



value proposition toolkit



ASSOCIATION
HEADQUARTERS

Not-for-profits compete for audience, social engagement, revenue, and registrations just like our for-profit counterparts. How effectively we compete and succeed starts with a well-defined, clearly articulated value proposition that succinctly answers the ‘Why?’ Why does the organization exist? Why is this organization valuable? And most importantly, why should one join? Providing value to our members, certifiants, and business affiliates depends on our ability to create a connection between our unique benefits and their needs and is the most integral component of our association’s brand.



What is a value proposition?

An association’s value proposition is the unique and compelling benefit(s) it provides stakeholders; including members, volunteers, sponsors, board members and the community it serves. The value proposition should be clear and concise; a benefit statement that explains the distinct advantage the association offers its constituents. Your value proposition should help members evaluate whether your organization aligns with their interests and offers the support they need.

Why is a value proposition important?

In a time and resource-deprived world, a strong value proposition serves as the answer to the question, “Why should I invest my time and resources?” It highlights the unique features, benefits, and advantages that set your organization apart, making it easier for members to understand why they should join your organization and how that membership will contribute to their careers and lives.

Your value proposition also speaks to investors when it’s time to ask for donations, sponsorships, and advertising sales. When business affiliates and partners are evaluating whether there is alignment between your organizations; a distinct statement of value will facilitate a favorable decision. A well-developed, relevant value proposition will facilitate member growth, engagement, and retention. Research demonstrates that it also has a direct correlation to increases in non-dues revenue. Thriving associations leverage their unique value proposition to develop robust and meaningful relationships with corporate and financial partners that share the same mission, vision, and values; promoting growth and longevity!

What are the steps to establish a value proposition?

1. Focus on member benefits:

Focus on member benefits: It is important to understand your core member group and cultivate an understanding of their needs, preferences, and pain points. Are your offerings addressing member challenges and focused on addressing their needs? An organization should analyze the ever-changing landscape of its members and evolve their solutions as new challenges arise. This member-centric focus allows you to align your resource allocation, programming, and events with stakeholder priorities and position your organization as an invaluable support system.

2. Define your unique benefits package:

Identify the key features, benefits, and advantages that your organization offers. What is your mission statement, and how does that apply to your organization's output and outreach? How will you support and solve the problems of your membership base? It is essential your benefits package is highlighted in a way that clearly differentiates your association from alternatives and competitors.

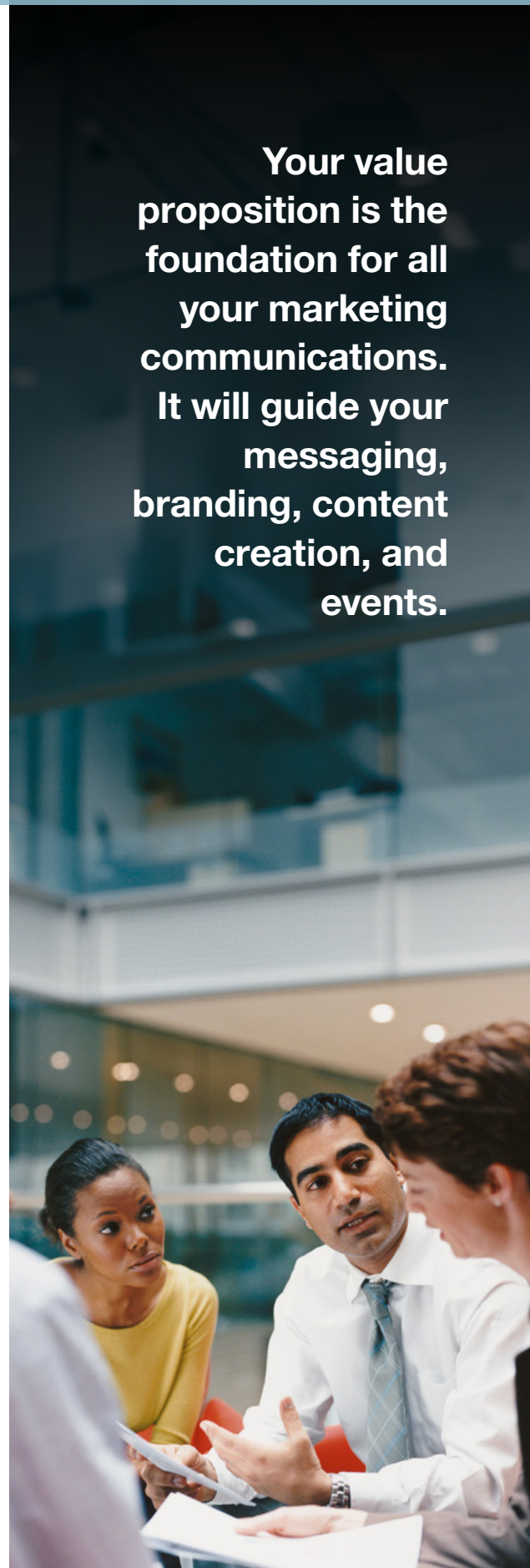
3. Craft a compelling statement:

