

ASSOCIATION EMAIL ENGAGEMENT BENCHMARK REPORT

See how you stack up and learn strategies you can use to increase member engagement

2024



Table of Contents

01	Note from the CEO
02	From Broadcasts to Conversations
03	The Response Rate
04	Why Campaign Size Matters
05	Inbox Rebels: Saturday & Sunday Delivery
06	Ask a Question & Remind Them
07	Response Rates by Campaign Type
08	Not Just Another Reminder to Renew
09	Building Profiles & Welcoming New Members
10	New Campaigns to Try
11	Response Rates by Question Type
12	Ready for Excellence
13	Next Steps to Email Success

Note from the CEO

01



Dave Will

CEO & Co-Founder, PropFuel

Dive into PropFuel's first-ever email engagement benchmarking report: a no-nonsense guide exploring modern approaches to email engagement: what is working and what is no longer. If you're a bold and curious marketing or membership professional in the association space, this one's for you.

This report offers insights on how to make every email count. From optimizing campaign audience size (smaller is better!) to exploring the magic of asking questions vs. broadcasting information, we've laid it all out for you. If you're on the hunt for ways to improve your email campaigns to finally create emails that engage and move members and future members to action, you're in the right place!

The Data

The data and trends in this report are sourced from an analysis of all campaigns from 201 PropFuel clients, nearly all of them associations just like yours. In total, the data represents just under 13 million emails sent in 2023. We believe these findings will provide both simple tactics and ah-ha moments to apply to your email campaigns, immediately.

"What is your open rate on emails from your mom? I'm guessing it is pretty high. How about if your daughter sends you a link, what is your click through rate? Probably pretty close to 100 percent, and certainly more than the industry average of 2.5 percent."

- Cameron Aubuchon, CTO & Co-founder, PropFuel, on why relevance and personalization matter in email.

201

PropFuel Clients

13 Million

Emails

From Broadcasts to Conversations 02



“Eblasts”

The standard method of communicating via email to a large group of people.

Conversational Engagement

A modern approach to email engagement, beginning with a segment of individuals and incorporating a question posed to the recipients.

For a moment, shift your focus from what you think of when you think about email marketing: traditional broadcasts with typical email metrics, like opens and clicks. Broadcast emails, and their indicators of “engagement,” merely scratch the surface of what is possible when it comes to your association creating more meaningful and natural relationships with your members and broader audience, at scale.

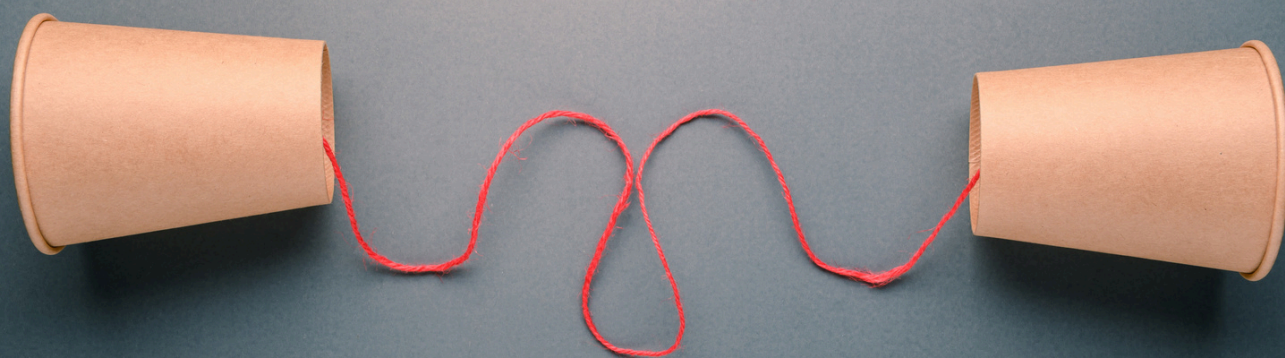
Enter Conversational Engagement, which differs significantly from broadcast email strategies. The goal of this method of communication is simple: to create a pathway to deeper connections. Broadcast emails sent en masse to large groups with the same message, leave you with an improved segment, at best. Conversational Engagement, on the other hand, starts with a segmented audience and drills all the way down to individual engagement. This initial step ensures that communications are tailored right from the outset, fostering more personalized and impactful interactions.

By focusing on smaller, more defined groups (segments), these campaigns are structured to resonate more directly with recipients, paving the way for enhanced engagement. Segmentation allows marketers to start conversations that are relevant to each unique group, moving beyond broad messages to address specific needs and interests.

