


# Engage Younger Members by Embracing the Digital Transformation

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**A quick scan of industry benchmarks reveals that association membership is on the rise.**

In fact, in the 2019 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report, 45% of association professionals surveyed indicated their membership had increased in the past year, with 44% reporting a growth of 11% to 50%.

But as exciting as it is to know that 45% of associations have seen an increase, that leaves more than half of membership figures are staying the same or declining. And when we take a closer look at the demographics, it

becomes clear that the breakdown tends to skew towards older generations, with Baby Boomers and Gen Xers making up 36% and 29% of memberships, respectively. Millennials and Generation Z, the age groups that make up the majority of the workforce today, make up the smallest percentage of association members, just 20% and 10%, respectively—numbers that fall as low as 1% in other studies.

“When younger professionals don’t see the same value as older professionals in joining an association, your membership is going to be vulnerable,” says Tracy King, CEO and Chief Learning Officer,

InspirEd. “If you want to stay relevant, you have to take the time to study the day-to-day of your target segment. You must understand their digital patterns for communicating, connecting and learning, and what results they’re looking for from a professional association—and it’s not one size fits all.”

What do younger generations look for in a membership association? And what can you do to ensure the learning and certification experience you offer meets their expectations for a modern digital experience? It all comes down to digital transformation.



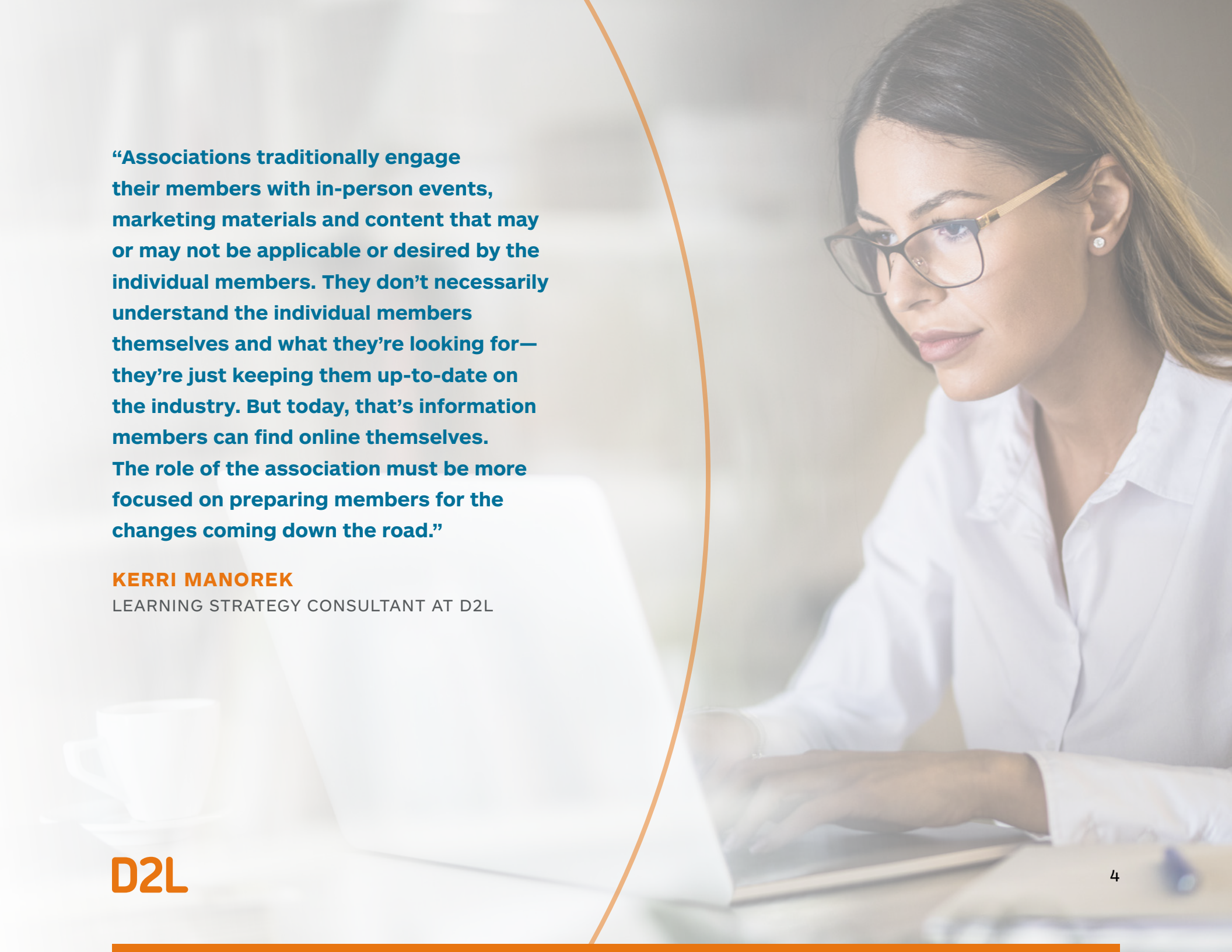


## Updating the Membership Association Experience with Digital Learning Solutions

For years, membership associations have made the best of a mostly manual process: applications for membership, certification, and renewal are typically processed by staff members and exclusive events are offered in-person through traditional conferences or workshop experiences. But today, associations find that it's no longer worth the time and resources it requires to maintain processes and programs that can often frustrate and confuse members—or turn them off entirely.

“Associations are having to quickly adapt to changes in the wider world of work,” says Kerri Manorek, Learning Strategy Consultant at D2L. “Not just the changes individuals need within the work they’re doing today, but also preparing those individuals for how their jobs are going to change. Being able to stay on top of that and provide ongoing value to members in the face of so much change is a significant responsibility.”

