PROGRAMMATIC PLAYBOOK
How Associations Can Use Technology to Win

MULTIVIEW®
In June 2018, Golden State won its second consecutive NBA championship and its third in four years, staking a claim among the all-time dynasties in league history. There is no denying the team features one of the top collections of talent in the world, but there’s also something additional at play. It wasn’t simply an accumulation of skilled players that put the Warriors on top. The club’s rise to prominence began prior to that – with the dedicated use of highly relevant data.

The game of basketball had been played for more than 100 years, but never approached in the manner Golden State began using with its advanced data science. And it changed the sport.

In a similar manner, industry and trade associations have functioned for decades using traditional best practices to recruit members, attract show attendance and increase non-dues revenue. Now, a relatively new technological innovation offers associations the power to target members and potential members like never before. You may think you’ve read all the books on association marketing, but the book is being rewritten.
The central purpose of an association is to serve as a flagship for its members, but over the years, associations have had to think more like businesses in order to stay relevant to those members and potential members. Professionals have more options than ever when it comes to networking and enhancing their career paths. Some of these options, such as online groups, were birthed in technology. Associations may have been slow to feed from the technology trough, but they now understand the leading edge is where the future lies.

Routinely, associations face the same few organizational challenges in order to maintain relevance. Results from MultiView’s annual partnership survey consistently indicate three top goals for associations:

- **Gain and retain members**
- **Increase conference/meeting attendance**
- **Increase non-dues revenues.**

Fortunately, there is technology that provides associations an opportunity to address all three of those goals, as well as others such as spreading advocacy, in a cost-effective, highly efficient manner: programmatic advertising. This playbook will explain what programmatic advertising is and how it can help your association change the game.
You may already know about programmatic advertising. If so, you can skip this section. But, in case you’ve maybe heard the term and wondered exactly what it is and what it does, here are the basics.

By definition, programmatic advertising is an automated method for buying and selling digital media. Gone are the human middlemen and rate sheets – replaced by software, machines and algorithms. It brings efficiency to the process, and just as importantly, the ability to buy highly targeted advertising virtually in real time.

In the past, if your association wanted to market its benefits to potential members on the internet, you would determine which websites your potential members are likely to visit. You would then contact that website and negotiate a direct buy for ad space.

With programmatic, ad networks find the places your prospects are going on the web, and serve them ads there. (How this actually happens is potentially fascinating if you’re the kind of person who finds highly sophisticated algorithms interesting, but that’s beyond our scope here.) The common refrain about programmatic advertising is that it delivers the right message to the right person at the right time.
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Thanks to available data, such as that mined through cookies and pixels, digital advertising has shifted from a “where” mindset to a “who” mindset. Potential online inventory is opened vastly beyond a single buyer’s knowledge. Instead of saying, “I want to buy ad space on Website ABC,” you can now say, “I want to buy ad space that gets in front of C-level professionals of industry X,” and the programmatic process takes care of it for you.

Buying processes such as real-time bidding (RTB) – where certain ad space is sold to the highest bidder – allow you to decide how much to spend on such ad buys, setting parameters for how much you’re willing to spend to reach certain targets. And it all happens in the time a webpage downloads.

You don’t necessarily need to know the highly technical backend of programmatic processes, you just need to know what it means – and thus how it can benefit you and your association. The tactic of automated buying has gained favor since its early use, with double-digit increases in spending each year, as illustrated in this graph from eMarketer.

With a general idea of what programmatic advertising is, it’s time to understand how it can help your association attract members, draw crowds to its events, alert professionals to continuing education opportunities and spread advocacy. Let’s explore how all that gets done.
Data – especially high-quality data – is the fuel that powers the programmatic jet engine. Associations are typically awash in data about their members, and oftentimes also about prospective members in the industry. This first-party data, combined with second- and third-party information, means you can target people who are: your members; share common traits with your members; are searching about your benefits or events; are near an event; or even researching competing associations. Here are some of the tactics under the programmatic umbrella that help accomplish this.
SITE RETARGETING

One of the most basic forms of programmatic targeting is that of site retargeting. As the name implies, this technique targets people who have visited and left your website. A pixel on your webpage collects information about the visitor. When that person leaves your website, his/her surfing is tracked, and you can place relevant ads on the pages he/she visits.

For example, say a young professional is considering membership in your organization and visits your website to have a look around. At this point, perhaps the prospect isn’t ready to commit. With site retargeting, you can put ads about member benefits in front of the prospect as he/she surfs around different places on the web, keeping the association top of mind.

Let’s hypothesize another scenario. Say an existing member visits the landing page for an upcoming event, but leaves without registering. As that person spends time elsewhere online, you can reach them through specific ads highlighting the event, reminding them to return to the event page and sign up.

Simple, but highly effective, site retargeting is a common tactic across many consumer companies because of its return on investment. In fact, a CMO.com study found that 70 percent of website visitors retargeted with display ads are more likely to convert on your website. Site retargeting is a practical and powerful tool in any programmatic campaign.
In simple terms, persona targeting puts your ads in front of people that match the characteristics of your target market. This makes it ideal for use in creating awareness for prospects that aren’t yet members, and perhaps don’t even yet know they want to be members.

