

Joanne Lockwood

Chair of the PSA UK&I 2022-2025

chair@thepsa.co.uk



My role in the PSA

- Chair the board meetings and AGMs of the association, provide the board with information for decision making regarding the finances and running of the PSA.
- Ensure that the board are working towards the objectives and goals of the agreed PSA board strategy and maintaining that strategy.
- Manage and support Sara Beth (our operations manager) and her office team.
- Provide leadership and guidance to the team, board and volunteers.
- Overall responsible for the finances and running of the association with guidance from the board and office team.
- Bring focus to the Board of our need to provide Positive Member Experiences and a Value Proposition for our membership.

Introduction

At the AGM in October 2023 the membership approved the PSA Strategic plan proposed by the board. ([see this link](#)). As a board we have been focused on the goals of the plan, together with implementing KPIs and measurements to track our progress.

We meet most months as a Board, except April, August and October, alternating between full day in person meeting in the Birmingham area and half-day virtual meetings. I can honestly say that these board meetings always have a packed agenda, and your board is working extremely hard on your behalf.

I would like to take you through some of the highlights, and as I do I will reference the relevant areas of the Strategic Plan as I go. Each board member has also submitted their own report which will contain more detail from their own portfolio.

We are all of course open to questions at the AGM and will make ourselves available 'in-person' at the Speaking Business Summit in October should you wish to have a more in-depth conversation about anything.

Challenges and Measurement for Each KPI

KPI 1: Financial Performance

Challenges:

The key challenges we face in maintaining financial performance include ensuring financial stability, making prudent financial decisions, and effectively managing our budget. Rising costs due to inflation, particularly for venues and event support staff, add pressure to our financial planning, alongside the complexities caused by legacy financial systems.

Measurement:

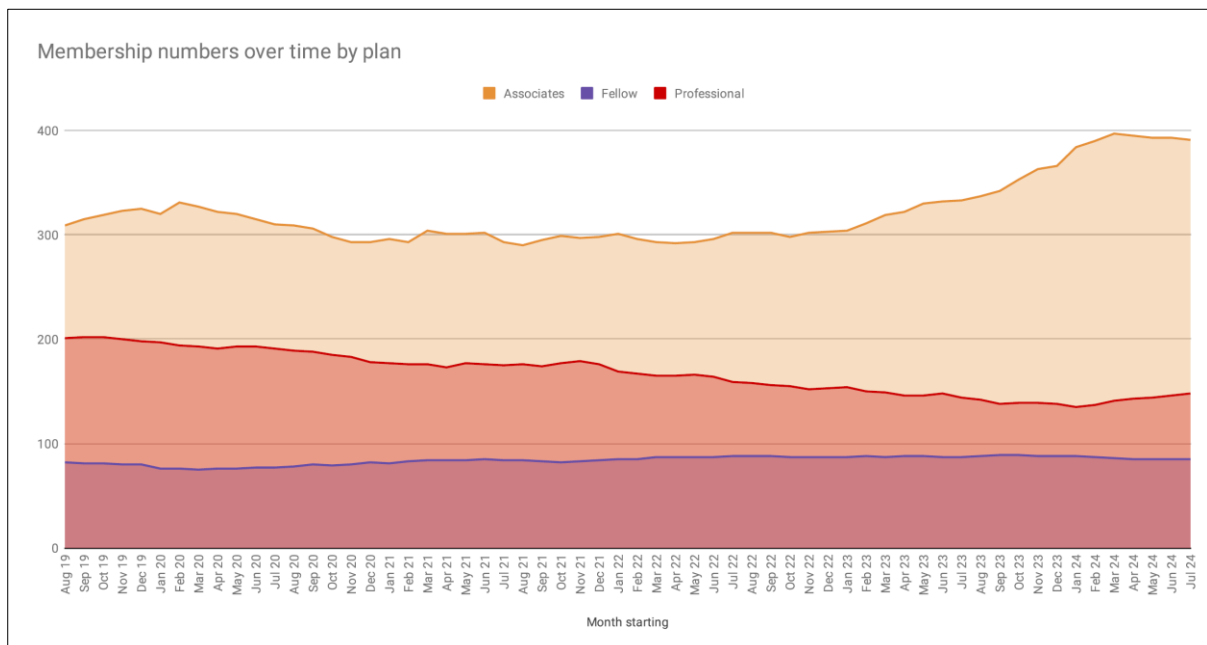
We measure financial performance by tracking income and expenditure, comparing budgeted figures with actual outcomes, and closely monitoring expenses. Our goal is to ensure value for money, particularly for national and regional events, while maintaining a high standard of delivery.

