

# 10 Expert Tactics to Increase Election Participation

## Why is election participation so important for associations and member organizations?

Member participation is the **number one challenge** facing associations and member organizations when executing their elections. Election participation is the “measuring stick” by which to judge how connected members are to your organization. When election participation increases, it proves the validity of the election, it shows improvements are being made and can be used to judge return on investment.

For over two decades, Survey & Ballot Systems has been providing the tools and resources for highly successful elections. We work with the world’s top associations, cooperatives and member-based organizations to plan and manage voting needs. When it comes to increasing election participation, we know how to get your numbers moving in the right direction.

We hope this guide will inspire organizations to utilize new and creative methods to increase member participation in their elections. As election experts, it’s our aim to share our tactics and knowledge to benefit organizations of all sizes.

We’ve conducted thousands of elections with millions of votes. In this e-book we’ll share 10 expert methods to increase election response rates, including exciting new technology and low-cost tactics that can help boost participation.

As always, you can contact us any time with questions. We’re here to help.

Sincerely,

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## Part I: Tactics to Encourage Voter Response

In part one, we will share tactics to encourage voter response. From prizes to promotions to contests, SBS has worked with hundreds of organizations and come up with creative ideas to engage members and get them to vote. Some of these tactics work in combination with our systems while others are low-cost methods organizations have used on their own. Whatever the case, these tactics appear in this section because they work.



