Is the Membership Model Dead?
Modern public engagement for non-profits

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Our initial situation:

- Membership-based organization

- Strong core, but stagnating membership

- Declining interest in "perks" of membership

- Low involvement beyond transaction of membership

- Online audience growing, but no increase in members, donors, or volunteers

Changes:

- Should "Membership" be the goal?

- Goal: cultivate support; build capacity
  - Achieved through contributions of time, money
  - Membership is an expression of support, but isn't the extent of an individual's support
  - Focus: empower people to take action

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Changes:

- Reduce barriers to entry

- Make it easy for anyone to get involved
    - Member "perks"
        - Magazine – moved online
    - New supporters:
        - Social media > newsletter > stories on website and/or events

- Wide variety of meaningful ways to connect

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Changes:

- Engage with new and existing supporters where they are
  - New supporters: petitions, events
  - Long-time members: ready for more responsibility, intentional asks
- Build incremental steps to become more involved

Challenges

- Change management

- Making the first step

- Example:
  - Newsletter changes → subscribers, opens, clicks
  - Project changes → volunteers, opportunities

Benefits of making changes

- Members are more engaged
  - Renewed enthusiasm for the org's mission and stronger sense of community, more willing to participate

- Online audience continues to grow

- More new donors, more new volunteers, more people taking action in their communities

- Biggest shift: sense of community, enthusiasm, pride; people feel like they are making a difference and are excited to raise their hands

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