Actions Taken:

- **Presentation of Financials and Budget at AGM:** At the 2023 Annual General Meeting, the Board presented financial statements and a proposed budget for members' approval, emphasising transparency around expenses and governance procedures.
- **Financial Governance and Reporting:** Our recently appointed Finance Director, Phil Ingle, together with William Buist, our previous Finance Director, will present the financial statements for the year ending 30th June, alongside the budget for the upcoming period, at this year's AGM.
- **Addressing Legacy System Challenges:** The complexities in financial reporting arise from multiple legacy systems and processes. The Board, alongside the Finance Director, is working on solutions to make the extraction and presentation of financial data more timely and efficient.
- **Cost Efficiencies and Budget Scrutiny:** We are actively working to drive cost efficiencies by closely monitoring regional event revenue and cost viability, and by scrutinising national event budgets to deliver value for money. This is being done against a backdrop of rising costs due to inflation. We are partnering with Sara Beth's organisation, My Management Company, to ensure that event and membership support services are both affordable and effective.
- **New Revenue Streams and Commercial Partnerships:** We are exploring additional revenue streams, particularly through Learning & Development programmes, and we are working with our new Commercial Director to secure

sponsorships and build commercial relationships. These efforts will help offset rising costs and support our financial goals.

- **Implementation of the New PSA Membership System:** The introduction of our new membership system, 'Bob,' under the guidance of our Programme Director, William Buist, will improve our ability to generate accurate, timely information on event and membership revenue. This, combined with the use of smart lists and enhanced reporting, will enable data-driven decision-making to improve financial governance.
- **Overhead Optimisation:** We are continuously seeking ways to optimise our overheads, recognising that, as a volunteer-led organisation, some tasks will need to be outsourced to third-party suppliers or consultants. Our goal is to deliver the most effective solutions and support while maintaining financial prudence.



KPI 2: Increase Visitors/Guests at Events

Challenges:

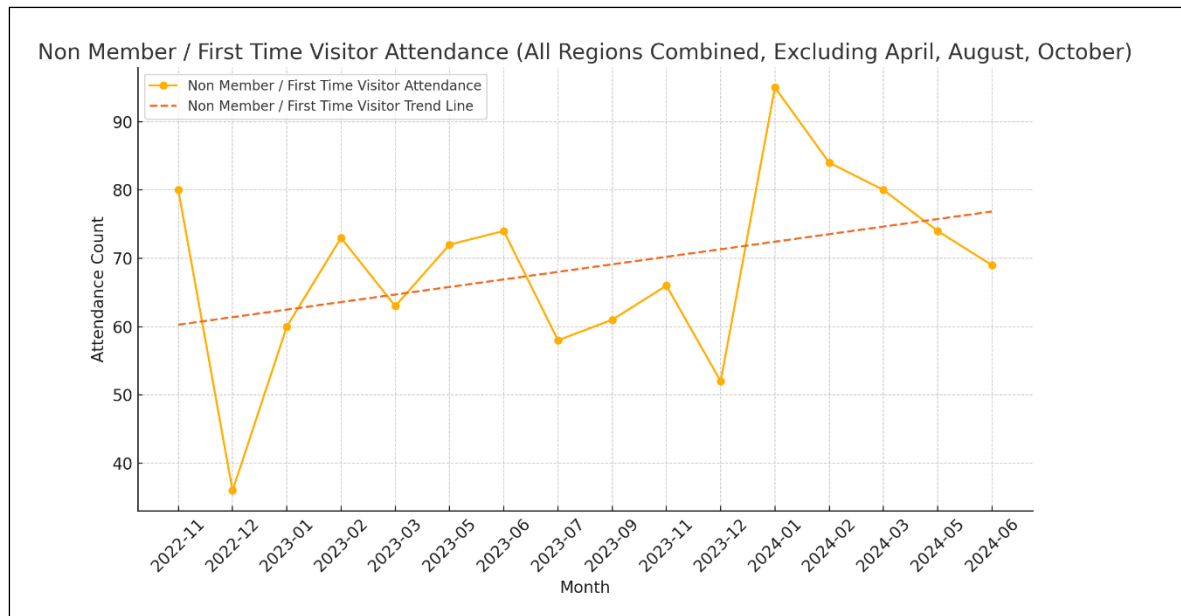
Our key challenges include attracting a greater number of attendees, enhancing the overall event experience, drawing in more diverse participants, and ensuring that our events appeal to a broad audience. Additionally, we must ensure that our regional events offer a value proposition that aligns with ticket pricing, making them more attractive to potential visitors.

Measurement:

We will measure success by tracking event attendance numbers, conducting post-event surveys to gather feedback, analysing attendee feedback to identify areas for improvement, and monitoring event registrations. This will allow us to gauge both the quantitative and qualitative success of our events.