This report offers a benchmark of your current email communication style - likely, generalized “blast” emails - with the conversational engagement method. You’ll see evidence of how this approach significantly uplifts engagement rates versus traditional email metrics, giving you options for a brighter email future.

The Response Rate

03



A New Email Metric

In the world of email statistics, the response rate is a novelty. Similarly to your everyday scenario where you send an email to a single individual and anticipate a response back, PropFuel campaigns are built to engage by initiating dialogue with a question.

The response rate—a pivotal metric within the PropFuel platform—sheds light on how members interact with a posed question that is answered in an email. This method offers invaluable insights into preferences, needs, and interests.

The outcome of an individual's response is different from a click, which tells you merely that the individual clicked. A response to a question generates new data from the Voice of the Member, while simultaneously triggering automated actions, customized to the response.

If you're thinking, "I can't send an email to thousands of members and manage individual responses!" - you can! A combination of automated workflows for a series of actions - such as sending an internal alert to a staff member regarding the individual's response - allow for a balance of time-saving automation and the human touch.

RESPONSE RATE

8.1% vs. 2.7%

Small &
Medium
Campaigns -
PropFuel

Non-Profit
Industry Click-
Through Rate -
Mailchimp*

OPEN RATE

41.7% vs. 26.6%

PropFuel
Campaigns

Non-Profit
Industry Open
Rate - Mailchimp*

<https://mailchimp.com/resources/email-marketing-benchmarks/>

Why Campaign Size Matters

04

Smaller, Segmented Campaigns for Bigger Impact

Relevance and personalization are the keystones of effective email communications. Data from our clients supports this philosophy, illustrating a clear trend: *as the size of the campaign's audience decreases, its performance metrics across the board show marked improvement*. This is usually because with smaller audiences, more attention is given to matching the audience with the message.

The decline in performance metrics as campaign size increases underscores a fundamental truth in email marketing: **engagement thrives on relevance and personal connection**. As the campaign's recipient count grows, the challenge of maintaining these crucial elements intensifies, often leading to diminished returns.

Today, where the email noise is louder than ever, cutting through with messages that matter to each recipient is not just beneficial; it's essential. The data below serves as a reminder of the value in beginning with a relevant segment of your audience. This way, the message is more likely to resonate with individual recipients from the start. As the data clearly shows, better segmentation leads to significantly higher response rates.

Of course, the journey to understanding your audience doesn't end when an individual responds. There's always an opportunity to learn more about them, which is what PropFuel delivers: every email is posed as a question, intended to learn something new about the individual who is interacting with the campaign.

Conversational Engagement Response Rate by Campaign Size

13.6%

Small Campaigns
(<1K recipients)

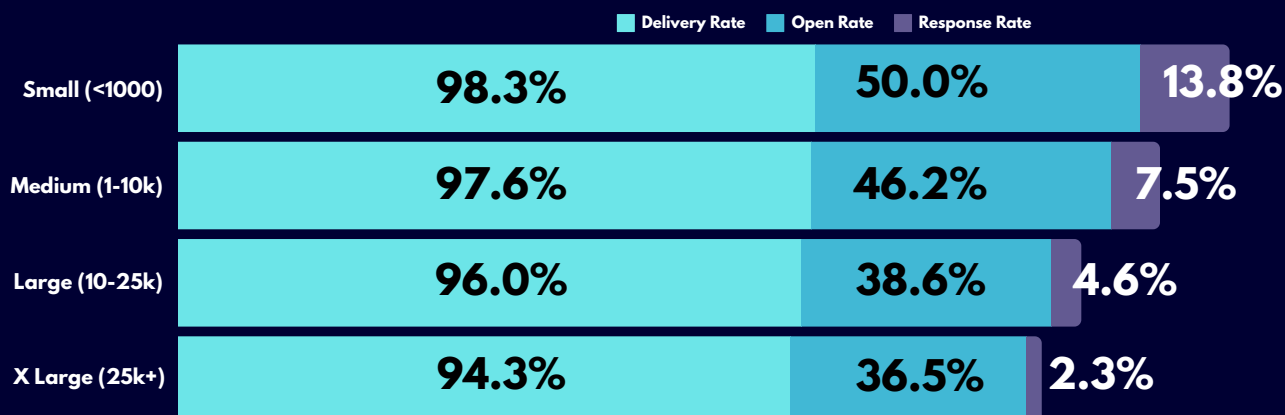
7.2%

Medium Campaigns
(1K-10K recipients)