Create a concise and persuasive value proposition statement that captures the essence of your organization and communicates the value you deliver. It should be clear, memorable, and resonate with your target audience. Start with a clear understanding of those pain points, industry challenges, and opportunities, and then outline exactly how your organization addresses these for your constituents. Use language that is compelling and familiar - your value proposition statement must create an impact and evoke emotion.

4. Test and repeat:

Gather feedback from your stakeholders; send out surveys to members, perform A/B testing, and evaluate your programs to refine your value proposition based on member feedback. Continuously improve and adapt your messaging to maximize its effectiveness. Like a strategic plan, a value proposition should be reviewed and evolve as the industry and member needs change.

Your value proposition is the foundation for all your marketing communications. It will guide your messaging, branding, content creation, and events.



Defining Your Value Proposition, by Organization Type

ASSOCIATIONS

Associations provide significant value to their members and the industries or communities they serve. These benefits collectively contribute to professional growth, industry advancement, and the overall success of members. Consider these key points when developing your value proposition:



Networking and Collaboration

Provide a platform for networking, fostering connections, and facilitating collaboration among professionals, experts, and stakeholders within your industry. This networking can lead to valuable partnerships, knowledge sharing, and business opportunities.

Ask yourself: What unique networking opportunities can we provide to our members?



Professional Development

Offer a wealth of educational resources, including conferences, workshops, webinars, seminars, and publications. These programs provide access to industry-specific information, research, best practices, and insights that help members stay updated on the latest trends, advancements, and regulatory changes.

Ask yourself: What subject matter experts do we have in our membership or associated with our organization who can serve as a resource?



Advocacy and Representation

Engage in government relations, policy development, and lobbying efforts to shape legislation and regulations that impact your industry. Associations can influence decision-making processes, raise awareness of industry issues, and provide a unified voice on important matters.

Ask yourself: What lobbying efforts have we played a role in and why is that important?

Share personal experiences and testimonials:

Be sure to share your own positive experiences and the fulfillment you gained from being a part of your organization. Additionally, gather testimonials or stories from other members who can speak to the value and rewards they've experienced.



Industry Standards and Quality Assurance

Develop and promote best practices, ethical standards, and quality assurance frameworks that help ensure consistency, professionalism, and excellence within your industry.

Ask yourself: How does our association define themselves differently?



Access to Resources and Discounts

Provide access to a range of resources that can benefit your members. These can include research reports, market data, templates, legal guidance, mentoring programs, and discounted services or products from industry partners or preferred suppliers. By leveraging the collective buying power of your membership base, you have the power to negotiate special deals and discounts that members may not have access to individually.

Ask yourself: Are the discounts and resources we provide still beneficial and better than what can be found in the competitive landscape?



Community and Peer Support

Create a sense of community and belonging among members who share common interests or professional goals. This can be in the form of special interest groups, mentor programs, online forums, or member communities where members can connect, seek advice, and share experiences.

Ask yourself: What community groups do we offer our members and are they sufficient for the different industry segments we represent?



Recognition and Leadership Opportunities

Recognize and celebrate the achievements and contributions of your members through speaking opportunities at conferences, leadership roles within committees or boards, or awards and recognition programs.

Ask yourself: Do we have defined career and leadership pathways for our members?

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

Certification bodies provide education, testing and credentials to individuals based on a standardized body of knowledge in a specific field or industry. Consider these key points when developing your value proposition:



Enhanced Knowledge and Skills

Provide training, examinations, and ongoing professional development to ensure that certified professionals possess up-to-date knowledge and skills. This enhances their competence and credibility, making them more effective in their roles.

Ask yourself: How does our certification differentiate us from others in our industry?



Career Advancement Opportunities

Open doors to new career opportunities and advancement for your certificants. Certifications can increase employability, job prospects, and earning potential. They can also be advantageous for promotions, leadership positions, and specialized roles within an organization.

Ask yourself: What about our certification is going to help the careers of our members?



Industry Recognition and Credibility

Validate an individual's expertise and professionalism, establishing credibility and trust with employers, clients, and colleagues. Certifications provide external validation of skills and knowledge, serving as a mark of quality and commitment to professional standards.

