

2024 Leadership Academy Research Project Executive Summary

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The National Career Development Association (NCDA) is a professional development association composed of the following: (1) school career counselors and specialists, (2) higher education career counselors and specialists, (3) private practice, business and industry and agency career practitioners, (4) counselor educators and researchers, and (5) graduate students. NCDA's mission to, "inspire and empower individuals," is reflective through their Leadership Academy (LA) opportunity which nurtures future NCDA leaders. As a LA participant, selected for the 2023-2024 cohort, I was paired with a mentor and assigned a Leadership Action Learning Project that is determined by NCDA's Board members, based on identified needs. The goal of this research project is to identify ways to clearly articulate NCDA member benefits and the value of membership.

Research Topic

Clearly articulating the benefits of joining NCDA. Do we communicate this well to various constituents (e.g., international members, K-12, private practice)? How do we market our organization and help people understand the value of membership?

Approach to Research

A survey was created to gain more perspective of NCDA members' perception on membership benefits and the value of NCDA membership. Open-ended questions were asked to gain insight from various constituency groups and understand their perceptions, based on how helpful/useful they felt NCDA's benefits are.

NCDA Benefits

NCDA provides a vast variety of membership benefits. From professional development, publication opportunities, standards, and advocacy, to numerous resources, and access to partnerships and networking opportunities. NCDA provides its members with the most recent work and research in career-related organizations and professional associations.

Findings

For this research project, there were a total of 146 participants. From the 146 participants, 144 of these participants confirmed being an NCDA member. Findings reflected more participation and awareness of resources from members who are geographically located in the Eastern region of the United States, compared to those in the Western region. Additionally, only 6 out of the 144 NCDA members who responded to the survey were international members from Hong Kong, Japan, two from Canada, and Saudi Arabia.

- 1. Audiences/Constituency Groups.** From the various constituency groups, there was more participation from participants that identified with the following: higher education career counselors and specialists (58), private practice, business and industry, and agencies (55), than there was from counselor educators and researchers (10) and graduate students (2).
- 2. Current Marketing of NCDA.** Based on the survey responses, professional development was the number one reason of what influenced members to join NCDA, with it being mentioned 140 times, from the 146 survey participants. NCDA resources were the second leading reason of what influenced members to join NCDA with it being mentioned 92 times, and standard and advocacy (45 times) and partnerships (37 times) being mentioned the least number of times from the respondents.

3. Value of NCDA Membership. The table below summarizes the responses from members when asked, “ Do you feel you are getting value from your NCDA membership? Why or Why not?”:

Responses to Value of NCDA Membership	Common Themes
60% felt they were getting value from their NCDA membership	Professional development, national conference, networking, resources, credentials, publication journals, webinars
24% did not feel they were getting value form their NCDA membership	Cost (too expensive), would like access to free webinars/resources, access to information, not aware of all there is, cost of resources in addition to cost of membership
16% mentioned that they somewhat/mostly/mixed feelings were getting value from their NCDA membership	Would like more research on current trends, did not find professional development trainings relevant, would like to learn more about what benefits are available/unaware of benefits, would like more reasonable cost, difficult to find resources on website, more free webinars

4. Other Findings. While many NCDA members found networking resources helpful, many were not aware of a vast majority of resources, such as: the job postings, sample forms, statement & position papers, or mentoring program resources, partnership benefits, or standards and advocacy benefits. NCDA members felt that the Global Career Development Conference, NCDA Hub, professional credentials, webinar series, and NCDA’s journal and magazine were most helpful.

Recommendations

NCDA provides a wide variety of benefits for its members. However, some of these need to be shared more effectively with targeted audiences to increase intentionality, awareness, and value. Considering economic inflations and limited resources among constituency groups, a conversation around lowering additional costs in resources (i.e., webinars, credentials, etc.), not covered by the membership fee, is encouraged to increase the value of the NCDA membership.