

Launching Your Association's Mobile App

A Playbook for Year-Round Member Engagement



Introduction

In our work with member-centric organizations around the world, we often hear that members sometimes struggle to find the information they need on the association's website.

A year-round mobile engagement app can easily address members' ever-changing and expanding needs. This playbook outlines the challenges many associations like yours may face, the solutions you can implement and the results you can realize.

Check out our best-practice tips and 10-point checklist to discover how the Clowder® mobile engagement app, can help you achieve a new standard for member engagement.



“PDA Go has been instrumental in communicating information to our members... The app has served as the members' hub for quick access to reliable information. It's been a valuable avenue to ask questions and share advice with one another. Many members have expressed gratitude for the timely information and the ability to connect with local colleagues directly through the app...”

- Pennsylvania Dental Association

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01 Setting the Stage

1

Challenges

It's important to start with an understanding of the challenges your association is facing so you can establish a baseline of the objectives for your mobile app. While every organization is different, there are similarities in what members need and they typically center around:

- 1 Information**
to stay informed about important industry/community news
- 2 Education**
to gain the knowledge needed to advance their organization or career
- 3 Networking**
opportunities to interact with their peers in meaningful ways

Communication is important, but the last thing a member really wants is another email. So, you need to look at innovative ways to get your point across in a manner that the member enjoys and welcomes.

A year-round mobile engagement app can help you deliver high-value benefits into the palms of your members' hands.

2

Considerations

As you determine your and your members' needs, you may want to take consider:

- **Social Media Adoption:** Are your members heavy users of social media, such as LinkedIn? If so, you may want to create a similar experience within your own mobile app.
- **Integration:** Do you need your mobile app to integrate with your member management system or other applications? You'll want to look for mobile apps that seamlessly integrate with your solution.
- **Single Sign-On:** Members appreciate the convenience of signing in just once. When looking for the right solution, SSO should be high on your list of must-haves.

3

Objectives and Goals

To align with your goals of providing invaluable resources, education, and networking opportunities, your mobile app should:

- Enhance member acquisition and retention
- Provide highly relevant, personalized content
- Drive member engagement
- Generate non-dues revenue

Set measurable goals for the first year of your app's operations. For example:

- 1 Downloads**
How many members downloaded the app
- 2 Engagement**
How many members actively engaged/used the app's features each month/quarter/year?
- 3 Rating**
How did the members rate their satisfaction with the app? (Hint: you can use your new app to poll members to gather this intelligence)

Once you have clearly defined your objectives and secured executive buy-in, you can set out to find the right mobile app solution.

02 Choosing the Right Tool

Types of Mobile Apps on the Market

When choosing the right mobile app, consider the various types available on the market and study the advantages and limitations of each:

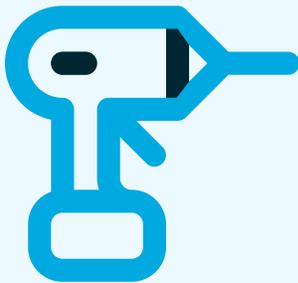
Type	Use	Pros	Cons
Event Apps	Large meetings, annual conferences, conventions	Effective during events, less expensive	Deleted after events, no integration with member management systems
Mobile Websites	Accessing websites on mobile devices	Accessible via any mobile browser, does not have to be designed for iOS/Android	Limited functionality, less user engagement compared to apps
Web Apps	Accessible through web browsers	Universal access on any device. Less expensive	Slower, fewer features, not optimized for iOS/Android
Hybrid Apps	Web apps in a native container	Available in app stores	Limited functionality, security concerns. Apps stores could discontinue
Native Mobile Apps	Specifically Developed for iOS/Android	Year-round use, better user experience, security, member systems integrations, generates non-dues/non-membership fee revenue	Larger upfront investment.

Customized and Configurable Apps

It's important to know that native apps can be customized or configurable:

Customized Native Apps

take longer to design but are totally customized to an organization's needs. This level of customization can increase costs and timetable.



Configurable Native Apps

are completely tailored to the organization and can be launched faster and at a lower cost because they leverage industry best practices.



"Most of the apps we've had in the past revolved solely around events. TADA needed an app that was relevant all year long, easy to manage, and available at a cost-effective price. Clowder checked all the boxes."

