The Challenges of Outreaching

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Introduction

According to Wikipedia, *"outreaching is an activity of providing services to any populations who might not otherwise have access to those services"*. Most people would have been the target of a fund raising campaign at some point, be it public radio during its annual fund raising or an alma mater fund raising event. While some of us may respond because it is a good cause or it aligns with our interests, outreaching has always been very challenging. We recently met with some ACM groups that have been successful in getting members and outreaching to new people. This short paper summarizes what we learned from the conversations and discovered from our recent activities.

Communications and Activities to Reach a Wider Audience

The goal of our special interest group, SIGAI, is to promote and support the growth and application of AI principles and techniques. With the current research and application interests in AI technology, now is a great time to garner people's interests in joining SIGAI. However, with many similar professional societies, such as AAAI, spreading "our brand" to a wide audience convincingly still has to rely on frequent communications. Northeast Ohio ACM group (NEO) is one of the most active local groups in ACM. Their key to success is engagement through local gathering, especially the new trends of incubators engaged in engineering and citizen science, such as Hackspaces and Makerspaces. Their leadership frequently looks though local list of meetups to find interesting meetings to attend.

Motivation is essential to all actions. A big incentive for member of SIGCHI is the CHI conference which requires a membership with

submission. They also offer reduced registration at conferences sponsored and co-sponsored by SIGCHI. Additionally, they cooperate with related societies, such as the International Federation for Information Processing and the Usability Experience Professionals' Association.

SIGAI Activities to Meet the Challenge

Outreach is not only about establishing links, especially just temporary links. Outreach depends on building long-lasting relationships that are mutually beneficial. The SIGAI webinar series is a good example. The industry liaison committee holds webinars every month, with the topics selected for the interests to industry practitioners and academics alike. The initial intention of running a fall and spring series turned into an ongoing event; these webinars are well attended with interested technologists from around the world.

This year, we took a survey of current and past SIGAI members to find out what they would be interested in as members of SIGAI. This survey indicates that people are interested in the Webinars and conferences. SIGAI sponsored 1st AAAI/ACM conference on Artificial Intelligence, Ethics, and Society is a well-received conference. If there are other areas of interest that you would be interested in, please contact the authors of this article.

It is important to find the right people to reach with the niche that is unique to SIGAI. The AAAI is already established as the premier forum for AI research. The SIGAI Webinars and conference on AI and ethics and society show an area that SIGAI can still make a difference with focus on industry and applications. Our niche may just be the applications of AI that are now flooding the workspace. What are they, how are they built and how are they being built and implemented.

People join SIGAI for the networking opportunities and resources it brings. The most common reasons for those who did not renew is that they did not take advantage of the activities and benefits. It is a challenge to us to provide members with activities and benefits that they are interested in. The recent increase in membership shows that we are going in the right direction, especially with the interests shown in the Webinars and sponsored conferences. Let us keep it up!

Acknowledgments

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