And that’s where a digital learning solution offers the most value to membership associations, allowing them to enhance the way they deliver learning experiences and better meet the needs of the modern learner. Here’s a look at how digital learning solutions are helping associations modernize learning delivery, seamlessly scale, and future-proof their membership.



**“Associations traditionally engage their members with in-person events, marketing materials and content that may or may not be applicable or desired by the individual members. They don’t necessarily understand the individual members themselves and what they’re looking for—they’re just keeping them up-to-date on the industry. But today, that’s information members can find online themselves. The role of the association must be more focused on preparing members for the changes coming down the road.”**

**KERRI MANOREK**

LEARNING STRATEGY CONSULTANT AT D2L






# 1. Modernize the Learning Experience

There are two components of a modern learning experience that younger generations expect to see: an updated, intuitive technology experience that makes it easy to access and absorb information, and personalized and timely course materials. Unfortunately, many associations fail to deliver on both counts. Clunky and dated websites struggle to attract or educate

members, and the material they offer is based on what the association thinks to teach, not what members want to learn.

“Modernizing learning is about making sure your members are getting learning opportunities that are timely and applicable to them,” says Manorek. “Members need to know that as soon as something changes within their

world, their association will let them know and help them update their skills or develop new skills. Associations that fail to update their learning experience for the modern learner will find that potential members will go elsewhere for information that is easier to access and absorb.”



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In one example, the Canadian Marketing Association (CMA) knew its disjointed user experience was keeping members from making the most of their membership. Working with D2L to revamp its interface, build a mobile app and make the site mobile-friendly, CMA saw a dramatic improvement in its learner Net Promoter Score and received its highest-ever satisfaction rating in its first pilot seminar.





## 2. Scale Without Increasing Costs

Every association wants to serve more professionals by growing enrollment, especially in younger demographics. But if most of your systems are manual, increasing your membership often requires a larger staff and bigger expenses. Digital learning solutions step in to manage that process, making it easier to scale your programs and services without increasing your costs.