-Texas Auto Dealers Association (TADA)

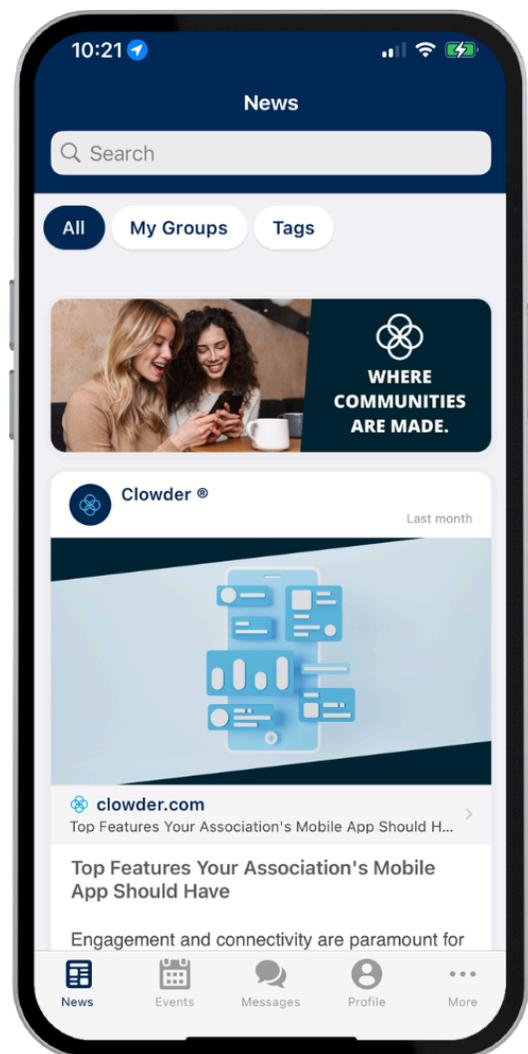
03 Planning



Assembling the Team

Best practices dictate that you build a cross-functional group to provide member insights, operational requirements, prioritize features, and establish strategic plans, including:

- ✔ **Membership Groups**
Play a crucial role in developing and executing a multi-channel strategy, crafting targeted messaging, and creating compelling content
- ✔ **Technical Team**
Collaborate with your app provider to integrate features such as Single Sign-On (SSO) authentication, personalized community views and automated RSS feeds
- ✔ **Executive, Board and Chapter/Volunteer Leaders**
Promote the app using talking points and outreach tools developed for them
- ✔ **All Staff**
Drive awareness and adoption of the app using their networks and communication channels pre- and post-launch



