**
Attitudinal Segmentation Research by Willow Marketing and Audience Audit**

In the spring of 2020, SMPS was approached by Willow Marketing to participate in an attitudinal research study by sharing their custom survey with our membership. 16 associations participated in the research. The types of organizations included: private sector, academic, nonprofit, retired/seeking work, government, and other. The survey launched in May 2020 and closed in mid-June. 4,170 association members completed the survey. There was a margin of error of +/- 1.4 percentage points.

Segmentation was based exclusively on ratings of attitudinal statements. Each segment represents a group of respondents for whom a particular set of attitudes are strongly connected. The research uncovered four attitudinal segments of association members. Here’s a brief overview of the segments:

* **Believers** are comfortable that the traditionally-cited benefits of membership associations hold true. They rely on them for events and professional development and are comfortable with the cost/benefit ratio.
* **Leaders** are actively seeking out new ideas, insights and developments in their profession. They feel well-informed and serve as a resource for others.
* **Change Seekers** expect associations to do a better job with alternatives to in-person
networking. They also believe associations need to look at the experiences of other industries for addressing challenges.
* **Strugglers** are quite concerned about the challenges they face in their own careers as well as the challenges faced by their organizations and their professions overall. The impact of COVID-19 on in-person engagement is of particular concern.

Please see the *Executive Summary* from Willow Marketing for more on the four attitudinal segments. And see the *Association Member Self-Segmentation Survey* for the question to ask members to see which segment they most closely identify with.

SMPS will use the findings from this segmentation research to better understand and engage more fully with our members. The more we know about our members and their attitudes, the better we can meet and exceed their needs and expectations.

 **SMPS Attitudinal Segmentation Research Findings**

There were 196 responses from SMPS members to the survey. With a margin of error of +/- 7.0%. Please see the *SMPS Attitudinal Webinar notes* for a transcript of the SMPS webinar.

As you review the findings below, **here are some items that stood out as being uniquely SMPS.** SMPS has a larger segment of Believers (44% vs. 25%) than other associations. Employers pay for SMPS survey responders (99% vs. 54%) to participate in association activities. SMPS participants are more likely to have participated in association activities than other associations. SMPS respondents had the highest rating of importance for Providing marketing advice and resources at 5.3. The SMPS Net Promoter Score of 73 was one of the highest seen in the study. SMPS respondents are more likely to value many aspects of industry conferences. Meeting with customers or prospects and social activities are substantially more important to them than other respondents. SMPS respondents are much more likely than others to use networking for many reasons. Increasing visibility, new business development, and connecting and supporting others are key.

**SMPS Segments:**

We have a larger percentage of Believers in SMPS. And a smaller percentage of Strugglers than other organizations. *See Willow’s Executive Summary for a description of the segments.*

* **Believers (44%)** vs. other organizations at 27%
* **Leaders (21%)** vs. 23%
* **Change Seekers (28%)** vs. 28%
* **Strugglers (7%)** vs. 22%

 **SMPS Responses:**
SMPS respondents are more likelyto **struggle with visibility in their profession, keeping up with developments and trends, and connecting with others.** They have fewer issues with finding work or having rewarding work than others.

For SMPS respondents, **the greatest organizational challenge is in finding new customers,** **students, members, etc. at 62%** **vs. 42%** of other associations. **And in finding qualified employees 65% vs. 35%.**SMPS respondents **are more likely to have only one association membership individually**. In the other associations, respondents had two or three memberships in different organizations. *So SMPS respondents are most likely talking about SMPS in their responses.*

91% of SMPS respondents **are allowed to participate in** **association activities.**

99% of SMPS participants **say their employer pays for them to participate in association activities** while in other associations its only 54%.

SMPS respondents **are more likely than other respondents to have participated in association activities** **of any kind.**

* 96% (vs. 82%) have attended, watched, or listened to a webinar, podcast, or online presentation
* 91% (vs. 69%) attended a regional or local event
* 89% (vs. 69%) used training or continuing education resources from an association
* 70% (vs. 65%) have attended a national association conference or trade show
* 79% (vs. 58%) participated in an online group or community
* 57% (vs. 43%) implemented or applied association research in my professional setting or network. *This is the highest percentages they’ve seen for research.*

*There’s a lot of engagement here with SMPS vs. what they see overall.*

**Values and Concerns:** Rating the value of association activities with 6 being extremely valuable and 1 not at all valuable.

