THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO INCREASING



Learn how you can increase your zoo's memberships.

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Zoos provide people of all ages with the opportunity to connect with wildlife near and far. The amazing educational opportunities, memorable interactions with animals, and beautiful sights create an experience like no other. So how can you get more people to engage with everything your zoo has to offer?

Memberships are a crucial part of any zoo's engagement levels, as they indicate long-term supporters who are passionate about your mission. Whether your members care about wildlife preservation or animal education opportunities, they've proven their investment in your organization by signing up for a long-term commitment.

It's no wonder that zoos like yours would want to maximize the number of memberships in your organization. Not only do memberships help you build meaningful relationships with patrons, but they also provide an essential stream of revenue to help your organization maintain and expand its attractions and offerings.

At Doubleknot, we understand the unique needs of zoos today, including the strategic importance of increasing memberships. That's why we've put together this comprehensive guide to help your zoo encourage more patrons to become members. In this guide, we'll cover:

- **Challenges Facing Zoos**
- Top Ways to Increase Zoo Memberships
- Engaging Your Current Zoo Members: 3 Tips
- How Zoo Software Can Help

Your zoo is a fantastic cultural resource, and focusing on increasing memberships ensures that you'll connect with even more people. By the end of this guide, you'll have the knowledge and tools you need to bring your membership program to the next level. Let's dive in!





Like many other cultural institutions, zoos are facing several challenges and have had to adapt to overcome new obstacles. Still, the work isn't done. Here are the top challenges facing zoos today: **Lower attendance:** Due to the pandemic as well as competition with other activities, zoos have seen lower attendance across the board. Although in-person activities, especially outdoor ones, are returning, zoos must still differentiate themselves from the competition.

Less engagement: In addition to lower attendance, zoos are also experiencing less engagement with their patrons. As issues like wildlife conservation and climate change become more pressing, it's important that zoos do everything they can to keep supporters engaged in environmental causes.

Organizational challenges: With virtual events, memberships, fundraisers, and more, zoos may struggle to streamline logistical and administrative tasks. Slowdowns with these tasks can decrease productivity and disrupt everyday operations.



However, you can overcome these challenges by focusing your efforts on increasing membership. More active members will likely increase attendance and engagement. Plus, when you take the time to get your membership program organized, you can apply these practices to other aspects of your Z00.

Overall, a strong membership program provides a steady revenue stream, which is essential to maintain your operations and develop new initiatives. With a dedicated group of members, you will have the necessary funding to drive more engagement, create exciting programs, and encourage more people to support your zoo.



Memberships are a great way for your zoo to deepen engagement with existing supporters. Your new and current members can use their memberships to access exclusive parts of your zoo, unlock discounts, and experience your zoo in a completely different way.

Although memberships have all kinds of benefits, some supporters may be hesitant to sign up, or might not even know about your great program! Let's take a look at the top three ways that your zoo can increase memberships:





1. STRENGTHEN MARKETING EFFORTS.

The first step to increasing memberships is ensuring that supporters know about the program and all the advantages it offers. You can keep your supporters in the know by strengthening your marketing efforts. Here's how you can market your zoo membership program effectively:

- Advertise in the right places: Your current supporters are the most likely people to become members because they've already expressed interest in your organization. For this reason, you should focus your marketing efforts on reaching these people. One way to do this effectively is to advertise where your current supporters will see your marketing materials. Ask yourself where your supporters will be most likely to see your messages, such as physically displayed at your organization, in your email newsletters, or during events. This way, you increase the chances that your current supporters will learn about the membership program and sign up.
- **Use consistent branding:** You may be advertising your membership program in the right places, but these ads won't be very successful if you don't have a branding strategy. A clear branding strategy ensures that your messaging, color scheme, and other visual elements related to your organization and your membership program are consistent. With a compelling strategy, potential members are more likely to remember the program and try to learn more.
- Personalize your outreach: Supporters respond best to personalized outreach. After all, who likes receiving a letter in the mail addressed to "Valued Customer" instead of our name? When sending individual outreach messages, be sure to personalize your marketing materials by using the supporter's name and other relevant information, such as references to previous donations. Additionally, consider segmenting your supporters into groups based on shared characteristics like age, location, or engagement level to further personalize your outreach. Our guide to donor segmentation can walk you through how to effectively group your supporters and get the most out of each communication.

Emphasize the impact that membership has on your organization: Your supporters have already shown their dedication to your zoo, and many of them may want to know how they can help even more. In your marketing materials, be sure to explain how each membership supports your operations and work towards your cause.

