

American Optometric Association Case Study

How the American Optometric Association Has Leveraged Technology to Better Support Members During the Pandemic



The American Optometric Association (AOA) had been hard at work for several months to launch "the year of the in-person eye exam" as their main theme for 2020. But, like many other organizations, COVID-19 had other plans and the AOA had to quickly adapt and adjust.

"When COVID-19 started sweeping across the United States, we knew instantly that the doctors we advocate for would take a hard impact," explains Adam Reider, Manager of Technical Training & Support at the AOA. "Overnight, they went from seeing their patients regularly to 'emergency-only' scenarios." The AOA knew that the first thing their members would need is information on navigating this new normal of health care: everything from getting set up for telemedicine visits to applying to Paycheck Protection Program Loans."

Share Critical Information with the Entire Industry

The AOA leadership team made the decision to host instructional webinars to both their members and non-members, and they were able to segment users in Personify360, their association management software solution, and deliver tailored messaging to specific groups of users. AOA was intentional about sharing education and their insights with anyone seeking information, regardless of their membership status.

"This pandemic is impacting every healthcare professional in the world," explains Reider. "So, we did not feel it was appropriate for us to throw up a giant firewall. We want to be able to look back after this crisis is over and know that we truly stood for this profession."

Additionally, the organization reprioritized their programming to place a heavier emphasis on advocacy, education and lobbying to support the optometry profession and eye doctors across the country. They provided education on how to apply for small business loans, what the CARES act means for them and more.



Technology is our digital truth. It unites all of our affiliates and allows them to work together.

ADAM REIDER

Manager of Technical Training & Support

Waive Membership Fees

The organization quickly recognized the economic hit doctors would take from not being able to see patients, and so the AOA decided to waive members' fees for two months. And it was harder than you would expect.

"Our finance team and our IT staff met on a daily basis to figure out how we could do it and track it. With technology in place and collaboration from the team, we found a way to roll this out smoothly for all of our 54 affiliates—plus extending it to new members. Any doctor that joins this year is eligible for that two-month waiver."

Implement a Plan for the Future

Having all of their information in one system allowed the AOA to be proactive and effective, says Reider. "Technology is our digital truth," he says, "it unites all of our affiliates and allows them to work together." That connectedness has allowed the AOA to do great things in the here and now—and to plan for tomorrow. "As doctors sign up for our webinars, we are collecting that information and cross-checking it with our member database. It is extremely helpful in planning what we do next: What topics should we cover for future webinars? How do we market them? Which are more engaging for members and for non-members?"

Having a system in place that allows for quick pivots in times of crisis not only helps the members, but the people behind-the-scenes at associations, says Reider. "It's been very rewarding—the horizon has been very bleak these past couple of months, and it gives you a sense of pride knowing that the work you're doing is helping the entire profession move forward in this landscape."

Highlights



Hosted educational webinars on how to conduct telemedicine visits, apply for PPP loans and more



Waived members' fees for two months, even for new members



Pulled all interaction data into Personify360 to deliver a more personalized experience moving forward

About Personify360 for Associations

Personify's suite of products enables organizations to meet their goals, even during challenging times, with digital connections, virtual programming, a single source of truth for your data, and peace of mind for your members. Associations trust our solutions to:

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- **Boost Your Presence:** Engage members, delight exhibitors and grow your brand with virtual and in-person event tools focused on flawless execution.
- **Grow Revenue:** Keep members onboard with features to automate renewals while amplifying opportunities for non-dues income.
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