



# Untangling your association's stakeholder engagement strategies

**Whilst most associations acknowledge the significance of a potent stakeholder engagement strategy, how many organizations use specific KPIs to measure impact and success? And even more worryingly, how many are just using it as a byword?**

**I**n a fast paced digital era, social media and innovative technologies play a major role in the way we function, both as businesses and individuals. As the competition to attract stakeholder attention rises, traditional, old-school static reports and surveys can no

longer keep up. Stakeholder engagement often becomes a norm that associations go through to tick a box, rather than seeking to understand what engagement really means to them, as well as to their community. Thus, any attempt to engage stakeholders stays in a state of limbo.

#### **POINT ZERO: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK**

In order to make stakeholder engagement meaningful, associations can't just coast to success on public relations and communications. As there are increasing external pressures which impel associations to engage more, such as fierce competition, the remarkable rise of online



communities, emerging digital tools and the ever-growing stakeholder needs, signing blindly on an engagement method without understanding it, or using it intently, can only get them so far. Adding to that the struggle to link engagement to the association's core business activities, it exponentially becomes a greater challenge to handle.

So, take a moment to reflect on the key foundations for developing a successful stakeholder engagement strategy as well as its essential compounds. Is it aligned to your association objectives? Have you identified who your stakeholders are? What is your return on investment? Reaching stakeholders in a click is not an easy task, however, it is all about listening and responding; attending to your association's goals and choosing the right tools for the job.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA FEVER**

For many associations, social media channels can still be a bit difficult to digest. More and more voices clamoring in multiple outlets asking for attention, is altering the reasons companies and associations engage. Changing along the way how they engage and with whom.

Nevertheless, social media still embodies a great asset; a two-way balanced dialogue between stakeholders.

Building a dynamic social media strategy into your overall communications strategy allows you to reap the benefits of real-time interactions with stakeholders, increased brand awareness, as well as strong - and active - online communities.

And as these social platforms evolve and grow, communication becomes effortless, eliminating any geographic borders. This creates plenty of engagement opportunities, enabling you, as well your stakeholders, to extend the reach to international audiences.

Keywords and hashtags (now available in most social media channels, not just Twitter) can further help you target your messaging even more, linking it to specific areas of interest and allowing the vast online audience identify your key offerings more easily. This also keeps the spark alive, allowing you to maintain a continuous and vivid dialogue.

The key for maximum impact lies in the content. Social media are the go-to platforms to tell a story and engage your stakeholders through a unique blend of insights and emotions.

#### **MCI BENELUX (AMSTERDAM & BRUSSELS)**

MCI is a global leading provider of strategic engagement and activation solutions in association, congress, meetings, and events industries since 1987. Through face-to-face, hybrid and digital experiences, we help associations and companies to strategically engage and activate their target audiences, building the dedicated online and offline communities they need to strengthen their brands and boost their performance.

#### **ONLINE PORTALS - YOUR GATEWAY TO YOUR STAKEHOLDERS**

Taking this multi-stakeholder dialogue to the next level, your options don't live and die with social media. In fact, online tools such as hubs or portals can help your association build greater trust and on the long run, drive better results in growth and engagement. Take, for instance, a personalized portal that allows your stakeholders to register, create individual profiles and exchange knowledge, insights, opinions and content. If you add the integration of other programs and systems into the mix, like your association's CRM system, you can really build a powerful online tool to facilitate and track participation, as well as assess the levels of interest and engagement.

#### **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT'S ALL OVER?**

Stakeholder engagement is never really over. A well-executed online stakeholder engagement strategy culminates in positive perceptions of an association, and these outcomes are assets to deliver value and yield additional revenue streams. So, how could you give that up?