

# MEMBERSHIP 2018

Australian trends  
and predictions



## INTRODUCTION

As membership professionals get set for another important year, we must remind ourselves of the one shared resolution that truly matters – to continually enhance our connection with the people we represent. In other words, how can we engage members over the next 12 months on a meaningful level they have never previously experienced?

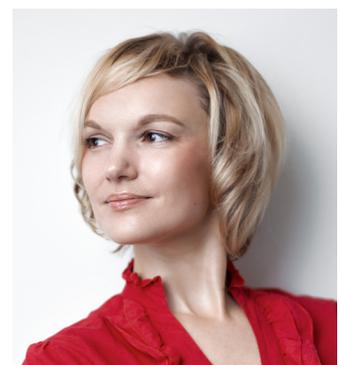
In *Membership 2018: Australian trends and predictions*, we speak to membership specialists about the **key trends** they believe will **shape and define the industry in 2018**. Among many insights, the experts highlight the **need to adapt our communication with a younger generation** of professionals on the rise, **improve our own professional standards** and industry expertise, and lead our members into a future characterised by **innovation and inspiration**.

At MemberBoat we proudly stand at the forefront of these bold endeavours. Research tells us young people are the future of successful membership organisations, meaning a more committed approach to these up-and-coming professionals is our number one priority. We also recognise the potential value in a shift of focus from content and events marketing towards **building stronger communities** and protecting professional standards.

Of course these trends and predictions only form the beginning of our efforts to better understand the future of the membership industry and the positive role to be played by membership agents. We invite you to continue the conversation by leaving a comment at [memberboat.com.au/membership2018](http://memberboat.com.au/membership2018). Together we are always growing.

### **Olena Sydorenko**

Founder and Principal Consultant  
MemberBoat



## THE YEAR OF ASSOCIATION GOVERNANCE

The association governance scandals of 2017 will be repeated in 2018. Different individuals and different associations, but the issues themselves remain the same. **Board capability will remain the biggest controllable threat** holding associations back in 2018. This presents an opportunity for organisations like the Governance Institute and the Australian Institute of Company Directors to find better ways to inform and inspire directors to engender real progress. It also offers a commercial opportunity for them to monetise these services more seamlessly. If they don't, it will open up a gap in the market for new, disruptive providers to lead the much needed governance reform in the association sector.

Without good governance, the sector will be hampered in 2018 in tackling disruption, addressing membership declines and developing robust strategies to drive impact, income and relevance. This presents an opportunity for organisations like AuSAE to step up and help association executives with resources to support progressive thinking, innovation, resilience and sustainability. If they don't, it will open the doors to new incumbents to bring the industry together on not just governance, but all the other aspects of progressive association leadership.

In the meantime, dozens of associations will fade away into obscurity. They won't necessarily close, but their impact in their sectors will be eroded by complacent boards and unclear value propositions. The commercial sector will steal market share from the association heartland, but this will be unseen because most associations don't track this critical performance metric. Members will be lost, and associations will be at a loss to explain where they went, and why.

**A handful of innovative associations will lead the way into the future.** They will be led by progressive CEOs backed by striving boards and fit-for-purpose governance structures. These will be the heroes of 2018. These are the stories to watch out for in 2018. A handful of progressive, fearless and purposeful association executives will shine a light on the future of our sector, and inspire us all to achieve more for our members. Will you be one of them?



### Omer Soker

The author of *The Future of Associations*

*Omer is an association strategist, board advisor, keynote speaker and workshop facilitator.*

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## ASSOCIATION POINT OF VIEW

### Important trends

Real estate agents are under increasing competitive pressure, and not just from the agent “up the road”. This pressure is coming from discounting agents (eg Purplebricks), referral websites funnelling leads to other agents, and technology start-ups looking to automate and replace some of the services that an agent provides. As a result, our **members are looking for answers**. Therefore, an important focus for 2018 is for us to help find those answers. That means **improving standards** and seeking formal professional recognition for the industry, so that member agents are positioned as trusted professional advisers.

We have started on the long road to **formal professional recognition**. The next 12-18 months will involve consultation with the industry and consumers; implementing a more robust framework of standards, training, and co-regulation; and formally applying to the Professional Standards Authority for our national body to be the Entity that regulates the scheme.