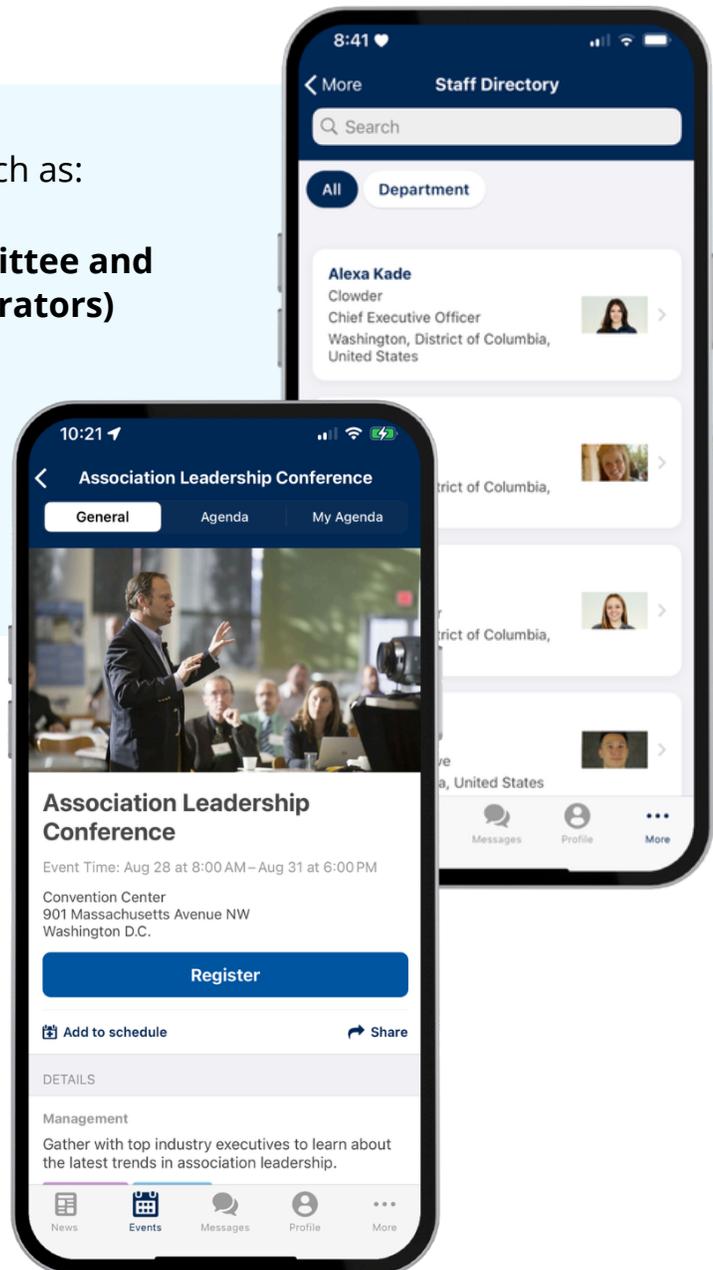


Charting the Course

Your planning process should be strategic and attempt to address the evolving needs of your membership. The process begins with setting key objectives, determining vital content and resources to be delivered, prioritizing features/functionality, and app theme.

Identify your target audiences, such as:

-  **Volunteers (Board, Committee and Chapter leaders/administrators)**
-  **Highly engaged members**
-  **Event attendees**





Developing the Content Plan

Developing a comprehensive content strategy to maximize your apps potential is key. Some priorities to keep in mind:

-  **Strategically Pinned Target**
Target crucial events, including your continuing education programs, special campaigns, or annual conference, to ensure the posts receive prime visibility.
-  **Push notifications**
Reserve for essential polls, standout articles, and major news, such as landmark court cases.
-  **RSS Feed Automation**
Automate the feed and draw from key internal resources to deliver tailored content that suits member preferences.
-  **Early/Exclusive Access to Resources**
Incentivize members to download the app to gain early or exclusive access to your key resources before they are released to the full membership.
-  **Regular Reminders**
Promote the app through every channel within your organization to encourage adoption and regular use.
-  **Subgroups**
Build subgroups, such as for regions, member types, or personas to ensure personalized content delivery and targeted discussions.



Crafting the Marketing Strategy

To promote the app, many associations adopt a comprehensive, multi-channel strategy to engage target audiences effectively. Strategies can include:



Branding

Determine your app's name and then carry this branding through to your logos, taglines, ads, email signatures, PowerPoint designs, Zoom/Teams backgrounds, etc.



Campaigns

Utilize all available marketing channels, including:

- Email campaigns to current members and prospects
- Social media (paid and organic)
- Advertising — website pop-ups, newsletter ads, social media, email banners, retargeting display ads
- Forums
- Collateral — consistent branding drew added attention across audiences
- Text messages with special offers
- Website — pop-ups, microsites, and chat bots



Internal Promotions

Leverage internal champions and incorporate the app into all staff and volunteer communication channels.



Ongoing Marketing

Use your app as a marketing vehicle for recruiting, retention, onboarding, trial memberships, events, and win-back campaigns.



