

News Revenue Trends

Building Revenue by Building a Community of Members



Who Am I and What Do I Do?



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Publisher/COO, Voice of San Diego: 2011 – 2017

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What is the News Revenue Hub?

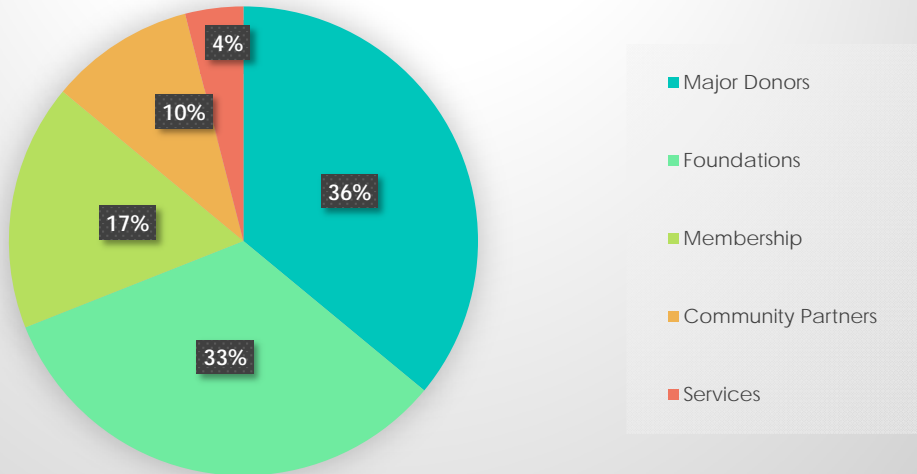
- New project spearheaded by Voice of San Diego
- Provides centralized management of revenue generating programs for other news sites – specifically membership
- Participating news outlets include InsideClimate News, Politifact, NJ Spotlight, The Lens, Honolulu Civil Beat, The Marshall Project, The Rivard Report, The Intercept, Youth Radio, CALmatters

Voice of San Diego

- Founded in 2005, first strictly digital nonprofit news organization
 - Digital = less overhead
 - Nonprofit = more funding options
 - Mission Driven Culture
 - Investigate
 - Explain
 - Engage

Revenue Model

Relationships = Revenue



Why Are Members Important?

- Provide a predictable revenue stream
- Breeding ground for major donors/investors, sponsors and in-kind services
- Serve as focus groups and keep us grounded
- Evangelize
- Help achieve our mission

What Are Members?

- Members are people who give us money **every year** to support the public service we provide.
- They value investigative reporting and accountability journalism.
- They understand and accept their role in making it possible.
- Members are a rare breed.

Is Membership Right for You?

- Do you need more money? Remember: membership is a breeding ground for major donors/investors, sponsors and in-kind services.
- Do you have a loyal audience who appreciates your work and recognizes that **you're** producing it?
- Are you willing to invest in a customer relationship management (CRM) system to store your audience contact information?
- Can you add lead acquisition features to your publication designed to add prospects to your pipeline?
- Do you have a team who can commit to managing a membership program?

How much money are we talking about?

- Voice of San Diego (local): \$350,000 from nearly 3,000 members
- Politifact (national): \$75,000 since Jan., \$86,000 pledged in recurring monthly donations (\$12,800 this week along)
- NJ Spotlight (regional): \$85,600 since Nov., \$20,7000 pledged
- The Lens (local): \$52,900 since Nov., \$40,620 pledged

10 Steps to Starting a Membership Program

STEP ONE: DATABASE

- Install Salesforce or a good CRM (customer relationship management tool)
- Migrate all existing contacts into CRM: subscribers, events, contests, commenters...
- Clean up and maintain good data – accurate messaging crucial

10 Steps to Starting a Membership Program

STEP TWO: DONATION PROCESSOR

- Recommendation: Stripe
- Integrates with Salesforce
- Low friction donation process
- Encourages recurring donations

10 Steps to Starting a Membership Program

STEP THREE: EMAIL

- Set up email software: MailChimp
- Integrates with Salesforce
- Allows for automation
- Effective lead generation

10 Steps to Starting a Membership Program

STEP FOUR: INVENTORY

- Content: columns, games/crosswords, coupons
- Newsletters
- News Alerts
- Magazine
- Events
- Access & Experiences

10 Steps to Starting a Membership Program

STEP FIVE: EXCLUSIVE BENEFITS

- Member Report – monthly email blast/insert from Editor/Publisher
- Member Coffee
- Brews & News
- Perks, Coupons, Branded Swag
- Special Events: tours, parties, breakfasts, lunch, dinner with reporters/editors

*** Make it about access, experiences and relationship building!

10 Steps to Starting a Membership Program

STEP SIX: PACKAGE BENEFITS TIERS

➤ **Conversation Starter** - \$35 - \$100

Exclusive Inside Scoop and Member Report. Invitation to member events including Member Coffees and Brews & News and special recognition on our website.

