



DAXKO

ONLINE MEMBERSHIP SALES PUT THE MEMBER IN CHARGE

Solution Overview

Challenge:

Increasing member service, putting the member in charge, and distinguishing the YMCA in a competitive marketplace are all major reasons for these YMCAs to put membership sales online. Retaining the personal connection after the transactional sale is complete paramount to success.

Solution:

With DAXKO Operations, online membership sales are fully integrated so the YMCA can focus on membership value rather than the transactional sale.

Benefits:

From day-one these YMCAs saw 14-16% of new membership sales online, with a reduction in front-desk administration and a positive impact on member retention.

With proper preparation and training, these YMCAs are able to trade time spent on membership sales for valuable time on member engagement.

“Through online membership we have given the consumer the level of service they are accustomed to, and staff are able to spend precious face-to-face time on getting them connected. We are seeing the positive effects of that with better retention rates for members who join online.”

*Bob Moss, VP of Branch Development
YMCA of South Hampton Roads*

Empowering Members through Online Membership Sales

The YMCA of South Hampton Roads wants the member in charge. As a membership-driven organization, the YMCA is ready to serve whenever the member is ready to join. Online membership sales became imperative in September of 2005 when Vice-President of Branch Development, Bob Moss, decided to make the choice to join the YMCA available 24/7, 365 days a year.

“Through online membership sales, we were about to put the customer in charge of their purchase,” says Moss. “The decision to offer memberships online brings our YMCA inline with other offerings in the market available on the Web, and motivates the prospective member to buy now. The by-product is that we maximize our cash potential and minimize administration at our service desk.”

At the Akron Area YMCA, offering online membership sales provide a way for the YMCA to stand out amid increasing competition. “In many cases we found that prospective members came to the branch to tour the facilities and made the purchase at a later time,” says IT Director, Ken Hoyt. “Members are able to make the purchase at their convenience, after they’ve spoken with their families or they’ve had a chance to review their finances.”

With online purchases becoming a standard with today’s Internet-savvy members, an online purchase is a more positive experience for the consumer when made from home or work, and without external distractions.

Technology Implemented:

DAXKO Operations' online registration component for membership and programs.

Online registration is a fully integrated part of DAXKO Operations on-demand solution. Activating online membership is a simple checkbox in membership status.

The technical aspects (servers, scalability, security, encryption, and back-ups), are all performed by experts at DAXKO's hosting facility, Data Return. With the technical requirements taken care of by the experts, the YMCA can concentrate on training front-line staff on getting members connected to the YMCA.

“Our membership directors really stepped up to the plate through advanced training to make sure that online members were engaged.”

**Ken Hoyt, IT Director
Akron Area YMCA**

Offering a More Memorable First Visit

Both YMCA's saw online membership sales in the 14-16% range in the first month. “With the transactional sale out of the way, the member's orientation visit at the YMCA is much more memorable,” says Hoyt. Online members are invited to schedule a time to come meet the staff, get their cards, receive a fitness assessment, and get connected to the YMCA.

At the YMCA of South Hampton Roads, the first visit focuses on meeting the new member's needs, from the moment they walk through the door. “The majority of online consumers want efficiency,” says Moss. “We have adjusted our processes so that online members click straight through to the Y, and we can focus on meeting their needs from the very first visit.”

Easing Fear About Losing the Personal Touch

In both YMCAs, preparation was the key to making sure they do not lose the personal touch when engaging members who join online. “Our executive staff was extremely concerned about losing the personal touch by offering online memberships,” says Hoyt. “Our membership directors really stepped up to the plate through advanced training to make sure that online members were engaged.”

At South Hampton Roads, detailed step-by-step instructions gave the branches strict guidelines to ensure a smooth transaction on the first visit. “Our branches prepare a folder for every new online member, complete with receipts, membership cards, a new member guide, and any additional information related to the branch that may be of interest, such as a newsletter,” said Moss. Personal e-mails or phone calls are made to let the member know that their membership cards are ready. When the member arrives, draft authorizations and waivers are signed, and staff members are able to proceed with making a personal connection to get the member connected at the Y.

Online Membership Sales and Retention

The YMCA of South Hampton Roads tracks member retention closely to monitor the effects of online membership sales on retention. “In September, the attrition rate for online sales after 90 days was 10%,” says Moss. “That's 4% less than the attrition rate of face- to-face sales.”

The YMCA is seeing the same trend with their January 2006 online sales. Surprising? Not to Bob Moss. “Through online memberships we have given the consumer the level of service they are accustomed to, and staff are able to spend precious face-to-face time on getting them connected,” says Moss. “We are seeing the positive effects of that with *better* retention rate for members who join online.