If you want to increase your membership levels, then you must put more time and effort into advertising the program. Put your membership program front and center at your organization's grounds and be sure to prioritize it within other communications with your supporters. The more that your supporters are exposed to the program, the more likely it will appeal to them.

2. OFFER ZOO MEMBERSHIP PERKS.

Let's say you've already put a great deal of energy into advertising your membership program but numbers still stagnate. What could you do to change things up and bring in new members?

The answer: offer new perks.

If your membership program has been around for a while without much growth, it might be because the benefits you offer don't outweigh the costs. But your members do a lot to support your organization, financially and engagement-wise, so they deserve the best that you have to offer! Consider these examples of irresistible membership perks:

- Special access to your organization
- Discounts at gift shops
- Members-only events
- Sneak peeks at new exhibitions
- Private tours
- Surprise rewards
- Reduced ticket prices at other cultural organizations
- Exclusive merchandise
- Career opportunities

These are just some of the options you can choose to revamp your membership program. But the best way to know which perks your members will enjoy the most is to ask! Send out a survey to your current members and most engaged supporters to ask which benefits they'd be interested in. With this approach, you can more effectively cater to the supporters who are already engaged, increasing retention and deepening their involvement.



Ultimately, your membership program should put your members first. While their financial support will contribute to bettering all of your visitors' experiences, you should give members the extra perks they deserve.

3. CREATE A MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY.

Now more than ever, people are seeking community, especially among others with shared interests. As a cultural institution, your zoo has the unique opportunity to create this community for your supporters through your membership program.

When revamping your membership program, consider building the infrastructure for a meaningful, well-connected community. This community can exist online, in-person, or some combination of the two. However you decide to do it, your community can distinguish your membership program from others. Here are a few ways that you can create a community among your members:

- Online forums: In your membership portal, create an online community where members can interact with each other. For example, maybe a large group of your members is passionate about your chimpanzee exhibition and research. With an online community, these primate enthusiasts can connect and build relationships.
- **Members-only events:** For your active, local members, consider offering exclusive members-only events. Not only can these events give your members a behind-the-scenes look at your zoo, but they will also offer them a chance to get to know each other or potentially see some friendly faces.
- **Discussion roundtables:** Discussion is an essential aspect of engagement it's what social media apps like Twitter and Reddit thrive on! Within your membership community, provide prompts for discussion or host webinars with important figures in the zoo community.

To build a robust community, be sure to invest in the <u>right membership management tools</u>. With these tools, you can keep track of every member, their level of engagement, who they're connected to, and more. With this information, you can design programs meant for specific types of members or further personalize your marketing efforts.

If you're not sure where to start with building a community, get your members involved! They'll probably be glad to play a bigger role in shaping the community they care about.



Although your membership efforts will likely concentrate on acquiring new members, it's also important to engage your current members. Ideally, you can create an engagement strategy that promotes high retention first and then you can move your focus to attracting new members. Once new members join, you'll already have a robust engagement strategy in place.

Providing a personalized zoo experience for each of your loyal members doesn't have to be a challenge. With the right membership management software, you can easily keep track of members, their level of engagement, and other important preferences. This way, you can deliver an excellent experience, which is the number one way to hang on to dedicated members.

So, what are the most effective strategies you can use to engage your current zoo members? Here are our top 3 tips:







1. CREATE NEW EXHIBITIONS AND EXPERIENCES.

Your members signed up for a reason — they're passionate about animals and wildlife! One of the best ways to ensure that members stay involved is by regularly offering new exhibitions and experiences if possible.

When brainstorming new exhibitions or attractions, be sure that they offer a truly new experience for your members. Because they likely get discounted tickets to your zoo, they're more familiar with your exhibitions than most. For this reason, design new experiences with these frequent zoo visitors in mind.

After your new exhibition is close to launch, you can give your members early access to these new exhibitions as a bonus. They'll love getting a sneak peek at what you've been working on before the rest of the crowd gets a chance to see it.



2. OFFER LOYALTY REWARDS.

Another way to keep your members invested in your program is to offer loyalty rewards. These rewards can accumulate the longer that members remain in the program. This way, you can provide your most loyal members with the best rewards.

- Some examples of loyalty rewards include:
- Better discounts at the gift shop
- Annual gifts
- Exclusive animal encounters
- Access to e-learning programs

Loyalty rewards can encourage your members to stay in the program, but it all comes down to the desirability of the reward. For this reason, it's crucial that you develop a deep understanding of your members, what drives them, and what types of rewards would keep them coming back.



