

October 2026

Associations West

Why Now Is the Time to Change Your **Pricing Strategy** (and How to Do It)

James Young
Product Community



OPENING

AGENDA

- ❑ **Welcome + Framing**
- ❑ **The Five Step Pricing Model**
 - ❑ **Surface** — where should I price?
 - ❑ **Sort** — which products do I price first?
 - ❑ **Set** — what method do I use?
 - ❑ **Steward** — who decides?
 - ❑ **Sustain** — how do I sustain momentum?
- ❑ **Takeaways**



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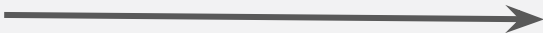
- ❑ Association work
- ❑ Society for College and University Planning
- ❑ American College of Chest Physicians
- ❑ Product Community
- ❑ **The Innovative Association**

My name is Jim!



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Member



Forever
Member
Journey





Innovation

Value
Creation

Community

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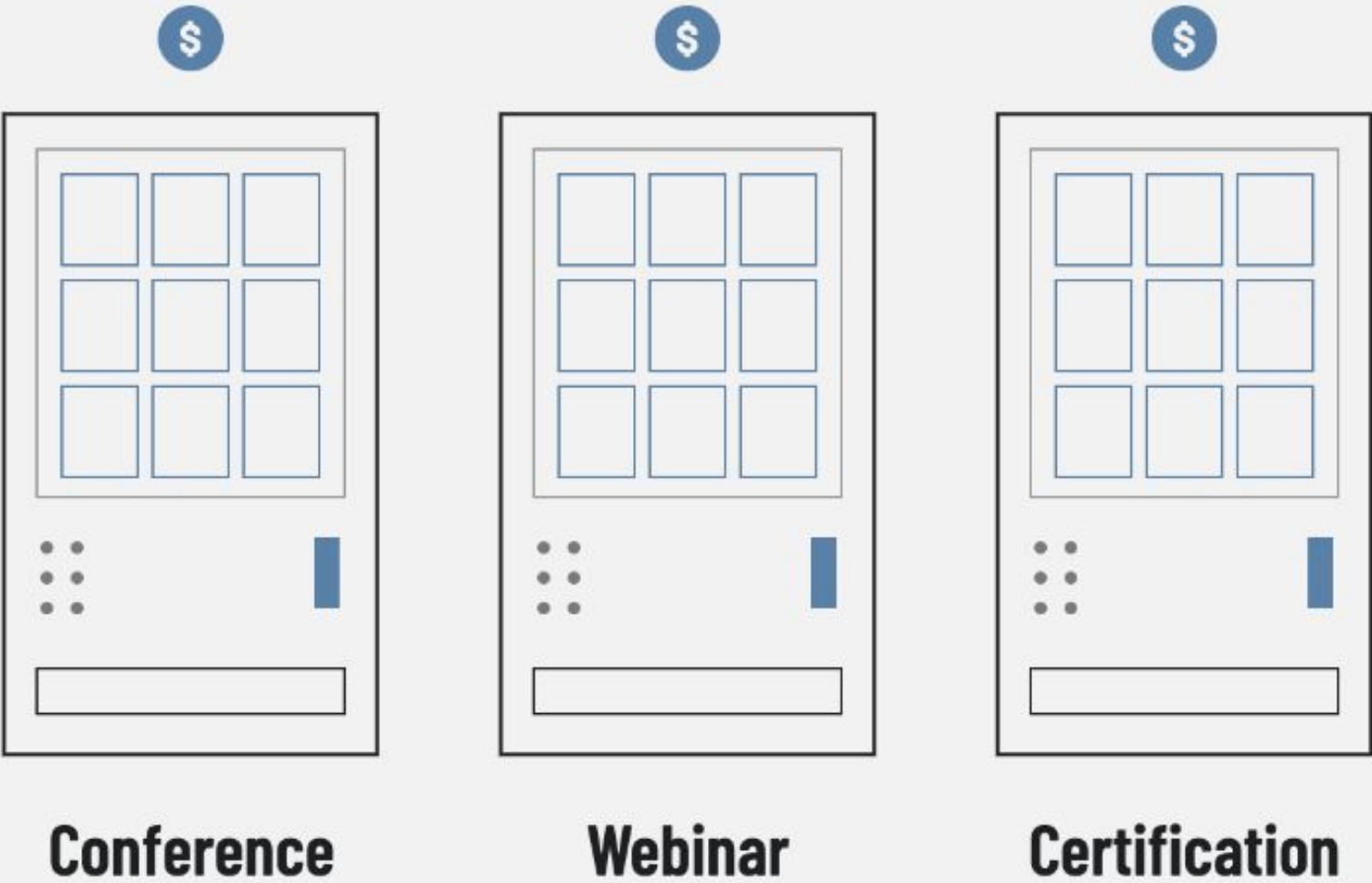
“ **Starbucks has** painted themselves into a corner through discounts. They have for too long relied on discount codes and happy hour pricing to bring in growth that they’ve **forgone true customer desire and loyalty.** ”

