

Looking to redesign its Annual Conference and modernize communication tactics with member councils statewide, the Massachusetts Council on Aging found a best-in-market, technology-efficient mobile solution partner in MobileUp.

The Massachusetts Council on Aging (MCOA) is the statewide organization supporting municipalities, membership, and other organizations that serve older adults through advocacy, networking, professional development, consumer education, and resource opportunities. Serving more than 350 municipal councils providing support services to older adults and their families in their local community, MCOA provides the centralized support, training, and advocacy to these councils across Massachusetts.



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– Paula Hersey
Digital Communications & Website Manager

For several years, MCOA has recognized the importance of connecting with members through digital communication channels, including the MCOA website, email marketing, digital newsletters, and social media. Recognizing the ever-increasing member dependency on their mobile devices, the MCOA marketing team prioritized the deployment of a mobile app as a strategic imperative in 2023. Like many similar organizations, MCOA was rooted in analog, paper-based communication tactics to reach members and other audiences.

The MCOA Annual Member Conference is the most important convening vehicle of the year for the organization, bringing together



Massachusetts
Councils On Aging

ORGANIZATION

MCOA is the Massachusetts statewide organization supporting municipalities, membership, and other organizations that serve older adults through advocacy, networking, professional development, consumer education, and resource opportunities.

SIZE & SCOPE

- Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA) is a nonprofit, membership association of the 350 municipal councils on aging and senior centers.

MISSION

- Building strategic partnerships to educate, empower, and advocate for professionals who work with older adults in municipalities and local communities across Massachusetts.

RESULTS

- Successfully deployed a comprehensive, fully integrated mobile app to drive attendee participation and engagement for the MCOA Annual Conference in October 2023.
- Ability to extend the mobile app solution for future Annual Conferences, smaller events, and ongoing communication.
- Opportunity to leverage the success of the mobile app deployment to modernize other MCOA branding and member experience channels.

over 700 attendees, including local council members, staff, and Board leadership. Intent on modernizing the Annual Conference, while leveraging technology to optimize efficiency, the leadership of MCOA was keen to shift from paper-based, analog materials to a mobile application to deliver programming, content, and overall Conference management.

As an experienced digital marketer, Paula Hersey joined MCOA in July 2023 as Digital Communication and Website Manager. Her priority was to evaluate mobile app solutions, select the best provider, and launch a new app for the Fall 2023 Conference. Paula's goals for the Conference were twofold: 1) change the conference production, with a mobile app central to that change; and, 2) bring efficiency to the conference by shifting from paper-based materials to a mobile app, which would enable immediate and persistent content updates.

Ms. Hersey and the MCOA team reviewed several mobile platform companies against a set of requirements including:

- Allow for a private-access component for members to communicate with each other.
- Allow for an open-access component for vendors and sponsors.
- Provide an all-inclusive solution, at one contracted price.
- Streamline the onboarding and implementation process.
- Access to available customer referrals/testimonials.
- Cost.

Ms. Hersey noted that she and her team selected MobileUp after hearing positive word-of-mouth referrals from peer organizations with prior MobileUp experience. Hersey also noted the positivity of the sales process with Mobile Up. "The MobileUp team

was responsive, helpful, and easy to do business with from our very first call. They made it very easy to select them as our mobile app partner," said Hersey.

MCOA contracted with MobileUp in July 2023 and launched the app in just over two months for the October 10-12 Annual Conference. Attendees embraced the solution, with nearly 80% of attendees downloading and using the app throughout the conference, and only 10% of attendees requesting/using printed conference materials. In only its first year, the mobile app has proven to be an essential part of the MCOA Conference experience, effectively modernizing the conference experience and replacing the prior paper-based solution.



Challenge: MCOA wanted to redesign its Conference including programming, branding, and educational content. Can the new mobile app from MobileUp enable the conference redesign?

With experience in user experience and technical development, Hersey wanted a partner to work alongside her and the MCOA team to deliver the most comprehensive mobile solution. She also wanted a partner who could help her change the conference production and attendee experience. Hersey found

that partner in MobileUp, particularly with respect to presenting MCOA branding and visual experience.