3. USE MULTI-CHANNEL MARKETING.

We've already touched on the importance of marketing your membership when it comes to recruiting new members, but it's also valuable to design a marketing strategy intended for your current members.

When it comes to connecting with your current members, consider using a multi-channel marketing approach. This means relying on multiple different avenues of communication, including:

- Email
- Social media
- Direct mail
- Website
- Text messaging
- Print advertising
- Television advertising

Using multiple marketing channels increases the likelihood of members interacting with your messaging, especially if you gear certain advertisements towards your members. For example, you could create a members-only email and direct mail campaign sharing new perks or new exhibitions with them first.





Acquiring and engaging members is no easy task, but with the right tools, you'll have a more robust membership program than ever.

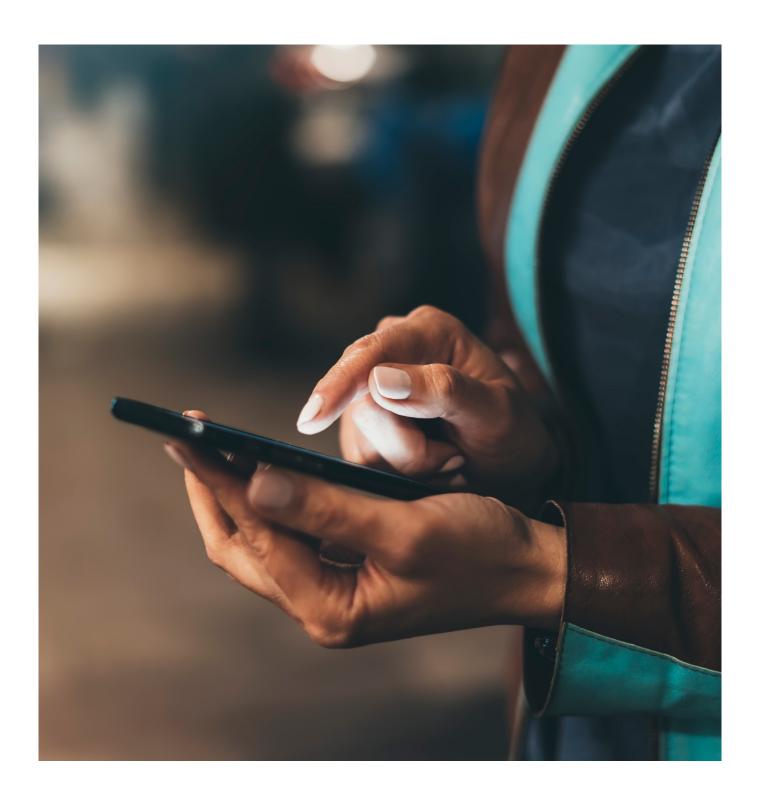
Zoo software can help you build better connections with members, grow your program, and streamline other administrative tasks that will save you time and money. With a program as complex as membership, it's important that you have the technology to stay organized and ensure that no member's experience falls through the cracks.

Doubleknot is specifically designed to help zoos like yours. With our membership management tools, you can:

- Offer your members a more personalized experience.
- Generate comprehensive reports to help you better understand your members.
- Create different membership tiers based on payment or loyalty.
- Stay in regular contact with your members.
- Organize members-only events.

- Manage membership registration.
- And so much more!

Want to learn more? Check out <u>our guide to understanding zoo management software</u> to learn how you can pick the best software for your organization.





Members are an important cornerstone of your zoo, so you should do everything you can to acquire them and keep them engaged. With this guide, you can successfully increase your zoo memberships and bring a new level of engagement to your organization. Good luck!

Curious about how you can make your zoo even better? Check out these additional resources:

- Zoo Ticketing Software: 6 Tips to Streamline Admissions: How can you speed up your zoo's admission process? These six tips can show you how to streamline admissions and how zoo ticketing software can keep your lines short.
- Major Gifts: 5 Strategies to Solicit High-Impact Donors: What's the best way to solicit major donors? Here are five strategies that can help you connect with high-impact donors.
- 6 Powerful Membership Management Features to Build Resiliency in 2021: Didn't get enough about membership management? This guide will walk you through our top six membership management features that can help your zoo tackle any challenge

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW DOUBLEKNOT CAN TAKE YOUR ZOO TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

Let's have an introductory conversation!

Book a demo today!