Michael Parent

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Vending Machine

Isolated transactions that end when they end

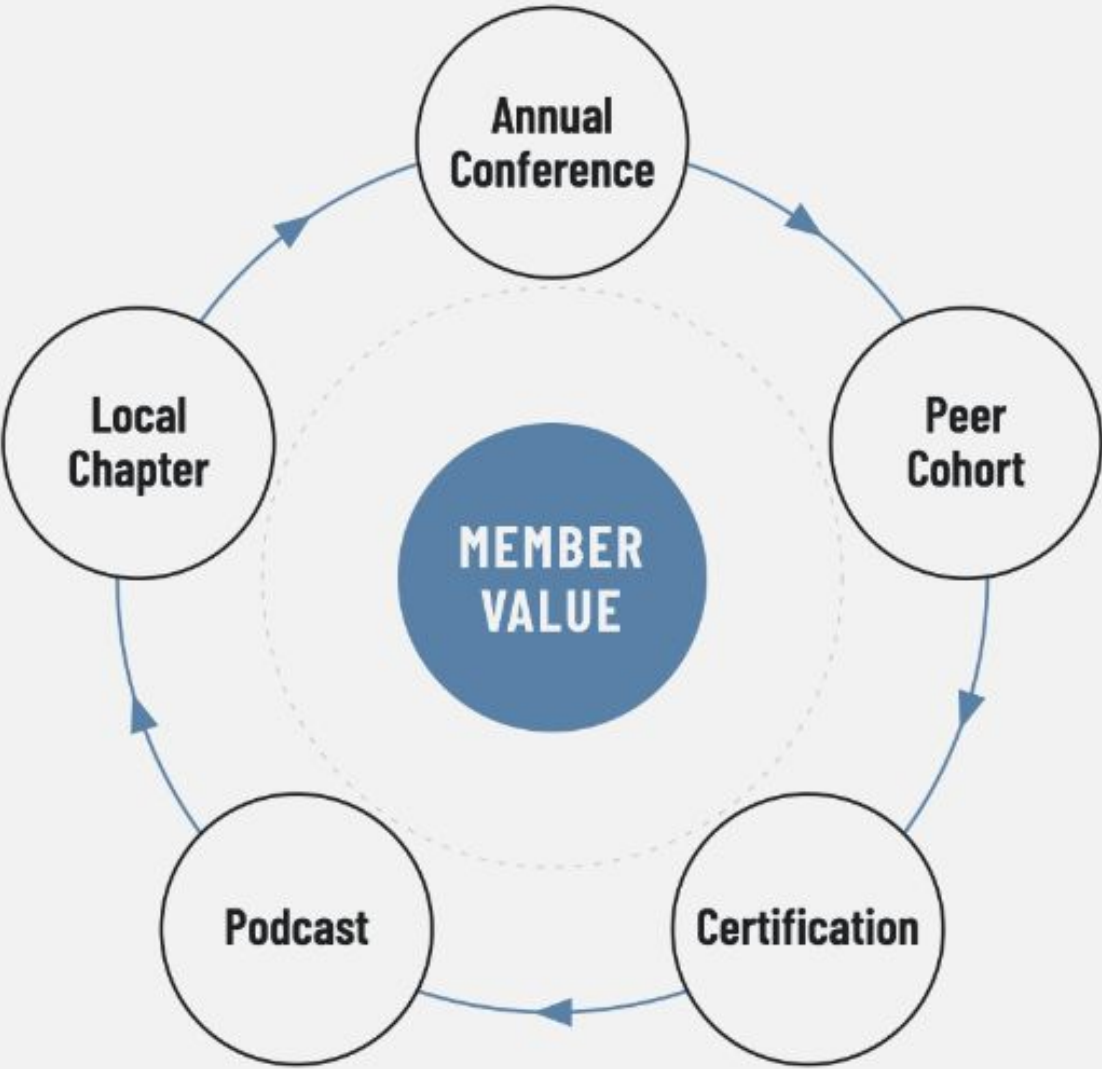


Each sale stands alone. Value ends at the transaction.



Value Engine

Offerings that connect and compound



Each offering feeds the next. Value compounds over time.

ACTIVITY · 4 MIN

Show of