Actions Taken:

- **Event Attendance Growth:** We are seeing a gradual increase in attendance at our events, with a particular rise in non-members and first-time visitors. However, it remains essential that regional events continue to deliver a strong value proposition in line with ticket pricing expectations. Our Director of Regions, Alastair Greener, is collaborating with regional teams to enhance the programme quality and overall event experience.
- **Marketing and Communications Strategy:** Recognising the need for improved communications and marketing, our Marketing and Communications Director, Denise Fay, is developing a comprehensive marketing strategy. This will support our regional teams in promoting their events more effectively across multiple platforms while ensuring alignment with PSA brand guidelines.
- **Event Industry Landscape:** The events industry has not yet returned to the levels seen five years ago, and many of our members and target audiences are still not generating the revenue they aspire to. This has a knock-on effect, limiting their ability to invest in attending regional events. We are mindful of these external factors and continue to adapt accordingly.
- **New Membership System:** Our forthcoming membership system will enable us to be more proactive in direct marketing efforts and in following up with potential members and first-time visitors. It will also provide regional teams with the tools necessary to engage more effectively with local audiences, ensuring that we continue to grow event participation.
- **Non-Member Pricing:** We have introduced a new ticket category this year, specifically for "First-Time Visitors." This ticket is offered at a reduced fee and allows us to track and engage with potential new members more efficiently.



KPI 3: Increase New Members

Challenges:

We continue to face challenges in retaining new members and attracting a more diverse membership base. Ensuring that new members feel welcomed, supported, and engaged is crucial to their retention. Additionally, diversifying our membership to better reflect the broader community remains a priority for the association.

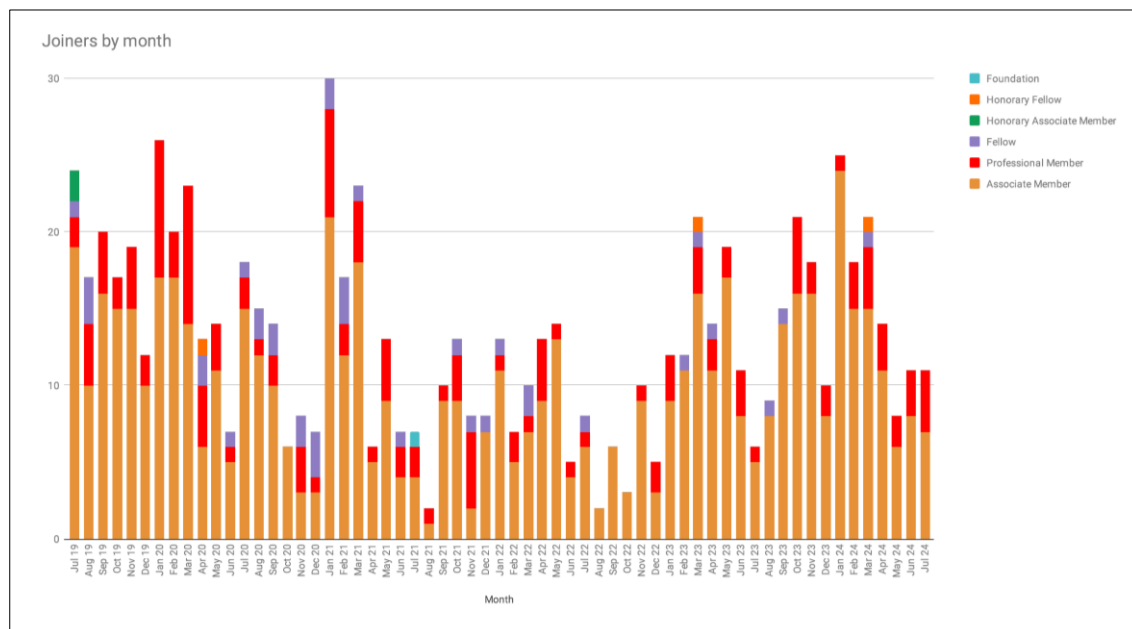
Measurement:

Our progress in increasing membership will be measured by monitoring new member sign-ups, tracking retention rates, and analysing demographic data. This will allow us to assess how well we are attracting and retaining a diverse and engaged membership. We are seeing a growth in our membership over time, the bulk of whom are Associate Members. We recognise that the churn rate of Associates is higher than any other membership tier.

Actions Taken:

- **Training for Regional Presidents:** We are actively training our Regional Presidents on visitor and non-member orientation to ensure that they are equipped to engage new attendees and foster a welcoming environment. This will help create a smooth pathway for visitors to transition into full membership.
- **Partnership with MoneyPenny:** We have partnered with the outsourced telephony service, MoneyPenny, to manage inbound enquiries. These will be directed to the appropriate regional presidents for follow-up. MoneyPenny will soon expand their role to handle outbound calls, ensuring proactive engagement with potential members and event attendees.

