

## **How To Get 500 Percent Increase In Membership**

By

Larry Chambers

In 1990, the Institute for Investment Management Consultants (IIMC) hired me to initiate my article marketing program with the objective of creating visibility for the Institute. Each month, I would pick a relevant topic and pitch the idea to an editor of one of the trade magazines. If the editor liked it, I'd outline the article, interview one or two of the Institute's members, and then turn my notes into a 1000-word article bylined by Dan Bott, the spokesperson for the IIMC. After a few months, I landed an ongoing column in the biggest trade magazine in the industry, and by the third year of the program, the Institute had experienced a 500 percent increase in new membership.

Having a regular column gave me the opportunity to try various methods of getting readers to contact us. My favorite method I called the Lure Mechanism. Here's how it worked: You know those few lines at the end of a magazine article where the authors can add their contact information? This is where I'd drop my Lure. *For more information, or, send for the following free booklet!*

While waiting for the article to be published, I'd write a short 10-15 page booklet, which was just a longer article that enhanced the reader's knowledge or skill set. Then, I'd get one of our sponsoring managers to volunteer to pay the printing costs to produce 5,000 booklets in return for displaying his business name as the booklet's sponsor.

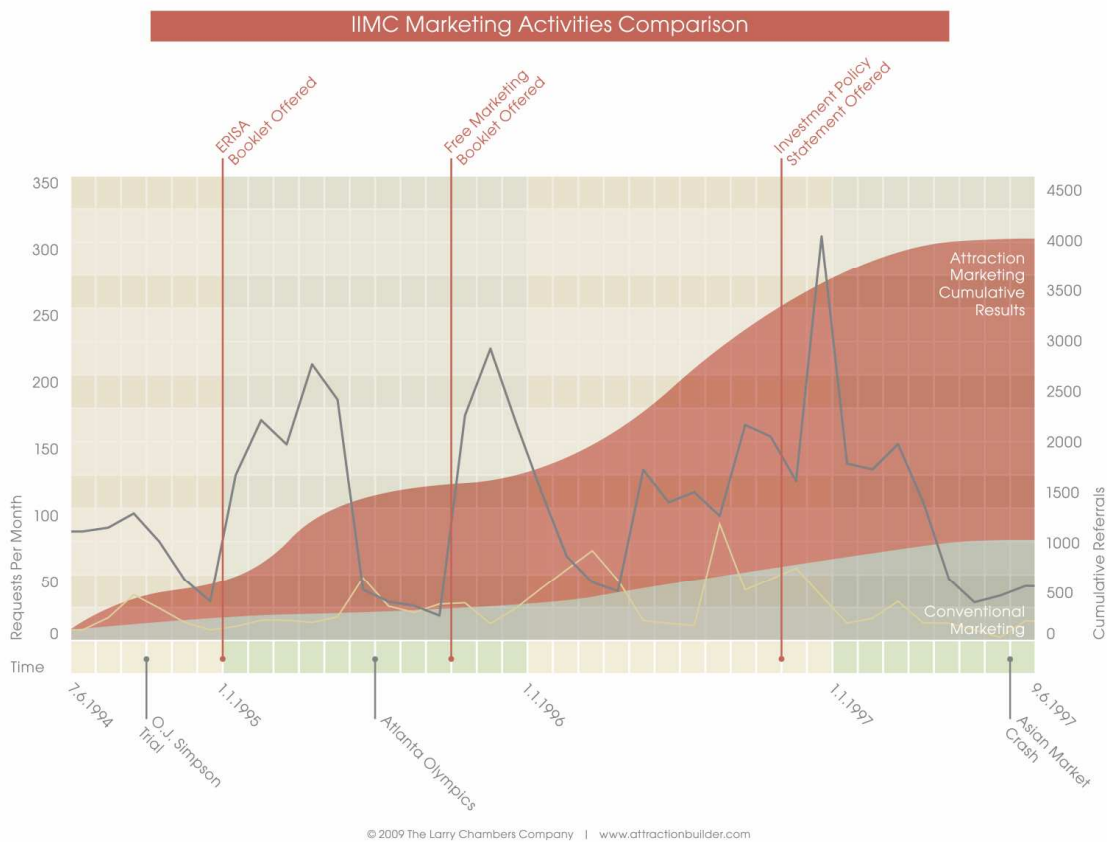
### **First Liar Wins**

In December, 1998 the IIMC's annual convention would be held in Seattle. It was in November that I got word that the incoming president had already decided not to renew my contact at our annual meeting. Because of our close working relationship, the IIMC secretary spilled the beans to me after overhearing the marketing director taking credit for the last three years' growth in new members. He had convinced the incoming president of the IIMC that the money spent on my article writing program would be better spent on his marketing efforts.

Lucky for me my informant also had reception duties and had kept a monthly response log tracking each incoming call and email. Each new member could be tracked back to their first contact with the Institute, and the originating marketing activity that led to their response. If the response came from one of my articles, the specific article could also be identified, which gave me the capability to see what type of articles worked and what subjects my target audience was most interested in based on their responses, not my guessing. The next afternoon a banker's box arrived filled with three years of daily response sheets. I enrolled a statistics professor from our local college to help compile all the data. Two weeks later my statistics professor handed me her certified finding and I published them on an oversized cardboard display I purchased at Kinko's. Two days later I landed in Seattle, drove to our hotel and assembled my display placing it next to the Welcome sign at the entrance of the convention hall.

Maybe it was a tad dramatic but can you imagine the confused looks on the faces of the committee members, and the incoming president as they studied the results. The last time I saw our in-house marketing guru he was making a beeline for the hotel bar. Comparing results side-by-side discounts BS anytime.

Out of a total of 4,735 responses, my (Larry Chambers) article writing program (now called Attraction Builder) accounted for 3,919 inquires, beating all six of the in-house marketing director's activities by a 5 to 1 margin. His conventional marketing strategies had a combined total of 816 inquires.



*What you're looking at:* This is a likeness of the visual display comparing all marketing results, monthly and cumulatively, over a three-year time period.

*What this tells you:* The large red band represents the cumulative results of my article writing program now called the (Attraction Builder Process). The thinner grey band represents the cumulative results from all traditional marketing activities including: PR, advertising, direct mail, passive referrals, membership referrals, and the in-house director CPA project. The three tall red lines represent the dates I offered the (Lure) in the form of a free booklet. The last in our series of booklets pulled a cumulative 950 monthly responses.

One of members remarked *how the last booklet really got a 'bounce back'*, causing us to name the process – The Bounce-Back Booklet.

*What this means:* Comparing results side-by-side is the most objective method for knowing which of your marketing activities work and which don't.

This last illustration is a simple tracking devise we used for monitoring call-ins, we now have sophisticated software program for tracking, but you get the idea.

### The Monthly Tracking Sheet

Month	March 1996				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Totals
Member Referrals	7	8	25	17	60
Registered Rep	153	146	102	335	736
Financial Planning	6	1	8	15	30
Associate Member	3	7	11	2	23
A Free Booklet	8	9	7	2	26
CPA Course					
Tapes					
Annual Conference	28	25	20	12	95
Special Mailers					
Other					
<b>Total</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>970</b>

At the time, no one had any idea how dramatic the results of the article writing marketing approach would turn out to be. Before we began the attraction writing program, few industry people had heard of the IIMC; as a result of our program, the Institute became a highly visible organization, which later was absorbed into IMCA, one of the most widely recognized organizations in the investment management industry.

Over results: In 1990, the IIMC had less than 100 members. In less than ten years, the organization's membership grew from 100 members to over 2,000, with a prospect list of 10,000.