As the name suggests, this technique builds a persona of your ideal target. Let’s say you’re trying to attract electrical engineers in North America. Using data about the characteristics of your members and combining that with the right second-party data, you can target similar professionals.

In the case of persona marketing, the targeting isn’t based on their searching behavior, but on demographic and psychographic details. Persona targeting resides at the top of the traditional marketing funnel. It’s used to cast a fairly wide net and build brand/association awareness, so when those prospects decide they want to join an organization, they will recall yours.

Persona targeting can also be used to spread advocacy and the mission of the association by getting your important message in front of non-members who likely still have an interest and impact in the industry. Based on the persona, the data identifies who those likely industry members are brings the message to them.
Unlike persona targeting, behavioral targeting is based on a person’s online activity. In the consumer world, these people would be described as those who have shown an interest in purchase. These are people who have proven an interest in the industry by the content they have consumed.

Behavioral targeting has multiple use cases for associations. It can enhance membership growth by identifying prospects consuming content related to the industry. It can boost event attendance and continuing education enrollment by targeting individuals who have searched for or researched similar events or learning opportunities. If these prospective customers have shown interest in other events and education, you can ensure they know about your offerings through display ads targeted specifically to them.

Behavioral targeting reduces waste in your marketing because the targets have proven an interest through their actions.
Search engines can be used in a couple of ways, both simple and effective.

Under the umbrella of behavioral targeting, search retargeting uses search data to determine if an online user is a prospect for your advertising, based on the keywords he/she uses as opposed to the specific content being viewed.

Another option is search engine marketing, which you’re likely familiar with if you’ve ever used a search engine. If you do a search for just about anything in Google, you’ll likely see ads at the top of the search results. These paid ads show up when a user’s search matches keywords that indicate a potential interest in your organization or its causes.

One of the great things about paid search ads is the ability to direct the user to a specific landing page relevant to what they were searching. Thus, prospects don’t have to look around for the information they want, you’re taking them directly to it, increasing the likelihood for conversion.
GEO-TARGETING/EVENT MARKETING

Many of your members and prospective members attend numerous trade shows or conventions, including but not limited to yours. GPS technology provides us an amazing opportunity to capture this captive audience.

Known as geo-targeting, this method of targeting puts a figurative fence around the event and serves mobile ads to those within it. You know this is a highly valuable audience because of their attendance at the show. Geo-location technology identifies users inside the fence and places ads on their mobile devices while they’re searching the web or using apps that are enabled for advertising.

Let’s say you’re at an industry event that isn’t your own, but you have a presence. You can put a geo-fence around the event, surrounding hotels and restaurants. Use display ads to encourage the attendees to visit your booth, even offering information about where to find you. Use a call to action to entice them: “Visit our booth, number 123, to enter our raffle for a free cruise.” Or, perhaps advertise your own upcoming event and encourage them to register for it.

Event targeting captures a valuable audience together in one physical location, and you’re reaching them in the very environment that relates to your organization and industry.
It’s the largest social network in the world, with more than 2 billion monthly active users. If Facebook was a nation, it would be the largest on the planet. You know your members and prospective members are on Facebook. In fact, you may have a Facebook group or routinely use Facebook for marketing. But how effectively are you using it?

Facebook advertising becomes far more valuable when coupled with insightful data and the right techniques, and it’s vital to always stay on top of the latest tweaks to its feeds and algorithms. MultiView has the valuable data and expertise to move your Facebook marketing from useful to powerful, offering a compliment to paid search and other targeting tactics.
PUTTING PRACTICE INTO PLAY

We’ve provided a brief overview of programmatic advertising and illustrated the different ways its tactics can work and be used to help membership organizations face challenges like increasing membership, boosting event attendance and promoting continuing education. So, what happens when you combine some or all of those tactics?

As an example, MultiView constructed a campaign for a partner association in the marketing industry, aiming to address some of those organizational challenges most membership organizations face.

The strategy included:

**Site Retargeting:** Displaying the association’s advertisements across the web, specifically targeting users who had already visited the association’s website.

**Persona Targeting:** Displaying the association’s advertisements to people with characteristics that match the organization’s potential member.

**Behavioral Targeting:** Displaying the association’s advertisements to potential members based on their online behavior.

**Event/Geo-targeting:** Served geo-targeted ads to potential members attending competing trade shows.

**Custom Landing Pages:** Web pages built specifically for this campaign, designed to boost conversion.

Following the campaign, the association asserted, “In regards to success metrics (i.e. brand awareness, website traffic, leads, website engagement, etc.), our campaign performed much better than expected.”

In another example, an association hoping to increase enrollment in CE and certification programs constructed a campaign featuring site retargeting, behavioral and event targeting, CRM/list targeting and persona targeting that aimed specifically for new students and graduate programs. It was a highly cost-effective method of expanding reach.

Associations and other membership organizations have always faced – and will always face – the same challenges of keeping and gaining members and selling their events and educational services. But thankfully, technology is making it easier than ever to find prospects and buyers – and importantly – do it in a cost-effective manner. As associations continue to find ways of bringing value and benefits to members, using the digital tactics discussed in this playbook can help them fulfill that mission.