hands

When did you last change a price?

What was your process?

We price by intention OR we price by habit



WHY NOW

What is your
revenue mix?

90%

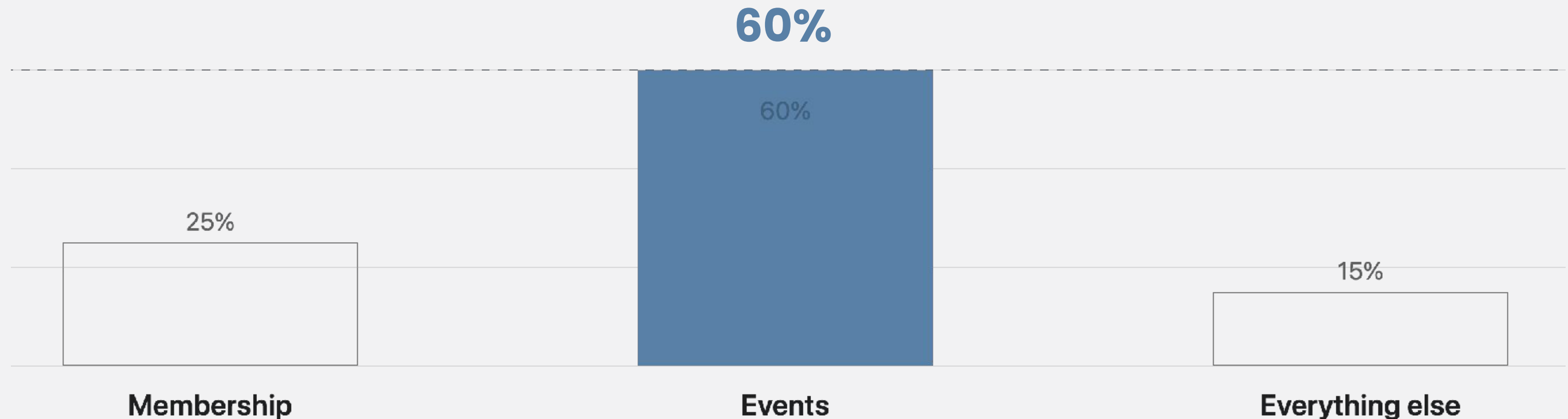
**Share of revenue for dues
and the annual meeting.**

This is why they become
untouchable. **Reliable revenue
is a double-edged sword.**

WHY NOW

What is your
revenue mix?