➤ **Inside Voice** - \$101-\$500

All the above, plus a subscription to VOSD Magazine magazine.

➤ **Speaking Up** - \$501-\$1,000

All of the above, plus a household membership and a free ad to plug your favorite cause in the Member Report and magazine.

➤ **Loud & Clear** - \$1,001 - \$5,000

All of the above, plus special invitation to VOSD Experience member outing.

10 Steps to Starting a Membership Program

STEP SEVEN: DEVELOP MEMBERSHIP STORY AND BRAND



"My name is Samantha and I think San Diego ought to be the world's best city for bicycling"

I AM THE VOICE
of SAN DIEGO

Join the VOSD Community
Become a Member >>

This advertisement features a portrait of Samantha, a woman with dark hair, wearing a yellow and white plaid shirt. The text is overlaid on the image, with a white box containing the quote and another white box containing the 'I AM THE VOICE of SAN DIEGO' logo. A dark grey banner at the bottom contains the call to action.



"My name is Jed and I care about using technology to help San Diegans collaborate with each other."

I AM THE VOICE
of SAN DIEGO

Join the VOSD Community
Become a Member >>

This advertisement features a portrait of Jed, a man with short brown hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The text is overlaid on the image, with a white box containing the quote and another white box containing the 'I AM THE VOICE of SAN DIEGO' logo. A dark grey banner at the bottom contains the call to action.

I Am the Voice of San Diego

10 Steps to Starting a Membership Program

STEP EIGHT: CREATE MEMBERSHIP PAGE

Voice of San Diego Member Benefits

I would like to donate \$

Per Month

Per Year

One Time

This donation will make you a **Inside Voice** member.

[Donate Now](#)

[Learn more about member benefits](#)



Conversation Starter
\$35-\$100

Support this critical public service.

Includes free or discounted admission to events, invitations to exclusive meetings with CEO Scott Lewis and VOSD staff and more.



Inside Voice
\$101-\$500

Make a strong statement in support of your community.

Includes all Conversation Starter benefits plus a subscription to VOSD's biannual print magazine.



Speaking Up
\$501-\$1,000

Share your generosity with a spouse, friend or co-worker.

Includes free admission for two to numerous VOSD events.



Loud & Clear
\$1,001-\$5,000

Make a profound impact on the success of this organization and the San Diego community.

Includes invitations to exclusive events and trips.

10 Steps to Starting a Membership Program

STEP NINE: DEVELOPMENT RECRUITMENT/RETENTION PLAN

Potential Member Strategy:

- 3 touches per month promoting membership, products, access and events

Current Member Strategy:

- Quarterly Impact Report detailing the impact of our reporting and ROI on their investment
- Monthly Member Report
- Renewal reminders at 90, 60, 30 days prior to expiration
- We Miss You reminder after expiration

10 Steps to Starting a Membership Program

STEP 10: PLAN AND LAUNCH CAMPAIGN

- Determine theme and set a goal (monetary and/or # of members)
- Plan coordinated event
- Establish and assign responsibilities
 - Web/print ads
 - social media posts
 - email campaigns
 - engage reporters and editorial team
- Map out entire month
- Identify challenge match

Lessons Learned

- Engage people in your story
- Choose benefits you can easily fulfill
- Don't underestimate the importance of CRM
- Be consistent and aggressive
- It pays to get to know your members

Revenue Trends Beyond Membership

Events, Native Advertising, Fee for Service

Other Trends in Revenue

- Event sponsorships
- Event ticket sales
- A/V services: podcast, video
- Speakers Bureau
- Native Advertising
- Monetizing Expertise: social media, graphic design, photography, copy writing, event production

Questions?

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