- **Zendesk Ticketing System:** A new Zendesk ticketing system has been implemented to streamline the tracking of inbound enquiries and manage follow-up workflows. This system will enhance our ability to respond to and monitor the progress of membership-related queries.
- **Active Follow-up by Membership Director:** Our current Membership Director, Michelle Mills-Porter, plays an active role in following up on membership enquiries, ensuring that no potential lead is overlooked and that there is a personal touch in our communications.
- **Marketing and Communications Initiatives:** We are progressing initiatives aimed at clearly communicating the value propositions of both Associate and Professional memberships. These efforts include enhancing the visibility of our benefits portfolio, such as the Speaking Business Builder initiatives led by our new Learning & Development Director, Yvonne Emery.
- **Mentoring Platforms and Schemes:** Looking ahead, we plan to explore the implementation of mentoring platforms and buddy schemes. These will enable potential members to connect with experienced members, offering them insight into the tangible benefits of joining our community and helping to demonstrate the value of membership.



KPI 4: Associate to Professional Member Upgrades

Challenges:

One of the primary challenges we face is encouraging upgrades from Associate to Professional membership. While Professional members have a notably lower churn rate than Associates, we recognise that the current value proposition for Professional membership is not strong enough to incentivise this transition. Additionally, many Regional Presidents often encourage individuals to join at the Associate level rather than as Professional members, further slowing the rate of upgrades.

Measurement:

We will track the number of upgrades from Associate to Professional membership, analyse the reasons behind these upgrades, and gather member feedback to better understand the motivations and barriers in this process. We will also monitor engagement with the specific initiatives aimed at Professional members to measure their effectiveness.

Actions Taken:

- **Tangible Benefits for Professional and Fellow Members:** We are actively enhancing the value proposition for Professional and Fellow members by introducing more tangible and desirable benefits. These include initiatives like Continuing Professional Development (CPD) accreditation and other exclusive resources.
- **Keynote and Leadership Restrictions:** To further differentiate the Professional tier, we are restricting keynote opportunities and the role of Regional President to those holding Professional or Fellow membership. This will emphasise the exclusive value and recognition of these tiers.
- **Publishing Tier Benefits:** A clear and comprehensive list of member benefits by tier will be published on our website, allowing members to easily understand the advantages of upgrading to Professional or Fellow status.
- **New Membership System:** Our new membership system will enable members to sign up directly as Professional members, streamlining the process and removing previous barriers. Additionally, the system's smart lists will allow the Membership Director to identify and assist members who are ideal candidates for upgrading.
- **Regional President Education:** We are providing targeted education to our Regional Presidents to ensure they fully understand and can effectively communicate the value proposition of Professional membership. This will help shift the focus from Associate to Professional recruitment where appropriate.
- **Business Builder L&D Initiatives:** The new Business Builder Learning & Development initiatives, led by Yvonne Emery, will provide Associate members with

the tools and skills necessary to grow their businesses and become sustainable professional speakers, preparing them for a seamless transition to Professional membership.

- **Mentoring Platform:** We are introducing a mentoring platform to support Associates on their journey to becoming Professional members, providing them with guidance and demonstrating the benefits of making the upgrade.
- **Professional Member Days and Events:** To further differentiate the Professional membership tier, we will be launching dedicated Professional member days and events, offering exclusive content and networking opportunities. These events will serve to strengthen the Professional brand and highlight the unique value of this membership level.

KPI 5: Professional Member to Fellow Upgrades

Challenges:

A key challenge we face is promoting the revised criteria for achieving Fellow status and effectively recognising the expertise required for this tier. Since the criteria were revised last year, we have not received any new applications for Fellowship. This may be partly due to a rush of applications before the criteria change, leading to a temporary hiatus as new candidates prepare for eligibility. Additionally, we need to determine whether the issue lies with the criteria themselves or the process, and this will be reviewed by the Fellows Community Presidents.

Measurement:

We will measure progress by monitoring the number of members reaching Fellow status, evaluating the fulfilment of the criteria, and gathering feedback to assess member satisfaction with the process. Our new membership system will also enable us to identify and target members who are ready for Fellowship.

Actions Taken:

- **Criteria and Process Review:** The revised Fellowship criteria will be reviewed by the Fellows Community Presidents to determine whether the issue is with the criteria themselves or the application process. This will help us ensure the pathway to Fellowship remains accessible while maintaining high standards.
- **Hiatus Consideration:** We are mindful that the current lack of new applications could be due to a hiatus period following the initial rush of applications before the criteria change. We will monitor this and provide support to members who are nearing readiness for Fellowship.