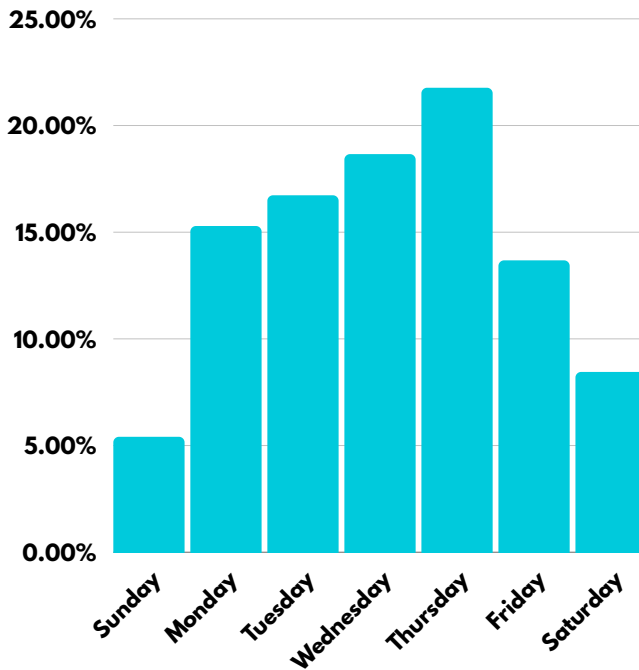
4.1%

Large Campaigns
(10K-25K recipients)

Engagement by Campaign Send Size



Inbox Rebels: Saturday & Sunday Delivery 05



% of Total Emails Sent by Day, PropFuel

Experiment with New Days for Increased Opens

In the quest for the holy grail of email engagement, marketers have long debated the optimal day to press "send." Conventional wisdom suggests mid-week sends, specifically Tuesdays - Thursdays, to capture the bulk of audience attention. Our data shows that **57.2% of emails are sent on these three days alone. What does that make them? Crowded.**

It's challenging enough to get eyeballs on emails, so why drop them into inboxes on the most crowded days of the week? For small and medium sized PropFuel campaigns, Saturdays and Sundays earn the spotlight, boasting the highest combined response rate of 10%. This suggests that less crowded inboxes on these days should provide a unique opportunity for messages to stand out and capture audience interest.

10%

Response Rate, Small & Medium Campaigns sent on Saturday + Sunday combined

57.2%

Campaign emails sent on Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays combined



ASSOCIATION HIGHLIGHT

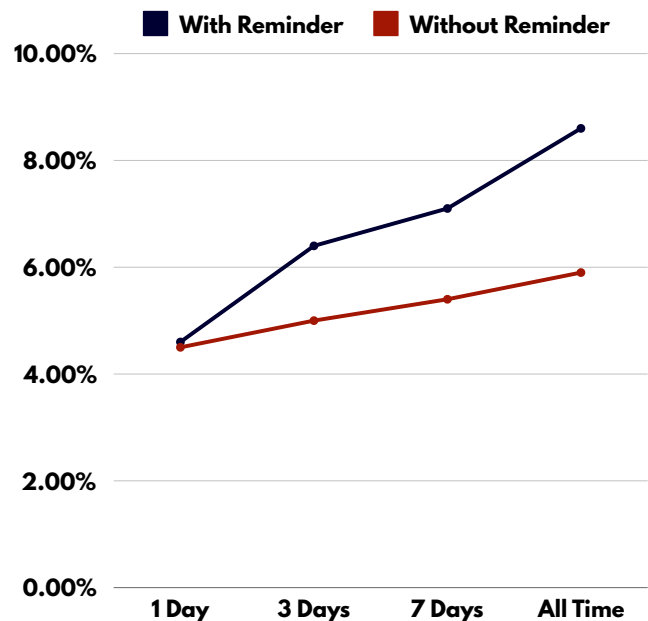
The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) used PropFuel to explore their members' perspectives on unionization. By asking, **"How interested would you be in joining a union?"** they achieved a 10% response rate. The results were insightful: 39% showed high interest, 24% wanted more information, and 18% were not interested. This feedback provided ACEP with a clear direction on addressing unionization in their community.

Ask a Question & Remind Them 06

Whether it's a gentle nudge about a lapsed membership or an invitation to contribute more actively, question-based campaigns with reminders ensure that associations remain top-of-mind for their members without overstepping. For small and medium-sized campaigns, the data offers insightful guidance on whether or not to include a reminder email, and if so, how many days after the original campaign send.