Undiversified revenue is risk

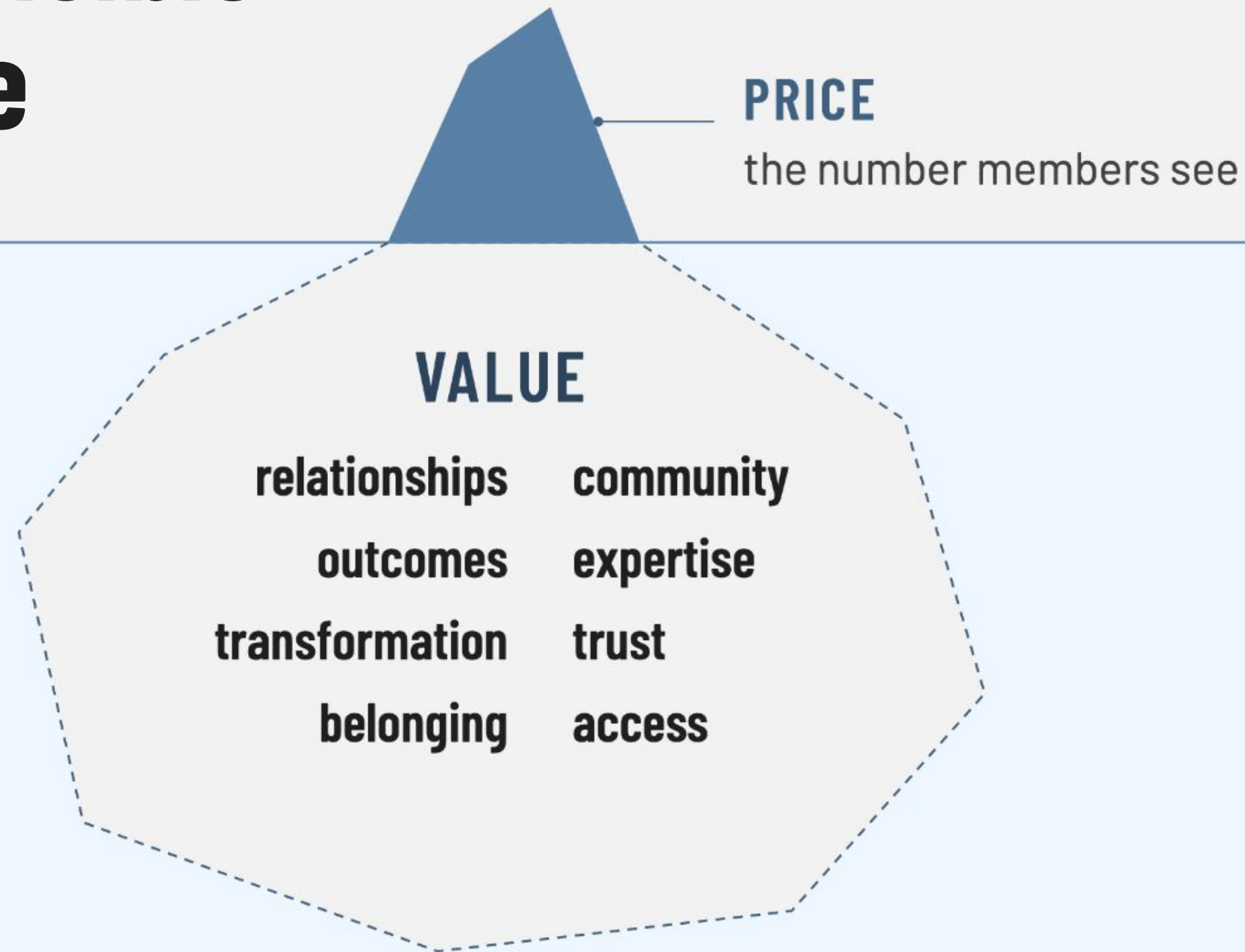


A common mix: one product already at the combined ceiling.

Aim for four to five healthy streams;
pricing rebalances the mix without inventing a new product.

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Price is the visible edge of value



What members pay for lives mostly below the surface.

WHY NOW

Three things we leave on the table

01

Value

We underprice things members would gladly pay more for.

02

Revenue

Mission fuel we never collect, year after year.

03

Trust

Inconsistent, unexplained pricing reads as arbitrary.