- **New Membership System:** The new membership system will allow us to proactively identify members who are likely ready for Fellowship, empowering us to target these individuals with tailored communications and support.
- **Learning & Development Initiatives:** We are developing a clear pathway within our Learning & Development initiatives to help members grow their skills and businesses, making it easier for them to aspire to Fellowship. This structured support will encourage professional growth and readiness for the higher tier.
- **Targeted Fellow Benefits:** Fellowship-specific member benefits will be further enhanced to highlight the value of this tier, making the benefits of achieving Fellow status more tangible and desirable.
- **Two Fellowship Routes:** There are now two distinct routes to achieving Fellowship. Members can qualify through a financial target of £50,000 per annum over two years, or £30,000 per annum over the same period. Both routes require the accumulation of points, which can be earned through contributions to the PSA, such as giving back to the community. This dual pathway ensures flexibility while maintaining the prestige and rigour of the Fellow tier

KPI 6: Decrease Resignations

Challenges:

One of the ongoing challenges we face is understanding the reasons behind member resignations and addressing these issues to enhance member satisfaction and engagement. Resignations often occur due to a perceived lack of value, disengagement within regions or the broader community, unrealistic expectations of the PSA's role in generating business, or members no longer being active in the speaking profession. While cost is a factor, it usually becomes significant only for members who are not seeing a return on their investment through their speaking business.

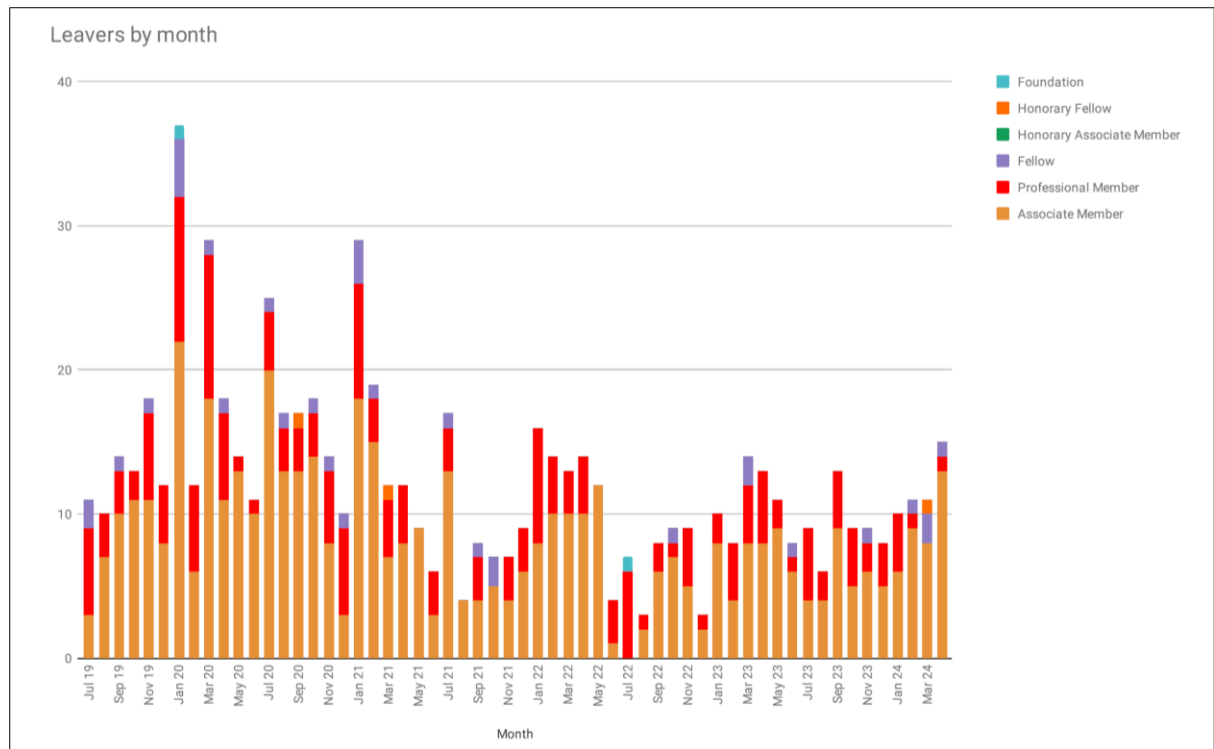
Measurement:

We will track resignation rates and utilise exit interviews and surveys to gather detailed feedback. This data will be analysed to identify recurring themes and improvement areas. The use of MoneyPenny will proceduralise this feedback collection, ensuring consistent and actionable insights.

Actions Taken:

- **Exit Interviews via MoneyPenny:** MoneyPenny will help standardise and streamline the exit interview process, ensuring we gather high-quality, consistent feedback. Currently, the Membership Director and operations team conduct most exit interviews, but MoneyPenny's involvement will help us better capture the reasons behind resignations.

