased at chapter events. This is attributed to communication methods the utilized both the digital stamp as well as the US postal stamp. Moral of the story, do not underestimate the power of snail mail.

Implications: The outcome was an increase in membership attendance at General Meetings. 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. Several factors could be the cause of this, but the board has decided to discontinue this multi-media option. 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. Board members need to evaluate members preferred forms of communication and consider utilizing multiple methods to promote chapter events in cost effective ways.

Title:

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Keywords:

Chapter Communication, Multi-media Use and Snail Mail

References:

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Abstract Summary:

Through the trifecta of communication, membership attendance doubled, and at times even tripled, at chapter events. This is attributed to communication methods the utilized both the digital stamp as well as the US postal stamp. Moral of the story, do not underestimate the power of snail mail.

Content Outline:

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I. Introduction

A. Trifecta of Communication

B. Increased Membership Attendance at Chapter Events

II. Body

A. Main Point #1: Postcard Mailing (US Stamp)

1. Supporting point #1: Mail 4-6 weeks prior to event

- a) Reach active members
- b) Reach non-active members

B. Main Point #2: Facebook (Digital Stamp)

1. Supporting point #1: Create event 4-6 weeks prior to function, weekly reminder posts

- a) Reach members, non-members, and community at large
- b) Free advertising of chapter events

C. Main Point #3: The Circle (digital stamp)

1. Supporting point #1: Create an event 4-6 prior to function

- a) reach active members
- b) free advertising
- 2. Supporting point #2: Discussions
 - a) reach active members weekly
 - b) encourages dialogue

III. Conclusion

A. Cost Effective Communication

B. Increased Attendance at chapter events

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Professional Experience: Since 2009 I have been an active member of the chapter. I have served as Counselor for two terms and then as Webmaster and Chair of Publicity. As a board member I have

attended the STTI Leadership Conference as well as the Nursing Education Research Conference.

Author Summary: During my tenure at Mercy College I have been part of the curriculum committee which transformed the traditional BSN curriculum into a concept based curriculum. I was also part of the committee that developed a new MSN program at the college. My research focus has been in program evaluation and the art of teaching and learning.