ACTIVITY · 2 MIN

Price and value are
not the same thing

Value-vs-price

Salary Benchmark Report

Members use it to negotiate raises and set staff pay. It is costly to replicate and no one else has the data. The price covers printing, not the outcome.

Webinar Archive

Recordings age fast, similar content is free elsewhere, and most subscribers watch one or two sessions. The price reflects what it cost to produce, not what members get from it.

THE MODEL

Five Actions

- | | | |
|----|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 01 | Surface | Audit your pricing |
| 02 | Sort | Prioritize what to evaluate first |
| 03 | Set | Choose a pricing method |
| 04 | Steward | Determine who owns the decision |
| 05 | Sustain | Establish an annual rhythm |

01

Surface

Pricing decisions are being made somewhere: a staff email, a board hallway, or “we’ve always charged that.” Rarely in a single visible, accountable place.

01 · SURFACE

“ It is about what could be,
not what is.

Roger Martin



Three gap questions

Clarity

Can we explain why each price is what it is?

Consistency

Do similar products get priced on similar logic, or case-by-case?

Cadence

When did we last purposefully review our pricing?



ACTIVITY • 8 MIN

Pricing audit

- ❑ List three offerings
- ❑ Rate each 1–5 on clarity, consistency and cadence
- ❑ Two minutes solo
- ❑ Then share your lowest score with the table



Pricing Audit Scorecard

Offering

Clarity

Can we explain why each price is what it is?

Consistency

Do similar products get priced on similar logic, or case-by-case?

Cadence

When did we last review this on purpose?

OFFERING 01

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

OFFERING 02

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

OFFERING 03

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

2 MIN SOLO

3 MIN TABLE SHARE

Where’s your lowest score? It isn’t a failure. It’s your priority signal.

02

Sort

Two lenses, one prioritized list. This section is the heart of our work.

“Leverage is a small,
well-placed move that
produces outsized impact.

Tendayi Viki



Growth-Share tells us where to focus.

Impact-Effort tells us what to do first.



Growth-Share

↑
HIGH GROWTH

Question marks

High growth, low share
Podcast or cohort pilot.
Price to learn.

Stars

High growth, high share
You're winning. Price for
value, not to fill seats.

↓
LOW GROWTH

Dogs

Low growth, low share
Running on inertia. Simplify,
reposition or sunset.

Cash cows

Low growth, high share
Dues, annual meeting, flagship
cert. Leverage and extend.

← LOWER SHARE

HIGHER SHARE →

Impact-Effort

↑
HIGH IMPACT

Quick Wins

High impact, low effort.
Start here now.

Big Bets

High impact, high effort.
Plan and resource them properly.

↓
LOW IMPACT

Fill-ins

Low impact, low effort.
Do them when you're idle.

Money Pits

Low impact, high effort.
Avoid.

← LESS EFFORT

MORE EFFORT →

ACTIVITY • 14 MIN

Plot your portfolio

5 MIN

Write and place

Place four to six real offerings onto the Growth-Share matrix.

5 MIN

Take your worst three

The three that scored lowest in your audit go onto Impact-Effort as projects.

4 MIN

Circle two

One quick win and one cash cow you are under-leveraging. Those go first.

03

Set

Three lenses for setting a price.
How healthy pricing uses works.

“ Cost doesn't determine price.
Price determines cost.

Ron Baker



Three ways to set prices

Cost-based

Cost plus margin.
Simple and
defensible; ignores
what the thing is
worth.

Competition-based

Price to what peers
charge. A reality
check that races
toward commodity.

Value-based

Price to the outcome
delivered and
willingness to pay.
Harder yet an
opportunity.

Most healthy pricing uses all three

Cost as a floor, competition as a sanity check, value as the target.



Dimension	Traditional Pricing (Cost-Plus)	Value-Based Pricing (Ron Baker)
Starting Point	Cost: What does it cost us to make this?	Value: What is this worth to the member?
Setting the Price	Calculated: Cost + desired profit = Price.	Market-Driven: Willingness to pay = Price.
Determining the Cost	Passive: The cost is what it is; the member must pay for it.	Strategic: The maximum we can spend to build this and still profit.