- **Understanding Reasons for Resignation:** The most frequent reasons for resignation include members not seeing value, feeling disengaged in the regions, no longer being active in speaking, or having unrealistic expectations about the PSA's role in generating business opportunities. By identifying these areas, we are addressing them through targeted initiatives to reduce churn.
- **New Membership System – Identifying 'At Risk' Members:** The new membership system will help us identify 'at risk' members—those who have not attended events or engaged with the Learning & Development initiatives—in advance of their membership renewal. This will allow us to provide timely, proactive support, helping retain members who might otherwise leave.
- **Strengthening Engagement and Value Perception:** To address the key reasons for resignation, we are enhancing the Learning & Development opportunities, expanding the mentoring programme, improving membership benefits, and increasing the quality of events and communications. These initiatives aim to provide more tangible value to members, especially those working to grow their speaking businesses.
- **PSA Foundation Support:** The PSA Foundation, through Foundation Director Mike Pagan, is available to offer additional support to members facing challenging personal or professional circumstances, providing an additional layer of care to prevent resignations due to external factors.
- **Increased Virtual Support:** Recognising the need for greater accessibility, we are expanding virtual support through regional online events and other digital resources. This will ensure that members who cannot travel long distances or prefer an online experience can still benefit from PSA offerings and stay engaged.



KPI 7: Decrease Retirements

Challenges:

We face several challenges in retaining retiring members and ensuring they remain engaged with the PSA community. Many members retire because they stop speaking, often due to age, health issues, or career transitions. Additionally, we must continue attracting new members to replace retirees and find meaningful ways to offer post-retirement engagement.

Measurement:

We will monitor retirement rates closely, implement strategies to retain retiring members, and track their ongoing engagement through feedback and involvement in the community. Our goal is to offer meaningful engagement options for retired members, encouraging them to stay involved in PSA activities.

Actions Taken:

- Retired Professional and Retired Fellow Status:** We have recently established a Retired Professional Member and Retired Fellow status, specifically designed for those who have stopped speaking or retired. This status comes at a reduced cost but still allows members to enjoy benefits such as discounted rates for events and continued access to key resources.
- Encouraging Post-Retirement Engagement:** Our objective is to encourage retired members to stay connected with the community by mentoring newer speakers,

giving back to the PSA, and maintaining friendships within the network. We aim to remove barriers to engagement and create a welcoming space for ongoing contributions from retirees.

- **Addressing Reasons for Retirement:** Most members retire due to natural causes like age, health, or a shift in career direction. While we understand these reasons, we aim to keep members in touch with the PSA community by offering flexible, low-commitment ways to stay engaged, particularly through virtual and online means.
- **New Membership System for Targeting Retiring Members:** Our new membership system will allow us to better identify and engage with members who may be approaching retirement. By targeting these individuals and offering tailored communication, we can maintain strong relationships and encourage them to stay involved in PSA activities, even if they are no longer active speakers.

KPI 8: Increase Attendance at Regional Events

Challenges:

The key challenge in increasing attendance at regional events lies in delivering value through the event programme. We are working closely with the regions to improve their speaker line-ups, ensuring that only Professional and Fellow members are permitted to keynote. Additionally, we are raising the eligibility criteria for Regional President roles to Professional or Fellow members to enhance the leadership and strategic direction of regional events. Another challenge involves supporting regional teams in their event management and organisation, as success often depends on the time availability and skills of the regional volunteer teams.