**Items valued most by SMPS respondents:**

* Providing continuing education resources (5.5)
* Providing employee training programs or professional development opportunities (5.5)
* Providing research and analysis to help people in my profession (5.4)
* Providing career development resources (5.4)
* Sharing the latest trends and legislative updates affecting my profession (5.3)
* Providing organization/institution leadership resources and guidance (5.3)
* Offering events at which participants can meet and connect in person (5.3)
* Providing marketing advice and resources (5.3) *[highest they saw for this item with any group]*
* Offering opportunities for participants to meet and connect online (4.9)
* Providing certifications (4.7)

62% of SMPS respondents **say it’s very important for them to understand the mission and goals of associations in their profession.**

74% of SMPS respondents **say they understand those mission and goals well** vs. 61% of other respondents.

68% of SMPS respondents (vs. 62% of others) **say it’s very important for associations to provide leadership.**
57% of SMPS respondents (vs. 47%) **say associations in their profession definitely provide leadership.**

43% of SMPS respondents (vs. 25%) **say that association membership was “absolutely essential” for someone in their profession prior to COVID-19.**

44% of SMPS participants (vs. 32% of others) **say the value of association membership for their organizations prior to COVID-19 was also essential**.

27% of SMPS respondents **say the value of association membership may have changed due to the pandemic. 38% believe it probably or definitely has.**

67% of SMPS respondents **say the value of associations has increased since the pandemic began.** 67% positive (vs. 60%); 25% (vs. 28%) negative; 8% (vs. 12%) unclear.

**Net Promoter Score:** They asked how likely they were to recommend membership-- **SMPS had a net promote score of 73.** *This is much higher than the other organizations who received a score of 48.*

71% of SMPS respondents **are fairly sure their associations will be able to successfully offer the activities they consider most important given the impact of COVID-19.**

SMPS respondents **are more likely to value many aspects of industry conferences. Meeting with customers or prospects and social activities are substantially more important to them than other respondents.**

* Hearing from experts in my profession or industry SMPS at 5.6 vs. other associations at 5.4
* Learning best practices I can take back to my organization/institution 5.6 vs. 5.3
* Learning about trends in my profession or industry 5.4 vs 5.3
* Learning about what others in my profession are doing to be successful 5.5 vs. 5.2
* Opportunities for training and/or continuing education 5.4 vs. 5.1
* Educational or training opportunities 5.3 vs. 5.1
* Connecting with others in my profession 5.3 vs. 5.1
* Meeting with customers or potential customers 4.8 vs. 3.1 *[largest gap between us and others]*
* The ability to participate in person 4.6 vs. 4.5
* Social activities 4.3 vs. 3.8

SMPS respondents are **much more likely than others to use networking for many reasons. Increasing visibility, new business development, and connecting and supporting others are key.**

* Learning from their expertise 91% (SMPS) vs. 86% (other associations)
* Gaining professional development 87% vs. 82%
* Potential new business opportunities 81% vs. 30% *[largest gap between us and others]*
* Increasing visibility within my profession 80% vs. 56%
* Providing support and encouragement to the people in my network 72% vs. 55%
* I like them as people 72% vs. 49%

SMPS respondents are **more likely to be comfortable with video calls for networking than other respondents.**

SMPS participants **overwhelmingly use LinkedIn for networking.** Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are also popular.

**In the past, how comfortable were you with in-person networking activities at trade shows, conferences, etc. to connect with colleagues?**

* Very comfortable 57% (SMPS) vs. 45% of other associations
* Fairly comfortable 33% vs. 39%
* Not very comfortable 9% for both
* Not comfortable at all 1% vs. 2%
* I have not engaged in in-person networking 1% vs. 5%

**How would you describe your comfort with in-person networking activities over the next six months?** (Asked about July – December 2020)

* Very comfortable 14% (SMPS) vs. others at 19%
* Fairly comfortable 28% (SMPS) vs. 32% others
* Not very comfortable 40% (SMPS) vs. 26%
* Not comfortable at all 15% vs. 17%

79% of SMPS respondents **say they’ve been fairly or very comfortable with online networking in the past.**

More respondents **say they’re fairly or very comfortable with online networking over the next six months.**

Most SMPS respondents **say their goals for networking in-person and online are similar.**