A significant 37% of questions are answered post-reminder, revealing a simple strategy to increase engagement. By ensuring that follow-ups occur no later than a week after the initial outreach, associations can significantly enhance their engagement rates, fostering a more interactive and responsive community.

With strategic timing and personalized communication, associations can leverage technology to meet and anticipate the needs of their members. In doing so, they create a more engaged, informed, and connected community, ready to respond, participate, and eventually, renew!



Response Rate by Time Passed: Small & Medium Campaigns

With Reminder

8.6%

Without Reminder

5.9%

With/ Without Reminder

Campaigns with reminders consistently outperform those without, showcasing an 8.6% response rate compared to 5.9% without. This 2x difference in engagement underscores the reminders' role not just in boosting immediate responses but in sustaining a dialogue.

Before Reminder

62.7%

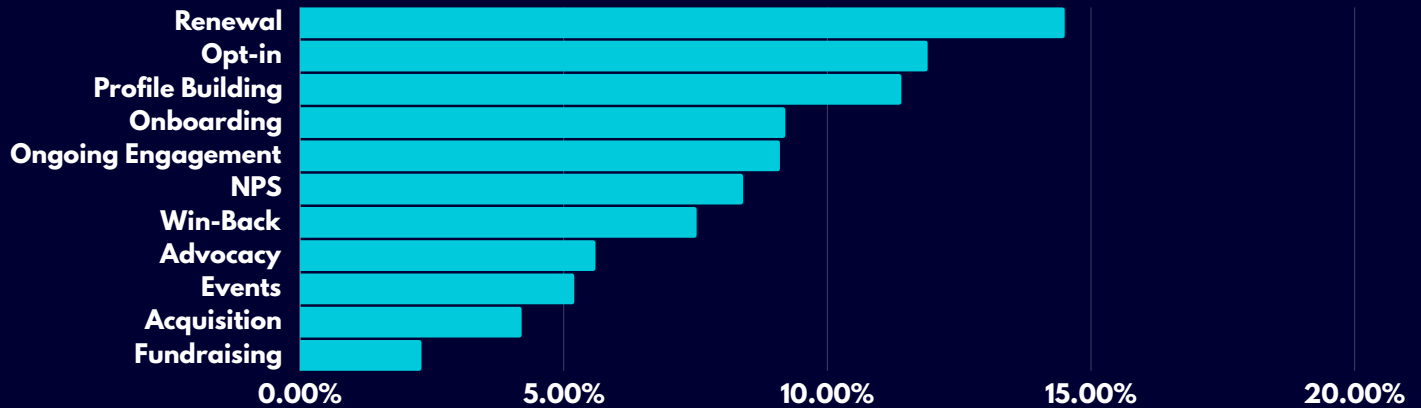
After Reminder

37.3%

Questions Answered Before vs. After Reminder

For questions that have a reminder that are answered, senders see a boost of an impressive 37.3%.

Response Rates by Campaign Type 07



When it comes to email campaigns, each type serves a unique purpose, targeting different facets of member interaction and engagement. Our analysis on response rates by campaign type shows insights into what drives member participation and which strategies yield the most significant results for associations. From renewal nudges to volunteer opportunities or sparking initial interest, the type of question—be it yes/no, multiple choice, open ended, Net Promoter Score (NPS), or a rating scale—sets the stage for a deeper engagement.

The Powerhouses: Renewal and Opt-In Campaigns

Renewal and Opt-In campaigns emerge as the clear front-runners. With response rates soaring to 14.5% and 11.9% respectively, these campaigns not only fulfill critical organizational objectives but also engage members in a meaningful way. Associations are in a constant quest to retain their members, and the success of renewal campaigns underscores the direct impact on revenue and ROI. Meanwhile, the high engagement with opt-in campaigns for email and text communications reflects an increasing trend: empowering members to have a say in what they receive. This personalized approach respects members' preferences and enhances their engagement by ensuring the content they receive is relevant and desired.



The Pennsylvania Medical Society used a straightforward yes/no question to boost membership renewals. Faced with 6,000 unresponsive lapsed members, they asked, "**Are you planning to renew your membership in 2024?**" This approach led to 918 responses, with 590 members (64%) intending to renew, demonstrating the power of direct questions in rekindling member interest and commitment.

Not Just a Reminder to Renew

08



The Dual Benefit of Membership Renewal Campaigns

Renewal campaigns, by their very nature, are pivotal for associations. They are not just about sustaining membership numbers; they are about reaffirming value and relevance in the eyes of existing members. The standout 14.5% response rate for membership renewal campaigns is testament to their effectiveness, demonstrating how well-crafted messages that resonate with the audience's need for belonging and value can significantly impact engagement and financial health.