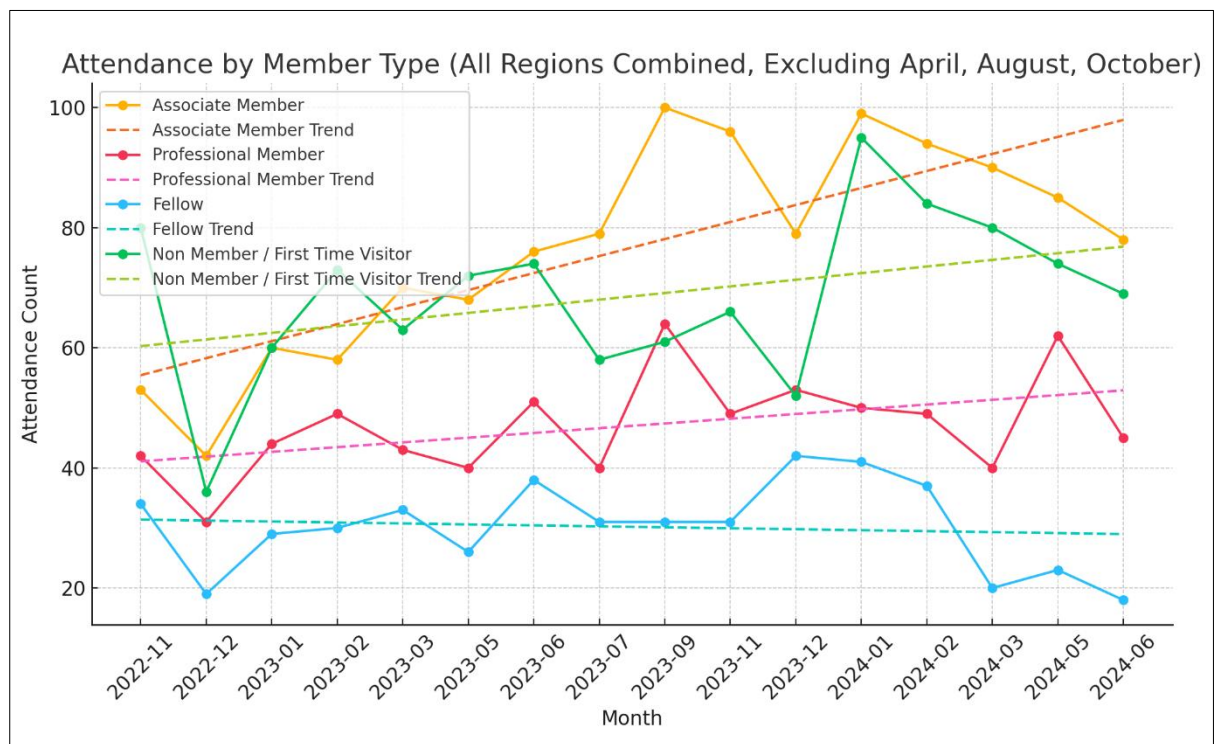
Measurement:

We will measure the success of these initiatives by counting event attendees, analysing feedback from regional events, and tracking overall attendance growth. Additionally, we will assess the impact of the events on member satisfaction and engagement.

Actions Taken:

- **Improving Regional Event Programmes:** We are collaborating with regional teams to ensure that their event programmes feature high-quality content and speakers. By limiting keynote opportunities to Professional and Fellow members, we aim to elevate the calibre of the events and ensure that members feel the value of attending.
- **Leadership and Eligibility Criteria:** The eligibility for Regional President roles has been restricted to Professional or Fellow members. This ensures stronger leadership and strategic planning within regions, helping to enhance the overall quality and appeal of regional events.

- Targeted Communications and Marketing Support:** With the support of the new membership system, smart lists will enable targeted communications, allowing us to engage potential attendees more effectively, both centrally and through regional teams. The Marketing and Communications team will also provide enhanced support to promote regional events across multiple platforms.
- Mentoring and Best Practice Sharing:** We will continue to mentor regional teams and encourage the sharing of best practices between regions. Recognising that some regions are more successful than others, we are exploring ways to replicate successful strategies and support less experienced teams in managing and promoting their events.
- Digital and Hybrid Event Options:** Where appropriate, we will explore virtual and hybrid event formats to increase accessibility, especially for members who may not be able to attend in person due to geographical or logistical constraints.



KPI 9: Increase Attendance at National Events

Challenges:

Our primary challenges include encouraging participation in national events, offering valuable and engaging experiences, and attracting a diverse range of attendees. Affordability remains a key concern, particularly as event prices continue to rise due to increasing venue and service costs, while both speakers and members are sensitive to their own budgets. Balancing quality and affordability, while aiming for realistic attendance targets and break-even points, is essential.

Measurement:

We will measure progress by tracking attendance, conducting post-event surveys for feedback, and monitoring registrations, particularly across early bird and late bookings. Success will also be measured by the overall event impact and financial performance.

Actions Taken:

- **New Membership System for Event Bookings:** Our new membership system will include event booking capabilities, reducing booking fees and surcharges. This will allow us to offer more flexible packages, such as bolt-on options and the ability to split events into one- or two-day options rather than requiring full attendance. By increasing pricing flexibility, we aim to lower barriers and make our events more accessible.
- **Price Management and Payment Options:** Recognising the importance of balancing value and affordability, we offer payment options spread across the year, early bird incentives, and premium pricing for late bookings. This approach ensures accessibility while encouraging early registrations.
- **Targeted Communications and Marketing:** Our communications strategy includes targeted outreach to members, with year-round announcements about key event highlights (Meet the Maestros, Keynote Speakers, Workshops, Fringe Events, Fellows and Professional Member sessions, Cabaret Night). Calls for speakers and contributors are strategically shared to generate interest and engagement.
- **Professional Event Presentation:** We have invested in professional marketing materials and event websites, ensuring each event is presented at a high standard. Speaker graphics and polished content enhance the overall event experience, improving both engagement and attendee satisfaction.
- **Venue and Cost Optimisation:** Despite rising venue and service costs, we are working diligently to negotiate prices and keep our events affordable. We are also focused on securing affordable accommodation options for attendees, helping to reduce the financial burden without compromising on event quality.