Designing Special Promotions

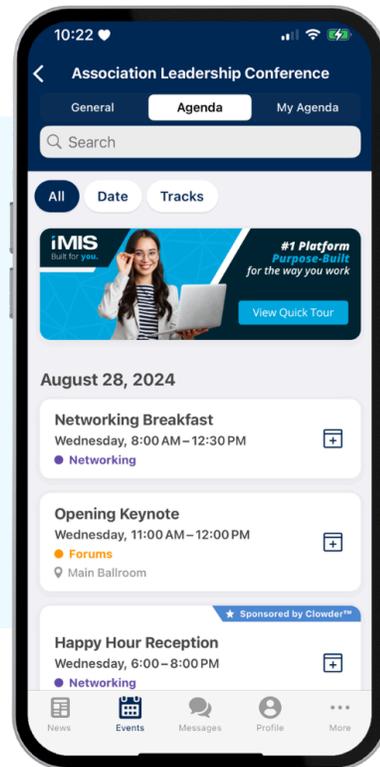
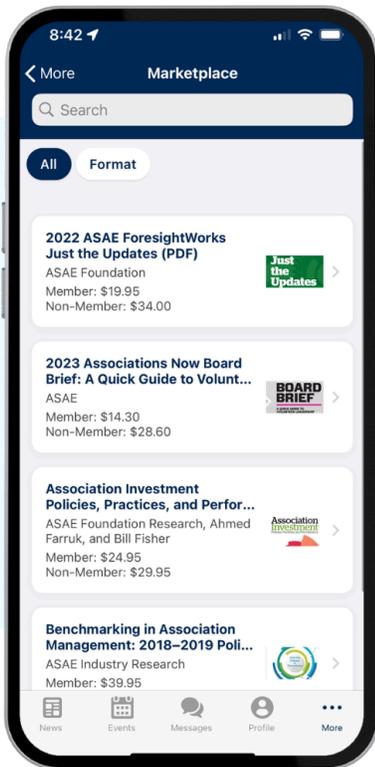
Offer your members numerous incentives to download the app, including:



Discounts on annual meeting registration, publications/resources, and membership renewals



Early or Exclusive access to annual meeting announcements, publications, and other important resources you offer



04 Building Your App

Things to include to provide a comprehensive and engaging member experience, promoting networking, education, and professional growth.

Key Features

- Membership directory**
with advanced search capabilities to ensure quick access to peers and industry experts
- Resource Library**
to deliver curated content
- Polling**
to drive engagement and collect rating data
- Push Notifications**
to alert users to key content and resources
- News**
with an automated RSS feed for up-to-date news
- Forums**
With personalized community views
- Newsletter and digital magazine**
- Jobline**
with the latest industry job opportunities

05 Launching Your App

When your app is ready, consider a phased launch to ensure greater control and flexibility:

1

Initial Launch

Introduce the app to “friendlies” such as your board committee leaders and key volunteers. Ask them to test the app to ensure usability and provide essential feedback on features, functionality, and the overall user experience.

2

Soft Launch

Your annual meeting/conference is a great place to conduct a soft launch. You can offer download incentives, print and electronic QR code signage, advertising, and promotional materials to introduce the app.

3

Full Launch

Following your soft launch, you can roll out special promotions, discounts, and other download incentives to the entire membership using all available marketing channels, including email, text, website, newsletters, committee/chapter communications, etc. Then, ongoing promotions might include early or exclusive access to key resources throughout the year drive engagement in the app.

06 Measuring Success

Goals/Results

Make sure to measure your achievements in the first year or two of the app:

1st Year		
Metric:	Goal:	Results:
Downloads		
Engagement Level		
Satisfaction Rating		

Feedback

-  **Members**
Liked having immediate access to their high value benefits — information, education, networking
-  **Staff**
Valued the opportunity to showcase their work in an innovative new way
-  **Leadership**
Appreciated the app's community aspect and the potential for new revenue sources

07 Tips and Checklist

Design



Content Strategy

Your content will help drive the design and functionality choices you make; you need to develop your plan early.



User Experience

It must be a great user experience with a familiar iOS/Android design — if it's not easy, they won't use it.



Features/Functionality

Be clear about what you want your members to be able to do and how you want members to feel while they're doing it.



Membership Directory

Make absolutely sure this is working well before launching — the first thing members will do is look up their own record.



Solution Provider

Find a vendor with a strong track record that offers unlimited events and users, all-inclusive pricing, and integration to your CRM.

Testing and Feedback



Testing

Make sure you stress-test the app to uncover any technical challenges. Use a pilot group of members to assess features.



Soft Launch

Use a group of friendlies to soft launch your app (such as your Board and volunteer leaders) to provide valuable input.



Feedback

Establish a User Advocacy Group to provide ongoing feedback and test new features.

Marketing and Promotions



Branding and Marketing

Include your app in everything you do — collateral, website, email signatures, Zoom backgrounds — everything!



Special Promotions

Use early-access promotions, membership, product, and event discounts, and even gift cards to boost adoption.



Ongoing Promotion

No matter how popular, your members will not check your app as often as LinkedIn and Instagram. You **MUST** remind them.