ASSOCIATION HIGHLIGHT

Argentum effectively used a Yes/No question to verify billing contacts for membership renewals, achieving a 52% response rate, with 90% affirming their role. A follow-up reminder three weeks later maintained a strong 42% response rate. This two-stage approach simplified administrative tasks and highlighted the power of direct questions in engaging members around the essential work of ensuring members renew.

Capturing context is only something you can do when responses are incorporated into the process. When most associations send a renewal campaign with a "Renew Now" button, there is very little context. The association doesn't know the individual's intent unless they complete the renewal process.

The campaigns measured in this data set reflect a new renewal approach. A posed question asks for renewal intent, upon which the organization can categorize engagement with relevant responses and follow-up communications via email, SMS or phone.

For example, If someone says yes, they intend to renew, let's send them to the renewal page. If they don't actually renew, add them to a nurturing campaign until they do. If they say no, let's ask them why and based on that, we can respond with a relevant response.

Building Profiles & Welcoming New Members

09



Profile Building and New Member Onboarding Campaigns: Key Drivers of Engagement

In the realm of email marketing for associations, Profile Building and New Member Onboarding campaigns emerge as top performers, ranking third and fourth overall for small and medium-sized campaigns combined. Their impressive response rates, 11.4% for Profile Building and 9.2% for Onboarding, highlight their effectiveness in engaging members and enhancing organizational data.

Profile Building campaigns stand out with an 11.4% response rate, underscoring their pivotal role in maintaining accurate member information.

New Member Onboarding campaigns, with a 9.2% response rate, play a crucial role in integrating new members into the organization. These campaigns typically involve a series of automated steps that introduce new members to the association's offerings, gather additional data, and assess their interests and needs. The success of these campaigns reflects the importance of a structured onboarding process that makes new members feel welcomed and informed.



In an era where accurate member profiles are essential, Profile Building campaigns have become pivotal. By asking, **"Is this information correct?"** associations streamline data verification and engage members in maintaining their own information.

Organizations like the Missouri State Teachers Association and the Biotechnology Innovation Organization have successfully used this approach. Their success highlights the dual benefit of improving data quality and fostering member interaction, setting a standard for effective, direct communication.

New Campaigns to Try

10



Other Notable Performers

While renewal and opt-in campaigns lead the pack, other types of campaigns serve essential roles within the engagement spectrum:

- **Ongoing Engagement** campaigns see robust response rates at 9.1%. These types facilitate the integration of newcomers and the continual engagement of the existing base, contributing to a vibrant, active community.
- **NPS/CSAT surveys**, with a 8.4% response rate, offer critical feedback mechanisms, allowing organizations to gauge satisfaction and areas for improvement.
- **Win-Back** campaigns, designed to reengage lapsed members who are no longer active members or in the membership grace period, offer organizations an alternative to typical “renew now” e-blasts, earn a 7.5% response rate.
- **Advocacy** campaigns garner a 5.6% response rate, showing that members are engaged in issues impacting their profession or industry.
- **Event** campaigns follow closely with a 5.2% response rate, reflecting the importance members place on professional development and networking opportunities. Effective promotion of these events is crucial for maintaining high engagement.
- **New Member Acquisition** check-ins have a 4.2% response rate, indicating good potential for attracting new members. This suggests that targeted outreach efforts can successfully draw interest from prospective members.
- **Fundraising Campaigns**, with a 2.30% response rate, face more challenges in engagement. However, there is an opportunity to enhance these campaigns by personalizing appeals and demonstrating the impact of contributions.

Overall, these response rates highlight the varying levels of member engagement across different campaign types, providing valuable insights for tailoring communication strategies.



In a standout campaign, VECCS asked members, “Would you like to activate your free Headspace subscription?” This clear call to action doubled the usage of the member benefit and boosted engagement. The campaign achieved a 15% response rate, with over 450 members opting in, demonstrating the power of timely, strategic questions to drive member participation.