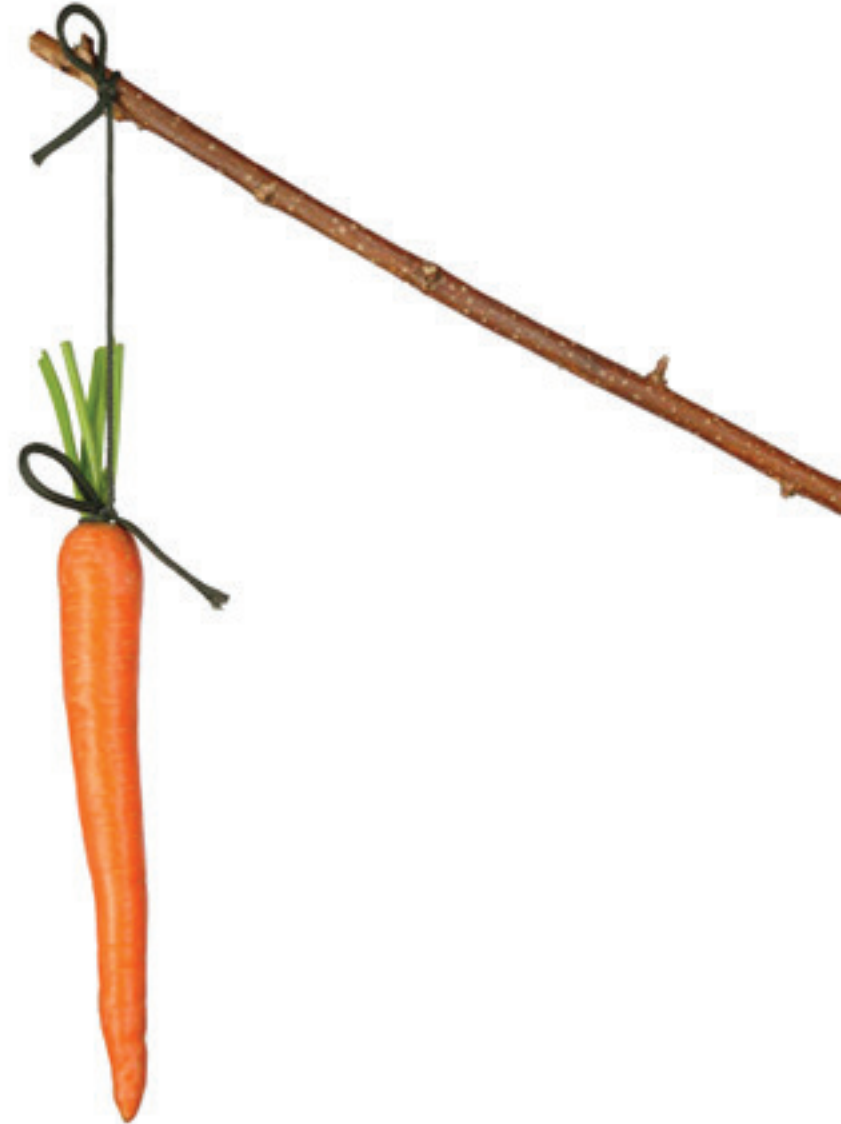
## TACTIC 1: PRIZES

You've heard of the "carrot and stick approach"? This is definitely the carrot. Even though it should be, the sound principle of a participatory democracy is sometimes not enough to get members to vote; often members and voters need extra incentive or reason to cast their ballots.

Here are a few popular methods of integrating prizes into your organization's election:

- Door prizes to get people to show up to events
- Raffling off the admission fee for an upcoming annual meeting or conference
- Drawing for membership dues for a year
- A lottery for certification/education courses
- "The first 100 voters get..."

Incentivize voters and provide prizes for participants and watch your participation grow. Make your prizes worthwhile and desirable and try to tie them to your organization. Also, as with any change to your election process, it's a good idea to check your organization's bylaws to make sure contests or drawings are permissible.



## TACTIC 2: DONATIONS

Go the philanthropic “carrot” route and make a substantial donation to a favorite charity if a certain participation level is hit. This creates the feeling of participating for a good cause and may make members feel a duty to vote.

If you really want to amp up the incentives, create a multi-level or tiered donation program where increasing donation amounts are made based on growing levels of participation.

For example: If a 10 percent participation level is reached, a \$1,000 donation will be made on behalf of members to a specific charity. If a 15 percent election participation level is achieved, a \$2,000 donation will be made.

Keep members posted on the progress towards the donation goal to generate further buzz and keep the excitement going.

Often, associations will make the donation to a cause or foundation that is linked to the organization.



### TACTIC 3: CHAPTER CONTESTS

Who doesn't like a little healthy competition? Holding a contest between regions, chapters, sections, etc. to determine who has the highest participation percentage can be a real nail biter.

Chapter presidents (or similar leaders) take on the role of motivator-in-chief to get out the vote and win for the whole team. This helps spread the responsibility of election participation to the chapter, regional or subsection level and takes some of the election promotion duty off the central or national office.

SBS has facilitated such contests by providing accurate, up-to-date reporting at key points in the competition so chapters can see how they are stacking up against the competition.



## TACTIC 4: PROMOTION

Elections must be promoted just like any other organizational event. Monthly newsletters, publications and websites are ideal vehicles for providing more information about election details as well as encouraging members to vote.

- Take out an “ad” in the organization’s publication rallying members to vote
- A well-written article from someone in a top leadership role can go a long way in explaining the importance of the election to the organization as well as what’s in it for voters
- A sample ballot included in the publication (or on a website) makes it easy for voters to know what to expect
- Banners at the top of a website, splash pages (web pages that pop up to get the visitor’s attention with new information) and even physical “belly bands” that encircle a hard copy publication are all great opportunities for election promotion and education

Everything from an ad to a complete voter’s guide can make a huge difference in informing members and motivating them to vote. The more opportunities voters have to get to know the candidates and issues, the more connected they’ll feel. And that’s motivation to vote.



## TACTIC 5: FACE AND VOICE TIME

Let members know that candidates, and even the election, have a human side. Video and audio interviews are becoming a popular way to engage and inform potential voters.

Candidates describe their platforms, qualifications and views on issues affecting the organization. Members feel connected and educated. It's a win-win.

When SBS works with organizations to create election podcasts, audio and video interviews, the comments are overwhelmingly positive because:

- The media is captivating
- It's informative
- It's interactive
- It's different than the traditional candidate statement or biography
- Through face and voice recognition, members feel like they are able get to know the candidates

When members feel connected and on top of the information, they're more likely to participate.



## Part II: New Technology to Boost Participation

In part two, we will introduce unique technologies, in many cases developed by SBS, which have successfully increased voter participation in private elections. Because we manage so many elections every year, we have a high-level view of election trends. And one of the top trends we see is election participation steadily moving to online methods.

