

How a Staff of One Nurtured Organizational Professionalism and Increased Members by 16%

At a glance

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| Organization name Midwest Sociological Society | | Type Professional Association | | Solution(s) used Oasis AMS | |
| Industry  Sociology | | Staff Size  1 | | Member Count  900 | |
| | | | | Annual Revenue  \$350k | |
| Challenge The skills of the executive director were being wasted, as she was spending most of her time performing data entry and highly manual tasks that kept her from more strategic focus. | | | Solution By using Oasis AMS, the organization’s executive director started saving 15-20 hours a week on manual tasks, and reallocating those hours to more strategic initiatives, which has proven successful through impressive membership growth and annual meeting attendance. | | |



When Jennifer Talarico entered her new role as Executive Director of the Midwest Sociological Society (MSS) in 2016, she realized quickly that something was missing. As the organization had been using File Maker Pro, the program’s lack of automation made it necessary to rebuild data year after year.

“Of course, the reports were less than adequate,” said Talarico. “So I used that program for a year and gathered some data to give to my board to say, ‘You hired me as an ED, and what you’re paying for is a very expensive data entry clerk.’”

Expensive Data Clerk Crisis

Talarico said in addition to hours of data entry, she was also mailing invoices and processing checks, which took an abundance of her time. She knew there had to be a better way. After receiving a recommendation for MemberClicks from a colleague, Talarico pitched to the board that the association management software would be the perfect solution to their efficiency problems caused by clunky software.

MSS is designed to be the home for academic and applied sociologists, as well as students of the discipline. Covering a 9-state area, being the sole staff member of the organization is no easy task. If member value was to be realized and strengthened, Talarico knew she needed reinforcement.

“I knew right away that we needed a different way of tracking and engaging membership as well as streamlining some other information that I was being asked but couldn’t really find easily,” Talarico said. “So, I started the research on

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membership management systems pretty quickly and we started the transition to MemberClicks in the summer of 2017, with full integration by September 2017.”

Since implementing MemberClicks in 2017, MSS has seen positive returns on their investments, mostly in the form of more time created for Talarico to elevate the professionalism of the group.

A High Stakes Annual Meeting

MSS's membership participation ebbs and flows based on their annual meeting. This is because in order to present studies, posters, papers, etc., at the association's event, they must be members. So, while many people join the organization every year to enjoy the perks of consistent connection, many more wait to renew their membership until they know their research has been accepted for presentation at the annual meeting.

With the annual meeting being the flagship event, Talarico said that many of the mundane, manual tasks she was forced to do got in the way of planning and working on strategic efforts focused on growing the meeting and membership. Because of the efficiency gained through using Oasis, Talarico estimates she is saving 15 to 20 hours a week by not having to tend to mundane tasks, especially in the four intense months leading up to the group's annual meeting.

The biggest lift from MemberClicks in regards to MSS's annual meeting was the use of online forms and payment. Talarico said she used to have to make regular bank runs for check deposits, but in the last several months, she has had one bank run with maybe 10 checks to deposit; nearly everyone is paying online.

“I have saved hours and hours of time that I used to spend processing memberships, registrations and payments,” Talarico said. “This time savings equates to thousands of dollars of my time repurposed to focus on our organizational needs.”

Ensuring Professionalism

The numbers not only support awareness, but also growth. Since December 2017, MSS has seen a 16% boost to their overall membership numbers and a nearly 60% boost in joins between 2018 and 2019.

Remember that goal of leading her organization to become and appear more professional? The ability to brand forms and emails appropriately has elevated the recognition and awareness of the brand for members.

Data Telling the Story

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Talarico's efforts are clearly being put to better use now that Oasis is doing some of the manual heavy lifting for her.

"You know, I meet with other (executive directors) at least monthly, and what is always said in that meeting is, 'This is the loneliest job you will ever have.'" Talarico said. "There's so much expected of you, but it's not like you have someone to go to three doors down to vent to. So making things as easy and intuitive as possible is the best thing in the world. One less thing I have to worry about."

For people like Talarico, MemberClicks is thrilled to be the coworker down the hall that handles daily tasks while you're not even looking. That way, customers can focus on executing the strategy and vision that leads to sustained member value and growth, just like MSS has done.

► Read more at blog.memberclicks.com/case-studies

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