Response Rates by Question Type 11

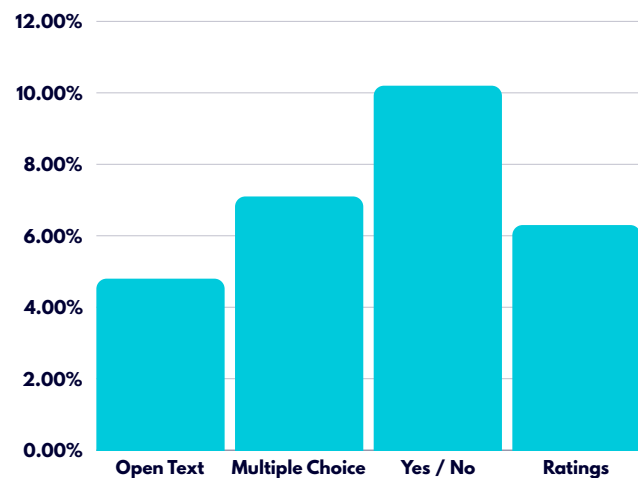
When looking at the effectiveness of various question types within email campaigns, a clear preference for simplicity and ease emerges among respondents. Analyzing the response rates for the initial question posed in PropFuel campaigns offers valuable lessons for crafting questions that not only engage, but also elicit valuable feedback from members.

The Importance of Yes/No Questions

Yes/No questions garner a 10.2% response, This question type epitomizes simplicity, allowing members to quickly engage without the need for extensive thought or time commitment. The high response rate to this format underscores a fundamental truth in member engagement: ease of interaction is key. Members are more inclined to participate when the effort required is minimal, yet the impact of their response can be profound.

Multiple Choice and Ratings questions also perform well at 7.1% and 6.3% respectively, offering a slightly more nuanced yet still straightforward option for members to express their opinions or satisfaction levels.

Response Rate by Question Type



ASSOCIATION HIGHLIGHT

NEHRA's 12-step automated onboarding campaign, using PropFuel's AI Blueprints feature, has set a new standard for member interaction. By asking targeted questions about preferences and integrating the data into their CRM, they achieved response rates of 20% to 36%. This approach, applied to a small campaign size under 1,000 recipients, demonstrates the effectiveness of thoughtful, consistent engagement in fostering deeper member connections.

The Place for Open Text Questions

On the other end of the spectrum, Open Text questions garner a 4.8% response rate, the lowest among the types analyzed. While this might suggest a reluctance to engage in more time-consuming responses, it's essential to recognize the unparalleled depth and richness of insight such answers can provide from the Voice of the Member.

Open-text responses allow members to share their thoughts in their own words, offering organizations a window into the personal preferences, ideas, and suggestions of their audience. This type of feedback, though less frequently offered, is a goldmine of qualitative data that can inform more personalized, member-centric strategies.

Ready for Excellence

12



The data and examples shared within these pages underscore a fundamental truth: **engagement is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor**. It demands a willingness to experiment, to question the status quo, and to embrace the unique characteristics and interests of your members. Whether through the strategic use of reminders, the exploration of new question types, or the tailored approach to campaign timing, the opportunities to elevate your email marketing efforts and forge stronger bonds with your members are endless.

As you move forward and make adjustments to your strategy, remember that the essence of effective email marketing lies in its ability to adapt, resonate, and inspire action. The organizations highlighted in this report have shown that with creativity, persistence, and a keen understanding of their members' needs, it's possible to break through the noise and make a lasting impact.

Let this report be a springboard for your own exploration into member engagement. The landscape is ever-evolving, and your next breakthrough could be just one campaign away. Here's to daring to be different, to asking the right questions, and to crafting email campaigns that not only reach inboxes but also touch individual hearts and minds.

We hope our findings have inspired you to continually push the boundaries of what's possible in your engagement strategies, ensuring that your association not only grows, but thrives, in an increasingly connected world.

Next Steps to Email Success

13

Join the Membership Masterminds Community on LinkedIn

Membership Masterminds is a collective space where member engagement professionals gather to share insights, discuss best practices, explore new technologies, and support one another through friendly and engaging interactions. You'll gain access to a suite of resources, engaging events, and activities all aimed at helping you thrive in membership engagement. And the best part? It's completely free! Sign up at www.membershipmasterminds.com.

Download the 100+ Questions You Should Be Asking Members Ebook

What questions should you ask your members to engage them in new ways? Get more than 100 ideas in the ebook. Download it for free at info.propfuel.com/100-ebook.

Book a Demo to See PropFuel in Action

Book a demo with PropFuel today to learn more about how conversational engagement can work for your organization and discover how to serve members individually, and at scale.. We'll take you through the platform so that you can see how organizations like yours are uncovering member needs, acting on them every day, and reducing email friction and number of broadcasts sent to members. Schedule your call at www.propfuel.com/book-a-demo.



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