10-Point Checklist

Use this checklist to guide you through the app launch process:

- 1 Assess Your Members' and Organization's Needs**

Conduct surveys, focus groups, and interviews to understand what features and functionality your members want. Poll leadership and staff about organizational goals/objectives (engagement, retention, networking, etc.)
- 2 Select the Right Vendor**

Look for a vendor that understands your industry, has a strong track record, and can integrate seamlessly with your existing systems.
- 3 Set Goals, Benchmarks and Timelines**

Define clear, measurable, and meaningful goals and benchmarks for your app — such as downloads, engagement metrics, and usage rates.
- 4 Determine Content Plan and Key Features/ Functionality**

Decide what content and resources will be available in the app — a content plan will help guide you when determining essential features and functionality.
- 5 Develop Your Implementation Plan**

Create a detailed implementation plan that includes timelines, responsibilities, and milestones. This plan should also encompass an educational component for your members. Develop resources such as guides, tutorials, and webinars to help members understand how to use the app and the benefits it offers.
- 6 Assemble a Cross-Functional Team**

Include members from various departments such as IT, Marketing, Member Services, and Program Directors on your team.

7

Develop a Multi-Channel Marketing and Promotions Plan

Consider email campaigns, social media, your website, exclusive promotions, and even in-person events to spread the word

8

Test, Test, Test

Conduct thorough testing across different devices and operating systems to identify and fix any bugs or usability issues.

9

Gather and Implement Ongoing Feedback

Use in-app polls, feedback tools, and direct communication to understand what's working well and what needs improvement to keep the app relevant.

10

Measure Your Success

Analyze download rates, user engagement, and feedback to assess the app's performance and regularly compare to benchmarks and goals.



“Clowder’s federated module provided exactly what CREW Network needed. The platform can provide multiple chapters access to a single app in a siloed and gated experience. CREW remains the overarching owner, servicing the Chapters events, posts and timely announcements in a single instance without having to manage multiple applications. By participating in the federated app model, our chapters are now weaving in their local information amongst CREW Network’s global news, resources and events.”

- CREW Network

08 Takeaways and Next Steps

By using the strategies outlined in this playbook, you can ensure a highly successful mobile app launch.

If you're considering new mobile engagement app in the next 6-12 months to increase member retention and leverage additional revenue opportunities, we've put together several resources that can help you now.



Watch a Clowder Quick Tour

See how the Clowder mobile apps puts on-hand connectivity and convenience at the forefront of your association's engagement strategy.

clowder.com/quick-tour



Client Success Stories

Read other Clowder client success stories to learn how a year-round mobile app can help your organization.

clowder.com/client-success



Clowder Connect Demo App

Download the Clowder® Connect demo app to try out our features right from your smartphone!

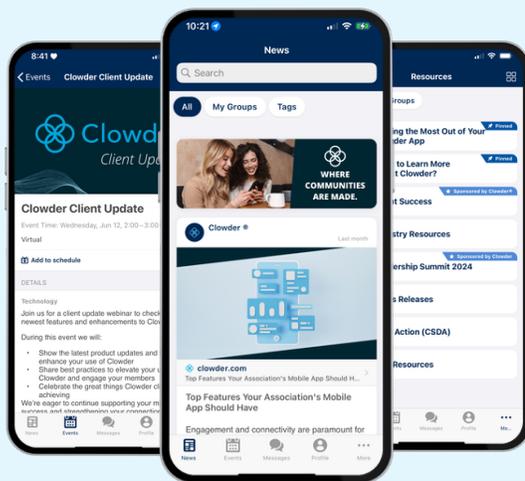


About ASI

Advanced Solutions International, Inc. (ASI) is a leading global provider of cloud software and services for associations



and non-profits. ASI's innovative suite of constituent engagement solutions helps clients digitally transform their organizations, streamline operations, and grow revenue by leveraging proven industry best practices and expertise. The company's portfolio includes iMIS® for association and non-profit management, TopClass for learning management, OpenWater for application and review management, and Clowder® for year-round mobile app management.



Looking to create a more connected and engaged membership?

Clowder powers a mobile-first member engagement platform that directly connects your organization to its members. Think of Clowder as your own private social network.

Schedule a demo with the Clowder team today to see how you boost your association's participation, retention, and revenue with the Clowder mobile engagement app.





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