- **National Events Overview:**

Our two key national events include *Impact!*, a 1-day April (spring) conference targeted at 100-130 delegates, and the 3-day Speaking Business Summit in October (autumn), which aims to attract 150-220 delegates. These events are designed to offer significant value through high-quality content, networking, and engagement.

- **Sponsorship and Partnerships:**

We are actively investigating sponsorship and partnership opportunities with the support of our new Commercial Director, Patrick Mercie. These collaborations will help enhance event offerings while offsetting some of the rising costs, further supporting the goal of keeping our national events affordable.

- **Accessibility and Travel Considerations:**

Travel and accessibility remain key factors in our planning process. We also promote our events to international delegates, both as speakers and attendees, to broaden our reach and ensure diverse participation.

KPI 10: Broaden Demographic Appeal

Challenges:

Our primary challenges include reaching a more diverse range of demographics, ensuring our events and communications are inclusive and relevant, and attracting a broader diversity of speakers. We recognise that our current membership and speaker base may be skewing older, and we are not attracting as broad a demographic or variety of topics and speaking modalities as we aspire to.

Measurement:

We will begin collecting and analysing demographic data using our new membership system, which will allow members to self-declare information such as gender, age, ethnicity, and disabilities. Additionally, we will track diversity initiatives and gather member feedback to measure the effectiveness of our efforts in broadening our demographic appeal.

Actions Taken:

- **New Membership System for Demographic Data:** Currently, we do not hold detailed demographic information about our members, but with the introduction of the new membership system, members will be able to self-declare their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, and other relevant details. This will provide us with better insights and help tailor our diversity initiatives.
- **Ensuring Diversity at National Events:** We actively ensure that our national event stages are balanced in terms of gender and ethnicity, although we have limited

control over regional event programmes. We are also mindful of ensuring that our Irish members are fully enfranchised and represented across our events.

- **Inclusive Speaking and Event Practices:** We provide guidance to our members on inclusive speaking ideas and work closely with venues to ensure accessibility for all attendees. We are also revising our booking forms to collect important information such as dietary requirements and accessibility needs. We strive to create inclusive environments at all events, although we recognise that more needs to be done.
- **Ethics and Safeguarding:** Our ethics and safeguarding policies are designed to ensure a psychologically safe environment for all members and participants. These policies are continually reviewed to ensure they align with best practices for inclusivity and member safety.
- **Challenges in Attracting Younger and More Diverse Members:** We are aware that our membership demographic is ageing, and we are not attracting as broad a range of speaker members or covering the variety of speaking topics and modalities that we would like. This is an area of focus as we strive to broaden our demographic appeal and ensure the PSA remains relevant to a diverse range of members.
- **Commitment to Improvement:** We acknowledge that while we have made progress in promoting inclusivity, there is still much more to do. We are receptive to feedback and requests from members and are consciously working towards creating more inclusive environments across all areas of our organisation.

In Summary

In the short term, our primary focus is to continue to build a robust marketing strategy that enhances how we communicate with and engage our members. This includes improving the overall member experience across all touchpoints and establishing foundational elements such as our new membership system, that will incorporate a speaker directory and facilitate a member's only area of our website, and a clear base level of membership. We are also reassessing our fee structures to ensure accessibility and value, while simultaneously concentrating on strategies to enhance member retention.

Looking ahead to our medium-term goals, we plan to target large corporations and companies, offering them tailored opportunities to engage with our speaker community. Supporting our members in securing speaking engagements is a key focus, which will be bolstered by the development of a comprehensive professional development learning and mentoring programme. In tandem with these initiatives, we will review our brand and target market to ensure alignment with future growth objectives. Enhancing membership benefits remains a cornerstone of our strategy, ensuring we offer tangible value to all members.

Together, these short- and medium-term priorities will allow us to create a stronger, more resilient organisation that continues to support and empower our members.

Before I sign off, I want to sincerely invite you to attend the AGM on the 10th of October @ 18:00. You will have the opportunity to challenge and question the board, as well as bring your own voice to the meeting. Attendance is free and we are running it as an on-line only event, so you can actively participate from anywhere in the world, as long as you have a signal. [Please register here..](#)

Take care, see you soon, and “keep speaking”!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joanne Lockwood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J'.

Joanne Lockwood
Chair of the Board 2022-2025
The Professional Speaking Association, UK and Ireland