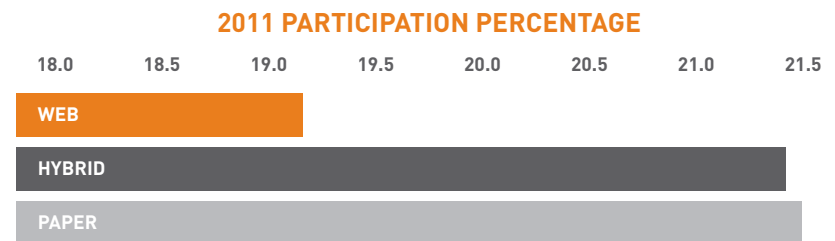
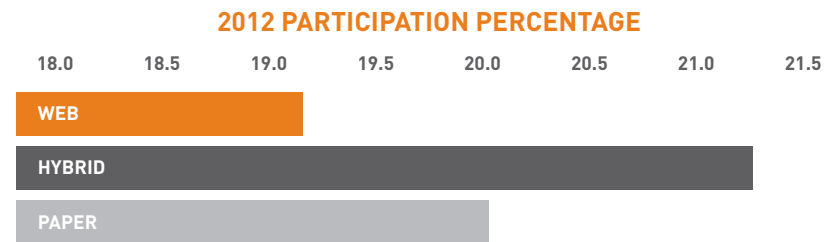
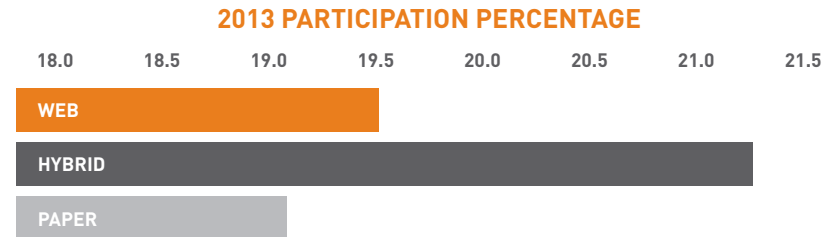
In the graph to the right, we break down overall participation in SBS elections during 2013.

- Web-only or online voting elections come in at 19.5 percent. Hybrid or multiple participation methods average 21.25 percent and typically achieve the highest participation rates. On the other hand, paper-only elections average just above 19 percent.

It's also interesting to take a look at the average participation rates by election type over the past three years. 2011 and 2012 participation averages are posted on the right.

- The average participation levels of online and hybrid methods are steadily increasing while paper-only methods are trending downward. We can clearly see that voters are becoming more and more comfortable with participating in online voting and web election options.

Technology can be an amazing tool and we've had great success utilizing it to expand participation. The next five tactics are highlighted features we have used to help enhance client election participation levels. This certainly isn't an exhaustive list, but gives you ideas of some of the new ways to encourage response from membership.





## TACTIC 6: SINGLE SIGN-ON

Single sign-on allows members to log in to a secure online election, right from your organization's website. No additional login names, passwords or separate websites necessary.

Instead of sending members away from your organization's website to a separate online voting site, you can direct them to a place with which they're already familiar—your online member center or members only area. The benefits of single sign-on technology are many, including:

- Added convenience
- A boost in website traffic for the organization's site
- Reduced voter support
- Increased participation

Clients who have implemented single sign-on technology report that their members:

- Enjoy not having to find passcodes and having familiar login credentials
- Appreciate having everything in one place

When you make voting convenient for members, they will vote.



## TACTIC 7: EMBEDDED LOGIN LINKS

“One-click login.” If you like the sound of that, embedded login links make it happen.

Custom links are sent to members with login values embedded right inside. When clicked, each member is automatically authenticated so they can access the online election—no user name, no password required.

Benefits of embedded login links include:

- Ability to include link in election email invitations
- Allows secure “one-click” access to an online election
- Automatically and securely authenticates voters
- Eliminates login and password hurdles that can cause members to give up before voting or overwhelm your staff with support calls
- It’s convenient

One of our clients, a nursing organization, tried embedded links and their results were surprising—a full point increase in in just one election cycle. And their members loved it too.

