

The Internet Society

Recruiting and Engaging Organisational Members

Daniel Karrenberg, 20 June 2006, v1.0

Scope

This document is intended to structure a strategic discussion about recruiting and engaging organisational members at the ISOC BoT meeting in June 2006. While it contains opinions and ideas of the author, these are much less important than the suggested structure for the discussion. Once the board has discussed the issue, a separate document will be prepared to summarise the discussion and to formalise any conclusions.

Why Organisational Members ?

Legitimacy

The society derives a substantial part of its legitimacy from organisational members, especially when we act as part of the private sector in the public policy area.

Input

Organisational members provide input for the society's vision and programs; we cooperate closely with some organisational members in a number of activities, such as education and public policy.

Revenue

The organisational members provide revenue to the society and its chapters.

Current State

Qualitative

Sectors, sizes, types, geographic distribution, cooperation.

Quantitative

How many, where, revenue,

Engagement

How do we engage them.

Recruitment

How do we recruit them.

Desired State

Qualitative

Who do we want? My idea: All parts of the Internet industry: equipment, bit-pushers, content providers, application builders, online communities; in short anyone whose business significantly depends on the Internet, the more it does, the more we want them.

Quantitative

We should set ourselves some realistic short-, medium- and long-term goals. These should include numbers of org members, geographic distribution, extent of cooperation and revenue. We want significant participation from organisations for true legitimacy, synergy in our programs and to lessen our dependence on PIR funds.

Engagement

In order to successfully engage organisations we need a clear and consistent message about the purpose of ISOC and our activities. It has to have appeal for organisations and address the challenges summarised below. We have to adapt that message into concrete value propositions for particular types of organisations such as ccTLD registries, Internet Exchanges, ISPs, equipment vendors and others. We have to engage such organisations at the highest possible level and provide value to them in order to bind them.

Challenges

Competition with Chapters

Many chapters derive the bulk of their revenue from organisations in their area; chapter events are often supported by industry sponsors. Often chapters are well connected locally and have already engaged a number of organisations. ISOC asking those organisations to become members once more is confusing. This can lead to friction with chapters and it does lead to difficulties if organisations are approached by both the chapter and ISOC.

PIR Revenue seen as sufficient

When recruiting organisations I have heard the opinion that ISOC does now have sufficient revenue and does not need organisational members or their contributions.

Lack of clear message about ISOC's purpose

We approach organisations with mixed messages about our purpose. Sometimes we stress the IETF support, a other times our educational or public policy work; we do this slightly opportunistically depending on whom we are talking to. Even worse we sometimes do change our message when talking to the same organisation and person. This lack of a consistent message often makes us less credible and makes us appear unfocussed.

Lack of targeted value propositions

Even though we are opportunistic when talking to individual organisations we do not have targeted value propositions for specific **kinds** of organisations. Having those would enable us to approach a whole sector and also to establish some momentum for ISOC membership in specific sectors.

Lack of regional credibility

ISOC is often seen as a North American industry association with little affinity or relevance in other parts of the world. Chapters are frequently better known and more credible than ISOC itself.

Some Ideas About Ways to Improve

Specific Value Propositions

We need to develop specific value propositions for specific kinds of organisations which we aim to recruit, while at the same time sending a clear and consistent message about our purpose and all our programs,. These should explain how **all** of our purpose and programs provide value to the specific kind of organisation.

Build regional program

Our engagement and recruiting efforts need to be understandable and credible in all parts of the world. The “look and feel” of ISOC must move away from a North American Association to a truly global image. We need staff support familiar with each region in which we want to seriously recruit and engage organisational members.

Work with chapters

We need to develop a clear message about the relationship between chapter membership and membership of ISOC itself. We need to get the language correct in the first place. Are we talking about “ISOC Northern Nowhere” or the “ISOC Northern Nowhere Chapter”? Are we talking about “ISOC”, “ISOC Geneva”, “ISOC US” or even “ISOC Central”? Wherever possible we should work with the chapters when engaging organisational members.

Make contacts through trustees and other ‘dignitaries’

Trustees, well placed friends and chapter people often can make contact with organisations at a good level for promoting organisational membership. We should provide these people with a consistent message, specific value propositions and serious staff support when they promote ISOC.

Organised efforts with efficient staff support

We need to run targeted specific campaigns to recruit organisational members driven by the staff. If someone starts engaging and/or recruiting an organisation they need to be confident the staff will follow-up with the promised documentation etc.

Pay for Acquisitions

It has been suggested to use commercial advertisers and fund-raisers who are rewarded with a percentage of the revenue generated. Personally I think that, while potentially effective, this is doubtful and may damage our image.

Add small tangible benefits

Some organisations may have an easier time joining if we provide some small tangible benefits. Things that come to mind are

- discounts of IETF attendance fees,
- mailed publications (IETF Journal),
- attendance of special briefings,
- ...