03 · SET

What **Price Determines Cost** Means in Practice

1. **The Market Sets the Price First.** Determine what a member is willing to pay based on the perceived value of the product or service.
2. **The Price Creates a "Cost Ceiling".** Once we know the maximum price the market will bear, we subtract our required profit margin. The leftover is the **maximum allowable cost** we can incur to create the product.
3. **Work Backward:** If the market will only pay \$100, and we want a \$30 profit, **price determines that your cost cannot exceed \$70**. If you cannot develop it for \$70 or less, you shouldn't make the product.

Three possible moves

Tiering

Good, better, best.
Members self-select
and your ceiling rises.

Bundling

Turns standalone
transactions into
pathways, and
deepens engagement.

Anchoring

A premium tier
makes the middle
tier feel reasonable.



03 · SET

The Decoy Effect

Small



\$3.00

Medium



\$6.50

Large



\$7.00

ACTIVITY • 4 MIN

Value-driver brainstorm

- ❑ Take the one quick-win product you circled
- ❑ What would a member pay for this? Why?
- ❑ What outcome are they buying?



ACTIVITY • 5 MIN

Price and value are
not the same thing

What would you charge? Why?

Leadership Cohort Program

Six months, twelve mid-career members per cohort. Monthly sessions with a senior executive coach, a peer group that stays together, and a capstone project presented to the board.

Member Job Board Posting

A 30-day listing seen by the full membership, the only board focused on this profession. Employers say it brings fewer applicants than general sites, but far more qualified ones.

Set a price for each | What outcome is the buyer paying for? Which method did you use?

04

Steward

Who decides and how. Most pricing dysfunction is a decision-rights problem, not a math problem.

“Revenue is an outcome of great relationships.

Mike Grinberg



04 · STEWARD

Four roles, one price

Proposes

Staff or the product owner, with the value case attached.

Consulted

Finance and membership, before the number is set.

Approves

The executive or a standing committee. One name, not a room.

Informed

The board, after the decision (not as the decision).

A council, and the guardrails it works inside

A standing pricing council

Small and cross-functional: finance, education, membership, marketing.

The same muscle that makes portfolio value-mapping work.

Guardrails, so decisions move

Pricing principles that are mission-aligned and member-trust-first; floors and ceilings; a clear discount and comp policy. Guardrails let you delegate without losing control.

ACTIVITY • 5 MIN

Decision-owner map

- ❑ Pick one product. Fill in the half-page template.
- ❑ Who proposes, who approves, who is consulted, who is informed?
- ❑ Share the surprises — usually “nobody owns this”



05

Sustain

Pricing set once and forgotten
becomes tomorrow's habit. The
cure is cadence.

“ Outcomes are where
pricing power lives.

Christopher Lochhead



Annual Review Checklist

- ❑ Re-plot the portfolio on Growth-Share
- ❑ Review price changes against the value delivered
- ❑ Leverage the cash cows, convert the question marks, invest in the stars
- ❑ Sunset a dog or two and reclaim the resources
- ❑ Half a day, inclusive participation, tied to the budget cycle