Noting that the MCOA branding had suffered in the past, Hersey was looking at the mobile app as the first, major visual implementation of the new branding. “My priority was to design the app’s welcome screen with clean, open icons that drive users to the most useful and relevant content. I was confident the MobileUp app would allow me to achieve this design focus,” commented Hersey.

Solution: The mobile app solution delivered MCOA’s desired visual brand experience, while also engaging users with relevant, and immediate Conference content. What’s more, the MobileUp solution provided the MCOA digital team with easy-to-follow tutorials and “how to” training materials.

The MCOA Conference was rich with educational content. The three-day Conference featured over 150 speakers and nearly 100 workshops. Virtually all the Conference programming content needed to be complete and accessible throughout the Conference. Hersey reported the app was embraced by an overwhelming majority of Conference attendees, receiving an overall score of 9 out of 10 in the post-event survey.

In addition to working with the MobileUp team to develop the app and create content, Hersey was also responsible for marketing the app to drive downloads, adoption, and usage among attendees. Hersey reported the MCOA was highly strategic and diligent in communicating the shift to a mobile app to drive the Conference programming and engagement. “We discussed the app in our membership meetings, shared a slide deck highlighting the app’s value, and encouraged downloads in weekly newsletters and social media,” commented Hersey. “We used every

available touch point to make certain attendees understood the value of the app and how to use it,” she added.

With respect to content creation, the MobileUp platform made the previously tedious task of publishing and curating content much more complete, and immediately available to all conference attendees. Hersey noted the app’s notification

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system was particularly on point, and workshop exit surveys were immediate and easily implemented. As the Conference technical lead, Hersey attended the workshops and heard positive anecdotal feedback throughout the Conference.

Attendee quotes from the final Conference survey validated the strength of the mobile app:

“I was a skeptic and didn’t download the app until the first morning of the conference. But I have to say, it was great! No fumbling around with a conference booklet, trying to figure out which sessions I signed up for,” said one Conference attendee.

Another attendee commented, “The app is great, at first I did not realize all that it had to offer but as I used it and became more familiar, I was loving it!”

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Results: MCOA is taking important steps to modernize the organization and bring new value to members. The 2023 Annual Conference was a notable opportunity to showcase this change. Launching its first mobile app at the 2023 Conference was an effective step forward for MCOA.

Associations like MCOA share common pain points including member communication strategy and tactics, data management, analytics, general technology competency, and utilization. These and other challenges are often driven by budget and human resource challenges. Recognizing this reality, MCOA identified the Annual Conference as a priority strategy to create meaningful change — both in event design and program implementation. Launching a mobile app to guide attendee participation and behavior was key to this strategy.

The success metrics were significant and immediate.

- The MCOA branding and visual identity were introduced and embraced on the mobile app.
- Conference changes and redesigned programming were embedded in the mobile app experience.
- The app was widely accepted and embraced by Conference attendees, with an adoption rate of 80% and a satisfaction score of 9 out of 10.
- Attendees felt empowered by the app. Suggested

improvements were minor and will be easily implemented for future Conferences.

- The mobile app is now established as a key strategic foundation for the MCOA Annual Conference and has seeded opportunities for future strategic channel development.

Following an effective first-year implementation, MCOA members now fully expect the MCOA-sponsored mobile app to guide them through the full Conference experience, with likely extension to future events, symposiums, and other MCOA-sponsored programming. Evidence of this value is the overwhelming number of MCOA members and Conference attendees who downloaded and adopted the app prior to/during the conferences. These members are now engaged with the app and are widely satisfied.

Importantly, MCOA management and staff are pleased with the operational value of the app, and the ease of implementation, workflow, and content management. “While the cost and technical features of the app are key benefits, the most important success measure is that our members, our Fall 2023 Conference attendees, were very happy with our mobile app,” said Hersey. “I look forward to building on this year’s success, and driving even more value to our members in 2024,” she added.