

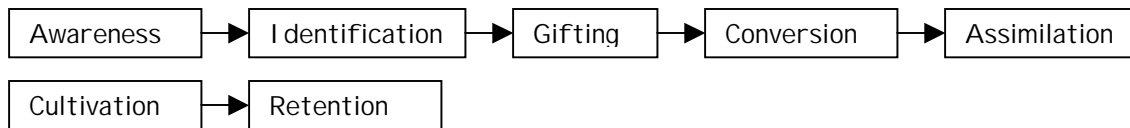
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

Membership Model

What is the Path To Lifetime Membership?

N.B. – This set of steps is hypothetical. Some people will take different paths, but some of these steps may be the necessary and sufficient elements for membership to occur.

Here is the model:



1. Under the radar – from awareness to liking and to seeking it out. The person discovers PTV/PBS channel and develops a “vague” awareness of the programming, which somehow appeals to him or her. Given their generally positive experience of the programming, hedonic overtones develop and positive emotional responses to the programming accumulate into feeling clusters (attitudes), and eventually PTV moves on to their viewing channel repertoire (meaning they begin to check out what’s on PTV when they watch TV). For some people this might take months or years to happen, while for others it develops quickly (e.g., a three-year-old discovering PBS children’s programming).
2. Programming Identity/Image/Brand develops. The programming service gains a separate identity from the programming for the viewer. For example, PBS is dissimilar from NBC because its programming is more serious and less sensationalistic and there are no commercial interruptions. Gradually (or instantly) the viewer creates and senses a separate identity for the programming service. Liking and image fuse into a differentiated concept of “public television”. (In marketing literature this is the consumer sensing and integrating the brand into their psyche.)
3. Gifting. Eventually “the ask” arrives in the form of direct mail or a pledge drive. Oversimplified one of two paths is pursued. (1) The plea for support is ignored for any number of reasons. Many of these “blockages” occur due

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individual differences in perception and reaction and are dealt with in a different document.

(2) The plea is responded to and a donation is made. Some of these people "get it," the connection between their experience of the service and positive consequences of their support. However, there are some pledgers who don't "get it" and may have pledged just for the premium.

The donation can have, ideally, two different origins. A reasoned response to something like the civic responsibility appeal that we see in some members, especially those recruited from direct mail. An irrational or personal response is motivated from liking the programming and/or pledge talent, and impulsively pledging for a premium. (In this instance the emotion and the experience tip the balance.)

4. Conversion. After a time the donor renews and converts into a member. The conversion is distinguished because the individuals have a close identification with the program service. They become a fan who invests both emotional and fiscal resources in the service, and they are not categorically any different from someone becoming a Packer fan.

Conversion means bonding between the member and the organization (brand, institution etc.) has occurred. A converted member can discuss at great length what they like about their local PTV station, how its programming is different ("doesn't insult your intelligence" is a common refrain) and last how they (the members) are different from others who are not members. If conversion does not take place the donor lapses off the file.

Other consumer marketing models assume that after converting a buyer into a loyal consumer something like the following often occurs.

First, assimilation efforts are pursued. The company or institution communicates messages to welcome them into the club, perhaps explaining the benefits of being associated with the brand. In some instances this is crucial to nipping "buyer's remorse" in the bud. Further, efforts are made to assure them they are a member of a special group or "club" that makes a difference (in the case of a philanthropy or public good).

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Cultivation has a number of different connotations, depending upon who is using the term. In major gift campaigns it is the process of profiling prospects, qualifying them and then developing (cultivating) a relationship that, in due course, results in a major gift.

In marketing and lower-end charitable gifts, cultivation is the process of reinforcing the message concerning the emotional and material rewards that flow from continual purchase (or renewal). These are important for both the company and for the loyal customer/member. Here the message is to articulate the relationship between the parties.

A problem is that product/programming experiences are ethereal, fleeting and often become ill-formed memories. Members/customers have to know and sense what they felt and thought when viewing a program or using a product. Second that "sense" has to be related to their decision to support the charity or buy the product. Here the specifics of the relationship are developed in some detail to help people articulate their experiences.

In public TV the continual exposure to the programming is positive but often the viewing experience fails to register consciously with the member. If they do not perceive it as a benefit and have no consciousness of their viewing and enjoying the programming, then members may fail to perceive a substantiation of their membership commitment. The linkage of "membership" and positive viewing experience has not occurred. Communication, be it by mail or through on-air promos, needs to cultivate and reinforce these perceptions of linkage.

For many stations and other charities the effort to develop and maintain assimilation and cultivation programs may appear ill advised given the costs involved. The question could be: How does the cost of lapsing members compare to the costs of developing and maintaining assimilation and cultivation programs to retain them?



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