### Improving the member experience

Whilst we employ lots of technology it needs to perform better - so we are and will continue to invest in improvements. For example, we plan to update our CRM to help us focus on member engagement scoring and taking action to better engage our low scorers. We're also looking at introducing **member self-serve**, **BPAY on annual-payer member renewals**, and improving our online registrations processes.

### Top challenge

The top challenge we face is getting more of our members to access our services and products. For example, we offer a weekly “free for member” webinar and a free member helpline but most of our members do not take advantage of either of these services - and they're great! We believe that member engagement scoring, some marketing automation, and more direct communications with the “less engaged” will help to improve our performance.

### Peter Griffin

**General Manager, Real Estate Institute of New South Wales**



*Peter has broad executive skills developed in the not for profit, private and government sectors such as associations, IT, publishing, and healthcare. He is a Certified Practising Marketer and a Chartered Accountant.*

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## WHAT MATTERS TO GEN Z MEMBERS

At Student Edge we deal with Gen Z and Millennials on a daily basis, so it's absolutely essential for us to be authentic and have a clearly defined purpose that younger generations can relate to. We're committed to a singular vision: helping to create a world where students are empowered and supported to make great life choices.

Student Edge has grown to become the largest member-based organisation of high school and tertiary-based students in Australia because we actively communicate with young people about the things that matter in their lives. We position ourselves as a true expert in the youth space by **providing ongoing relevant and up-to-date content**. We conduct research to stay on the pulse of youth interests – from music and movies all the way to social issues – and deliver content that's in line with these interests, speaking to members in a voice they recognise and appreciate

On behalf of its student members, Student Edge continues to negotiate benefits from the nation's leading retailers, on products and services that are important to young people like food, fashion, education, technology, travel and entertainment. We also offer comprehensive support on lifestyle, education and career choices.

This is the number one lesson for membership organisations trying to develop highly engaged young members in 2018: **become the trusted 'go-to' resource** for the key life-stage decisions of your industry's youth segment.

Membership organisations must recognise that successful youth engagement relies on a **strong, relatable member benefits offering**. As part of our efforts to continually grow our database, we recently transitioned to a better rewarding system where members redeem points earned online for completing surveys. Our quick polls and competitions have amazing prizes that are genuinely relevant to this age cohort.



### Simon Miraudo

Editor, Head of Communications & Membership  
at Student Edge

*As Head of Communications & Membership, Simon oversees a team that cares for the entire Student Edge memberbase (950,000 students nationwide), as well as their content and outreach activities.*

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## FUTURE TECHNOLOGY PREDICTIONS

A prominent trend Member Evolution sees going into 2018 is associations ability to adapt their membership strategies and value proposition to build engagement with a **younger audience**. The younger generations have grown up with computers, other devices, and yes, games – lots of them.

As a result **gamification** is a comfortable experience and transition from the ordinary work-based environment. Member Evolution believes 2018 will be the most opportune time for associations to implement gamification strategies. Enough time has passed for associations to grasp both the meaning and usability of gamification. Gamification takes the principles of the gaming world, experiences of levelling and point systems, or rewards and redemptions and implements them into real world environments to stimulate the member and make activities more engaging.

The **top challenge** will be related around how associations define and strategically implement the variety of creative gamification measures on offer. For example, an association could assign a point system for each resource a member reviews (this could involve adding a comment or opinion of the particular subject). Once the member reaches a certain amount, say 10 points they received a virtual gift (such as a gift certificate).



### Mike Whitehouse

CEO of Aspedia and Director of Member Evolution

*Mike has over 30 years' experience in the IT industry, having founded four successful businesses. He specialises in Member Acquisition & Engagement solutions including process improvement and traditional & social growth strategies.*

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# THE FUTURE OF SPONSORSHIP

There has never been a better time for associations to develop purposeful and profitable partnerships that create real impact. There are three things that every association sponsorship manager should be aware of as we move into 2018 and beyond.

