



CASE STUDY

Phoenix Zoo

Extending the Trail:
How P2P Texting Increased
Membership Retention

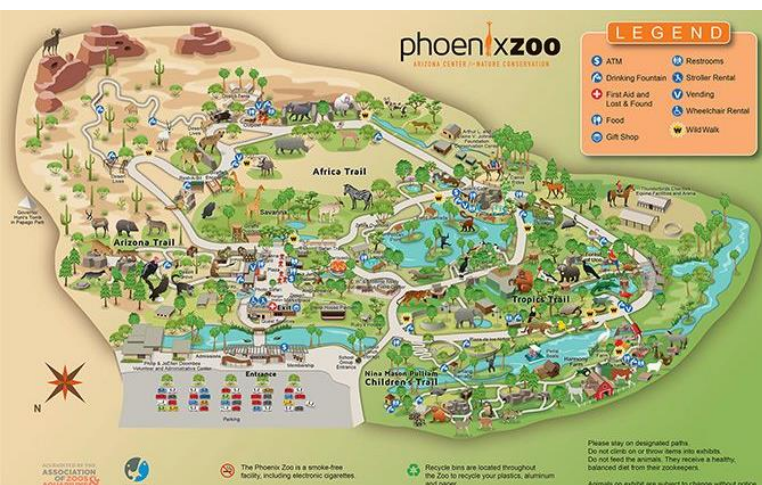


BACKGROUND

Since 1962, the Phoenix Zoo has welcomed more than 43 million guests and become home to over 3,000 animals representing nearly 400 distinct species. With a mission to provide experiences that inspire people to care for the natural world, it's world renowned for advancing the field of conservation science via robust research programs and engaging educational exhibits.



Like all organizations, the Phoenix Zoo was significantly impacted by COVID-19. However, being an outdoor attraction enabled it to open its doors sooner than other cultural institutions and quickly become the ideal place to get out of the house and explore while maintaining social distance protocols.



Visitors were treated to four main trails featuring geographically themed areas, a variety of interactive exhibits, and dozens of animals. Moreover, advanced ticketing reduced crowds and made it easy for families to feel safe while in public, all of which contributed to higher foot traffic and skyrocketing membership sales.

CHALLENGES

The Phoenix Zoo's spike in popularity resulted in a tremendous increase in its memberships. While exciting, the Phoenix Zoo knew that its pandemic membership bubble wasn't going to last forever. That coupled with rising direct mail costs begged the question: as the world gets back to normal, how can it continue attracting and retaining members?

OBJECTIVE

To help the Phoenix Zoo retain its members, TLC sought to create a highly creative and cost-effective membership renewal strategy that would engage members and compel them to continue supporting the Zoo.

TLC SOLUTIONS

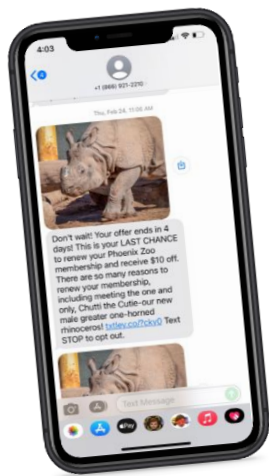
TLC began with data-backed research to assess the Phoenix Zoo's previous membership renewal campaigns, which included direct mail, email, digital advertising, and lightboxes. From creative and copy to channels and cadence, we poured over the results and hard numbers, ultimately determining that an extra touchpoint may be just the trick: Peer-to-Peer (P2P) texting.



Given P2P texting was a new channel for the Phoenix Zoo, we used it to supplement the existing membership renewal program that consisted of direct mail and emails and added it as a touchpoint for two distinct audiences: current members in their expire month and members who'd lapsed for two months. The text messages served as an additional reminder for current members to renew their membership and a "Final Notice" to renew for lapsed members.

We implemented the P2P texting program in July 2021 and, after seeing extremely positive results with these two segments, expanded the audience universe. In August, we included members who'd lapsed for one month and come October, added in current members whose expire month was three months away.

These text messages included a range of offers based on cadence and seasonality, including \$5 off, renew at your old rate, and two free tickets to the ever-popular ZooLights.






Results from the initial six-month P2P texting program were extremely promising and prompted the Phoenix Zoo to deploy additional P2P texting in 2022. From January through April, we conducted another P2P texting program. This time, the campaign entailed A/B tests that focused on evaluating the responsiveness to SMS messages (text only) against MMS messages (text and graphics).

The MMS text messages seemed promising at first given the campaigns had an array of eye-catching images and graphics of the Phoenix Zoo’s animals. However, the data showed a different story: results for the SMS control group far exceeded those for the MMS test group across the board—almost double the membership renewals, revenue, and ROI.

RESULTS

The introduction of the low-cost P2P texting program resulted in nearly 900 renewed members. This additional touchpoint significantly bolstered the Phoenix Zoo’s membership retention within the renewal series, negating the need to reengage lapsed members with a more costly reactivation program.

The P2P texting program greatly enhanced the campaign’s overall response rate and ROI. The 2021 program averaged a 1.83% response rate and brought in over 600 renewed memberships at a \$20.16 ROI. Meanwhile, the 2022 program averaged a 1.05% response rate and brought in roughly 300 renewed memberships at a \$11.11 ROI.

			
2021 <i>6-month program</i>	1.83% Response Rate	602 Renewed Members	\$20.16 ROI
2022 <i>4-month program</i>	1.05% Response Rate	294 Renewed Members	\$11.11 ROI

Given the P2P texting program’s high response rates and ROI, we’ve now incorporated this highly effective communication method as a key channel to connect with members in the Phoenix Zoo’s membership renewal campaigns.



Are you ready to grow your membership, raise more funds, and increase your impact?

Whether you're refreshing your membership program, ramping up fundraising, or generating support for a new exhibit, we can provide you with dynamic strategies that champion your cause.

Get in touch with our team of experts to begin crafting data-driven, creative, and cost-effective communications that are finely tuned to your audience.

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