- “It was quick and easy to navigate.”
- “I appreciated not having to hunt for member numbers and a passcode.”
- “I wish all electronic voting, as well as other processes, were this easy!”

Your organization could get that kind of feedback and boost in voter response too! It’s an easy technological add-on.



## TACTIC 8: QUICK RESPONSE (QR) CODES

If your members are tech-savvy, a QR code may spur them into taking action to vote.

A QR code is a two-dimensional barcode that, when scanned with a mobile device, links directly to a web page. We've developed the technology to allow members to scan a customized QR code that brings them to a secure online ballot.

QR codes provide another convenient option to make voting quick and easy. They can easily be integrated with customized paper ballots and online voting websites.

One of our clients recently achieved their highest response rate ever with the implementation of QR codes—44.6 percent! They attributed the increase to technology enhancements to their election process including the use of QR codes.

If you're considering QR codes:

- Check with internal staff to see if QR codes are already being utilized in any way
- Check to ensure members are familiar with smartphone technology and QR codes

The more familiar staff and voters are with the QR code technology, the more it makes sense to add as a participation boosting option.



## TACTIC 9: SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING

The power of social media is a virtually untapped force in member organization elections. But seeing a colleague post “I voted” on Facebook is a remarkable reminder and call to action.

So we developed a social media sharing page that can be implemented with our hosted online elections. When a member votes in an online election, they’re taken to a screen offering them the option to share their participation across social media channels like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (among others). They let their friends, colleagues, contacts and fellow members know that they voted in your organization’s election.

Not only can this be exactly what fellow members need as a reminder to vote, it’s also a way to get your organization in front of a connected audience and potentially even build your member base.

Recently, a professional association representing members of wide-ranging ages and demographics implemented their social sharing page and were delighted with the results:

Ten percent of voters shared on their social media pages resulting in more than 1,100 total shares.

A significant number of people shared that they participated in this private election. The reach and number of impressions when using social media is truly impressive.



## TACTIC 10: A MOBILE-FRIENDLY VOTING SITE

It's official—the majority of people in the U.S. now access the Internet through a mobile device. Mobile devices now account for 55 percent of the country's Internet use, as of January 2014. That's an astonishing increase of 12 percent in just one year.

Mobile is here to stay and if your members can't access your online election while they're on the go, you're missing out on a lot of votes and opportunities to connect.

Our mobile-friendly voting options:

- A specific, secure online voting app or responsive website that detects and reacts appropriately to the device accessing it
- An easy-to-read layout sized for a smaller screen
- Easily accessible and obvious calls to action
- Larger font size so your message can be read on a small screen
- Simple design so images don't take ages to load

And what does your organization gain from mobile voting?

- Better connected members
- Increased participation
- The ability to allow members to vote anywhere, any time it's convenient for them

Your members don't stay in one place, so you should give them every opportunity to vote and the option to get their election on the go.



## Conclusion

Now you've got the information to implement 10 expert tactics to increase participation in your election. From creative ideas to inspire participation to cutting edge technology that gets voters to take action—we've covered the gambit. This report shares the trends and examples based on more than 1,100 elections and 14 million votes we have managed for clients.

We hope this information sparks new initiatives within your organization and increases your election participation rates.

## ABOUT US

You run elections, we provide the tools and resources to make those elections highly successful. Survey & Ballot Systems (SBS) works with the world's top associations, cooperatives and member-based organizations to plan and manage voting needs.

Whether you need traditional paper ballot elections, online voting, telephone voting or hybrid voting systems, we have the expertise to make it happen. We can be the third party to run your voting process or we can provide the resources and tools you need for a self-administered online election.

Our dedicated staff works with you to deliver the highest quality election services available. We pride ourselves on thorough communication, project management and an unwavering commitment to accuracy and superior customer service.

## CONNECT WITH US



## CONTACT US

Contact us any time at [surveyandballotssystems.com](https://surveyandballotssystems.com)  
or **800-974-8099**.

"I sleep better at night knowing SBS is there to handle the election and trust them to provide a great voting experience for ASRT."

**Dana Aragon**  
Director of Governance and Affiliate Relations  
American Society of Radiologic Technologists