“If you have to adjust your processes for the number of people in your association as you go, you’re not

going to be as productive as you could be,” says Manorek. “For example, if you have to manually add members to your courses when they register, or you need to engage another instructor every time a course enrolls more students, you’ll be limiting the number of people you can serve at one time. Making sure your learning opportunities are set up correctly from the beginning and automated for growth is essential.”

The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) offers an excellent

example of scaling without increasing costs. The 65,000-member organization wanted to increase the accessibility of member-directed professional learning for teachers in Ontario but found many teachers lacked the time and resources to travel for in-person professional development. Using a digital learning solution, ETFO was able to deliver accessible, high-quality courses at an affordable price while staying competitive with other course providers.



# 3. Future-Proof Your Association


As technology makes the membership space more accessible to competition, associations find it increasingly challenging to engage and retain the interest of new members. To stay competitive and make sure prospective members find value in your organization, it's critical to treat your association more like a business that has a product to offer its customers—you need to go to market with your

minimum viable products, test them, and take that feedback into account as you develop and maintain your educational products and services.

“An entrepreneurial approach to membership and education is required in this market,” says King. “Associations historically provide information, not education. But now that information is available anywhere, associations must

provide results. That means learning and learning design isn't nice to have; instead, it's critical to establishing and maintaining a competitive advantage. Associations that don't design their learning experiences intentionally—that stick to the structures of association management that prohibit or throw big obstacles in the way of nimbleness and innovation—leave themselves vulnerable to low membership rates.”



A woman with long brown hair and glasses is smiling and clapping her hands. She is wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored striped shirt. In the background, other people are also clapping, suggesting a meeting or presentation. The scene is brightly lit, possibly in a modern office or conference room.

As the oldest professional organization in the U.S., the American Nurses Association (ANA) wanted to future-proof its membership to continue to serve its 3.6 million registered nurses. By implementing a new digital learning solution, the Association saw several immediate results, including a 4,000-member boost in new member access to the learning portal and a 60% increase in the conversion of purchased courses.

**“Much like the members they represent, many associations find themselves facing a lot of change, disruption, and competition within their field. The associations that are growing are the ones that are focusing on providing value to their members. It’s also those that stay on top of big-picture changes and shifts rather than individual technology changes that are out of date the minute you create a training program around them.”**

**KERRI MANOREK**

LEARNING STRATEGY CONSULTANT AT D2L

## Digital Transformation in Healthcare Associations

Healthcare associations represent some of the most complex and high-stakes job functions around the world, including doctors, surgeons, executives and nurses. And because these professionals play such a critical role in the health and safety of their patients and stakeholders, it's especially important that the

associations that keep them informed of updates in their fields offer engaging, convenient, and easy to use modern learning experiences.

“Healthcare professionals must navigate constantly changing privacy requirements, regulations, funding and the various processes in between healthcare organizations, often under

the threat of litigation,” says Kerri Manorek, Learning Strategy Consultant at D2L. “If they can offer a compelling and easy-to-access learning experience, healthcare associations have an opportunity to really stand out as a go-to source of reliable information around those shifting factors.”

## Exceeding the Expectations of Today's Association Members

Across industries, today's association members have high expectations for their membership experience, and associations that don't meet and exceed these expectations will dwindle

over time. If you want to continue to capture the interest and loyalty of your professional audience—especially the up-and-coming younger generations—you must respond to your member's

demand for engaging, accessible, and digitally-inspired learning with a digital learning solution.





Associations today face many challenges including shifting member expectations and incredibly competitive markets. To overcome these hurdles, they need to change the approach they take to training and development by embracing more modern learning experiences.

At D2L, we are transforming the way the world learns. Our modern learning platform helps maximize the impact of your learning with personalized learner experiences, peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, Social Assessment™, video assignments, and more.

D2L's Brightspace platform is a leader in content creation and curation and enables learners to act in real time to keep them on track. With a fully open API, D2L can easily integrate into your existing technology ecosystem.

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