

# AIA Kansas City: “Cityscape” Membership Recruitment Campaign

Contributed by AIA Kansas City

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## SUMMARY

AIA Kansas City set out to ensure its first-ever membership recruitment campaign was special and successful. The Cityscape campaign appealed to both young and established architects, had compelling messages about the value of AIA membership, and tapped into the creative nature of architects.

## CREATIVE TEAM TASKS

The creative team developed an interactive, multi-platform campaign that incorporated email communications, direct mail, a design contest, and an online presence. The combination of online and traditional mailed communications bridged the generational comfort zones of our audience.

## LEARNING WHAT WAS NEEDED

The messaging was directly informed by two large-scale surveys that AIA Kansas City conducted in the months leading up to the recruitment campaign. A members’ survey surfaced what people value about AIA membership; and, a nonmembers’ survey discovered what barriers exist to joining AIA. The survey results helped the creative team craft targeted messages and incorporate key concepts to persuade our prospects.

## IDENTIFYING PROSPECTS

A successful direct mail campaign begins with a well-researched list of prospects. We created our prospect list from five sources:

1. Missouri Division of Professional Registration
2. Kansas Board of Technical Professions
3. 12 AIA Kansas City Member firms
4. AIA National lapsed list, 2006-2010
5. ARE study session registrants

## “CITYSCAPE” IS BORN

The team created the theme of “Cityscape” to symbolize the building of our AIA Kansas City community of members. An embedded design contest in the campaign enhanced the appeal. The campaign began June 21 with an email teaser, followed by a clever and colorful direct mail packet with a cityscape deck of cards. Recipients were invited to construct a model—a building or a group of buildings— from the deck of cards and other

materials contained in the mailing. As models were submitted, the AIA Kansas Cityscape developed to mirror the growing membership base. Incentives such as gift cards and other prizes were offered for participation and creativity. The models were displayed on AIA Kansas City’s Facebook page, Web site, weekly e-newsletter, and at a members’ art show in October. The final installment of the campaign was a “gentle nudge” reminder email to encourage participation.



## RESPONSE

The response received to this recruitment campaign was overwhelmingly positive and was a clear indication that messaging, creativity, and prospecting were on the mark. An important subordinate goal for the Cityscape membership recruitment campaign was to convey the excitement, strength, and quality of a dynamic chapter to a wide audience that may not have been familiar with us. Some of the best conversations came from architects who were not able to join AIA due to financial limitations, but who genuinely appreciated

what the AIA Kansas City organization provides to the profession and the professionals.



## RESULTS

The campaign resulted in a 3% increase in membership in just 11 weeks, a notable gain over past years during the same timeframe. The membership increase included associate and architect members (some of whom had lapsed), as well as new graduates. The demographics show that all of these new members are within the 23-65 age range and are employed, most with large firms.

## RESOURCES

### More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 21.04.03 AIA Florida Membership Program
- 21.04.04 AIA Colorado Membership Program
- 22.05.08 Reigniting Member Interest at AIA Inland California

### Feedback

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### Key Terms

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components