## 1. Move from transactional-based sponsorship to relationship-based partnerships

The new rules of etiquette in successful sponsorship are all about creating a partnership. Professionalising your approach to create a partnership between two like-minded brands who know what they want, value what the other wants and are both prepared to work collaboratively to make it work is vital. Gold, silver, bronze proposals listing logo placement and exhibition space as focal benefits of sponsorship are not enough. Brands want to value-add to the experience of your members (their customers) and forge real connections.

## 2. You operate in a competitive environment - how will you make a different noise?

In Australia and New Zealand there are approximately 700,000 organisations that identify themselves as non-profit. When it comes to sponsorship, many associations forget that other organisations and events operating in similar industries, sectors or professions will be approaching the same brands. The real opportunity to stand out lies in being able to uncover your unique value to a brand and make an approach that is compelling.

## 3. Understand your REAL value to sponsors.

Real value to sponsors comes from honouring your role as gatekeeper to a community of members that is also their ideal target market. Your members are not mandated to be with you - they stay because they derive value from your programs, you advocate for them, educate them and they trust you to represent them. The key to finding where your real value lies, comes from diving deeply into the demographics of your membership. Who are they? What problems are they trying to solve? What interests do they have? What are they already buying? Once you can identify those details, that becomes a powerful proposition to a potential sponsor.

Over the coming months and years this trend of 'professionalising' your sponsorship approach will become more and more prevalent, and unless you move with the tide, you are at risk of losing out on valuable sponsorship investment.



### Abby Clemence

Founder and Managing Director  
Infinity Sponsorship

*International speaker and one of Australasia's leading corporate partnership advisors to the Non-Profit Sector, Abby Clemence has more than 25 years' experience in marketing, sales, adult education, communications, event management and corporate sponsorship.*

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## AND THE RESEARCH SAYS...

As with previous years, we believe the trends for associations in 2018 will continue to be **improving member engagement and members' experience of belonging**, and maintaining the associations' relevance. Nothing new really! However, with an increasingly informed population and a myriad of ways in which to obtain information and professional development, associations do need to find new ways of **engaging** their members in a meaningful way, particularly **younger members** (Millennials).

Isolating the top challenge is difficult! However, we believe that associations need to understand what they can offer to members that no-one else can. And from our own research we know that how well an association understands members' challenges, advocates for the profession or industry, and provides leadership to protect the interests and reputation of members, has a significant impact on member satisfaction, and propensity to renew and recommend membership to others.

So, in 2018, we believe the challenge will be to **better understand members day to day issues**, so that the association can advocate, promote and enhance the profession or industry on behalf of their members. No-one else can do this the same way associations can, and this core to an associations' value proposition.

Recent research from the USA suggests that the Millennial generation, now "grown up", are looking to find roles that they are passionate about, as opposed to a role with a good salary\*. As a result, their attitudes to joining and contributing to an association are also different - they want to belong to an association with a purpose, one they can believe in, and one that makes a difference to them and their career.

So, in 2018, Survey Matters will be conducting a project to better understand Millennials in Australia. We will determine if they belong to an association or not, why they do (or don't) join, and look at their attitudes towards membership. We will also explore what they expect from membership and their opinions on what associations can do to make membership more attractive. This project will be run in February and March 2018, with results available in May.

\* <https://associationsnow.com/2018/01/associations-can-make-match-millennials/>



### **Brenda Mainland**

**Director  
Survey Matters**

*Brenda Mainland is a co-founder and director at Survey Matters – the only research agency exclusively servicing the Australasian association and non-profit sector. She works with associations to help them understand members' needs, so they can represent their members more effectively.*

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MEMBER  
BOAT 

Creating stronger membership  
communities, **together.**

A Sydney-based boutique agency, MemberBoat is a team of passionate professionals who specialise in marketing for membership organisations, industry associations and professional societies.

We believe that marketing for professional associations isn't about pushing information about events and member benefits onto your audience. Marketing to associations is all about establishing credibility, earning trust, fostering purpose and belonging. It's about **creating value beyond financial perks.**

MemberBoat supports professional associations and membership organisations with **all** their marketing efforts, from **membership strategies** and **marketing consultancy** through to day-to-day **tactical** implementation.

With **three pillars** of our business – traditional and digital **MARKETING**, member **ENGAGEMENT** and **PROJECT** management – we create smooth and interactive experience for your members on every step of their customer journey.



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