ACTIVITY · 3 MIN

Tomorrow's commitment

❏ One commitment

- ❏ One product I will review
- ❏ A deadline for my calendar

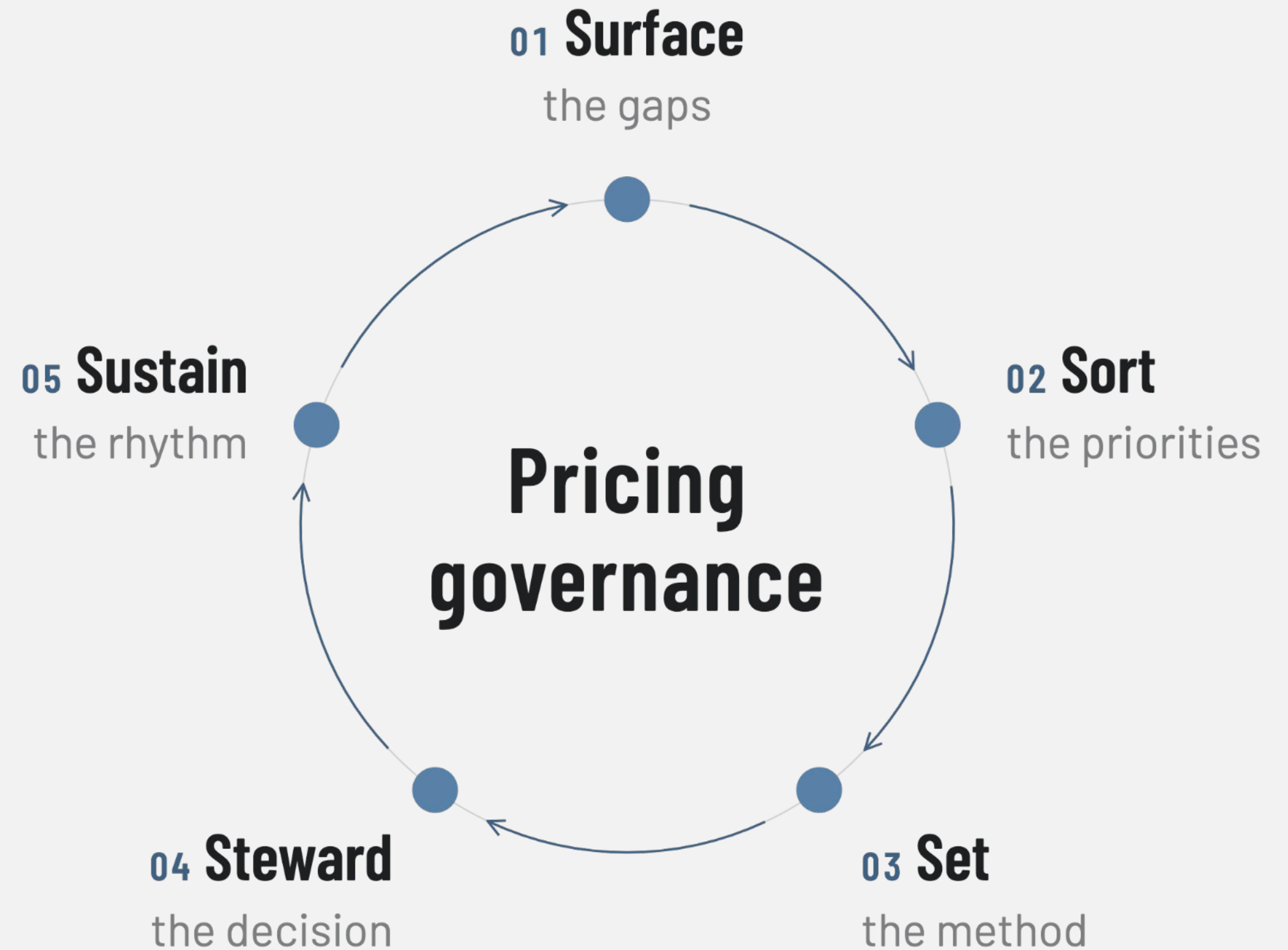
❏ Communicate to the person next to you.



CLOSE

Five steps recap

- ❏ **Surface** the gaps
- ❏ **Sort** the priorities
- ❏ **Set** the method
- ❏ **Steward** the decision
- ❏ **Sustain** the rhythm



CLOSE

“Costco’s membership model. Netflix’s content algorithms. These are business architectures designed to **generate and sustain emotional connection**. The systems create the conditions for love. **Love creates pricing power**. Pricing power creates economic surplus: higher margins, lower customer acquisition costs, **improved retention**.”

Paul Worthington

Let's keep in touch

THANK YOU!

James Young

james@productcommunity.us

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