Ask yourself: Why is our credential the one someone should pursue?



Competitive Advantage

Provide proof of certification that will differentiate your certificants from their peers. Employers often prioritize candidates with certifications, considering them to be more qualified and reliable for specific roles or projects.

Ask yourself: What do we do to recognize those who have completed our certification?



Continuous Learning and Professional Development

Require ongoing learning and professional development to maintain and renew certification status. This ensures that certified professionals stay abreast of industry trends, advancements, and best practices. Programs could include exclusive resources, continuing education credits, webinars, and networking platforms.

Ask yourself: What opportunities are we providing certified professionals that will continue to connect them to our organization?



Peer Recognition and Networking

Foster connections and networking opportunities among certified professionals. These programs can take the form of online forums, social events, working meetings, or conferences. These channels can provide valuable mentorship, support, and access to job opportunities or industry contacts.

Ask yourself: How can we expand the way in which we are connecting these certified professionals?



Industry Standardization and Quality Assurance

Contribute to industry standardization and quality assurance by establishing common standards of knowledge, skills, and ethical conduct. By promoting consistency, best practices, and adherence to ethical guidelines, you will elevate the overall professionalism and reputation of your industry.

Ask yourself: How often are we updating our certification with the latest in the industry and is the cadence sufficient?

Offer flexibility and convenience: Recognize the needs of members who have been with you for years, and those that are just starting out. Try a mix of in-person and virtual events, and integrated communication channels.

NONPROFITS

The value provided by nonprofits is multifaceted and extends beyond financial measures. They are essential drivers behind social change, community development, and the betterment of society as a whole. Consider these key points when developing your value proposition:



Mission and Impact

Clearly state your organization's mission and the positive change you want to achieve in the world. Highlight the social or environmental impact of your organization's work and how this contributes to society as a whole - use language that easily connects with your audience.

Ask yourself: Who we are serving and why are we serving?



Beneficiary Focus

Emphasize the specific group or cause your nonprofit serves and how lives or circumstances are improved through your efforts. Don't shy away from the emotional and intangible benefits of the noble work your association produces - this is very often a primary driver of audience connection.

Ask yourself: Are we effectively communicating how we impact the community?



Unique Approach or Expertise

Highlight what distinguishes your organization from others working in the same space. It could be a unique methodology, innovative solutions, specialized knowledge, or partnerships that enhance your ability to create solutions.

Ask yourself: How are we different from the other nonprofits in the community?

While your nonprofit may not focus on generating financial profits, your value proposition needs to attract support and contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations, and other sources to fund your strategic priorities and initiatives.



Tangible Results

Lead with data! Provide evidence of your organization's track record and tangible results. This can include statistics, success stories, testimonials, or data-driven impact measurements that demonstrate the effectiveness of your work. Audiences vary and while emotional appeals work with many; discerning stakeholders require data - don't be afraid to brag about the results!

Ask yourself: Are we doing all we can in our area of focus and what areas of our work are we looking to expand?



Engagement Opportunities

Clearly communicate the ways individuals or entities can partner with you, such as volunteering, donating, fundraising, advocating, or collaborating. Virtual webinars, events and conferences, and member apps that promote engagement are all unique networking opportunities with fellow industry professionals that your stakeholders desire. Highlight the benefits and rewards of participating in your organization's activities.

Ask yourself: How can others engage in our work and donate their time and talent?



Trustworthiness and Accountability

Address transparency and accountability by mentioning your financial stewardship, governance practices, and any relevant certifications or accreditations. Highlighting your association's history and longevity is also an easy and accessible way to promote your trustworthiness.

Ask yourself: Where are their opportunities within our organization?



Emotional Appeal

Connect with the emotions and values of your target audience by conveying a compelling narrative or personal stories that illustrate the human impact of your organization's work. People covet people like themselves - leveraging member stories, biographies and contributions to your association will resonate with broad audiences and help them develop a connection with your mission.

Ask yourself: Why would a donor choose to support our organization?

Value Proposition Generator

Let's create your value proposition statement in two easy steps!

1. Answer these three questions:

Who is your target audience/membership?	What benefits or solutions is your audience looking for?	How does your association solve those problems, or provide those benefits?



TIP:

Keep your statement clear, concise, and focused on the most compelling aspects of your association's value proposition

2. Fill in the blanks:

For who are looking for
target audience

, our
a solution to their problem

provides
membership benefit/service/training

.
how your association solves their problem

If you need help developing your value proposition, or would like to learn more about AH's approach to association management, we would love to hear from you. Reach out to us at inquire@ahint.com or call 856-439-0500.





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