



2025-2026 AAF National Club Achievement Competition

Category of Entry: Membership Development and Communications

Introduction

To provide some background on how Ad 2 Roanoke has made a comeback in 2026, it is important to acknowledge the challenges the club has faced in recent years. At the start of the 2024–2025 fiscal year, Ad 2 Roanoke had only one board member who also served as president. Thanks to that individual’s dedication and persistence, we entered the 2025–2026 fiscal year with a board of five members, even though we still did not have a clear picture of how many other individuals remained connected to the club. Throughout this document, we share the journey of rebuilding Ad 2 Roanoke and expanding our regular membership base. As of March 20, 2026, Ad 2 Roanoke once again has a full board, and we have successfully achieved our goal of growing the club close to fifteen members, an accomplishment that felt very ambitious at the beginning. Ad 2 Roanoke is steadily becoming a strong and active club dedicated to connecting young professionals in the advertising, marketing, and creative fields.

The Drive Behind Creating a Strategy for Membership Development and Communications

In October 2025, we wanted to gauge the local community’s engagement with Ad 2 and assess our current reach. To do this, we hosted a Members’ Meetup at a local brewery. Unfortunately, only the current president, the past president, and two board members attended (EXHIBIT 1.1). While we had hoped for a larger group of new faces, the reality highlighted that we still had much work to do. For that specific event, the club’s president created a survey to understand the types of programming members were most interested in (EXHIBIT 5.1). Even though only three people attended, the surveys were distributed to gather their input. Once the feedback was

reviewed, it was clear that the club needed to adopt a new approach to engage our members and drive growth. From the insights, we developed the following goals:

Goals

1. Strengthen collaboration with our local AAF chapter to establish credibility as a club.
2. Increase membership to 15 members by enhancing our programming efforts.
3. Fill all available board positions and strengthen our communication tactics.

Goal 1: Strengthen collaboration with our local AAF to establish credibility as a club.

Method 1: Participate in events hosted by AAF Roanoke.

For Ad 2 to stand out among the other clubs in our community and position Ad2 Roanoke as a valuable organization within the Roanoke Valley, it is essential that we participate in events hosted by our local AAF. These efforts provide opportunities for our club to highlight our involvement in networking and professional development activities alongside seasoned professionals in marketing and advertising. By sharing these experiences on our social media channels, we can showcase the club as an active space where young creatives can connect.

- **Execution of Method 1:**

Our board members are highly committed to attending events hosted by AAF Roanoke.

This fiscal year, at least one or two members of our team have been present at nearly all of their events, whether virtual or in person (EXHIBIT 2.1) and (EXHIBIT 2.2). Many young people in the local marketing community are still unaware of Ad 2, so being present at these sessions allows us to shine a light on our club and encourage word-of-mouth recommendations. This year, six out of the seven board members serving at the time in February 2026, volunteered their time to assist AAF Roanoke by welcoming

guests at the awards gala they hosted – The Addy Revue. One of our board members also secured a gig as the event’s photographer, which made us very proud as a team and provided excellent material to share on social media (EXHIBIT 2.3).

Method 2: *Host at least one event in collaboration with AAF Roanoke.*

Collaborating with AAF Roanoke to create at least one event a year is a great way for both teams to get to know each other and cross-promote. It also provides Ad 2’s young board members with hands-on experience and the opportunity to build strong professional relationships.

- **Execution of Method 2:**

Ad 2 and AAF Roanoke hosted a webinar in September of 2025 to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. Our team assisted with finding speakers, creating the agenda, and designing the presentation for the event. In addition, one of our board members participated as a panelist. Helping execute the webinar was a valuable learning experience for our small team at the time (EXHIBIT 2.4).

Results of Goal 1: From the webinar, we were able to create content and add the event to our portfolio of valuable resources to showcase with potential members at networking events. As a result of attending AAF events, we gained four new members: three were introduced by an AAF board member, and the fourth proactively reached out to our club after attending the Awards Gala with her company, expressing interest in becoming more active within Ad 2.

Goal 2: Increase membership to 15 members by enhancing our programming efforts.

Method 1: *Collaborate with local organizations to co-host events and deliver educational workshops.*

To expand our audience and provide programming that is both educational and engaging, we have been actively developing partnerships with local organizations. While Ad 2 remains focused

on connecting young professionals in the advertising and marketing industries, these partnerships allow us to broaden our reach and offer more valuable experiences, supporting the growth of our group.

- **Execution of Method 1:** This year, we hosted two successful events following this method. The first was our Headshot Happy Hour. To boost attendance, we partnered with a local organization, Get2KnowNoke, whose audience primarily consists of young people getting to know the Roanoke region. We offered three different headshot pricing tiers: \$10 for Ad 2 and AAF members, \$15 for their followers using a promo code shared through Get2KnowNoke's newsletters and social media, and \$20 for non-members. The goal was to cross-promote and reach a wider audience, which helped increase the event's attendance to 10 participants, including our team (EXHIBIT 3.1). The second event was a partnership with a local nonprofit organization, the HumanKind Economic Resource Center (ERC), to provide our audience with a free, in-person educational workshop titled "*Mindset for Success*." The goal of this workshop was to inspire attendees to develop a mindset that supports achieving their personal and professional goals. The event had a great turnout as well and high levels of participant engagement. We welcomed 14 attendees, including our team and two presenters (EXHIBIT 3.2).

Method 2: *Partner with local speakers and community leaders to offer professional development sessions.*

Another way Ad 2 is working to attract new members and retain existing ones is by offering professional development sessions. To achieve this, we have focused on building relationships with local speakers and industry leaders. Collaborating with speakers and community leaders not

only provides a more dynamic content for our members but also helps us reach new audiences and expand our social media presence.

- **Execution of Method 2:** We would like to highlight two examples. The first is a virtual panel hosted by Ad 2 Roanoke in mid-July 2025, designed for students and creative individuals in the Roanoke Valley interested in entering the marketing and advertising fields. We invited three industry leaders working in marketing agencies, two of whom are agency owners with extensive experience (EXHIBIT 3.3). During the panel, speakers shared honest insights on how to transition into these fields and offered practical advice on building successful careers, including what employers are looking for. It was wonderful to see 11 people join the webinar, including our team. The second example is an upcoming initiative. Ad 2 continues to grow, and we are taking programming to the next level by trying something new. We partnered with a marketing and public speaking professor from Virginia Western Community College, who also leads leadership workshops in workforce and corporate development, to host a professional development session titled “*Network Beyond the Job Title*” on Thursday, April 9, from 5:30 to 6:30 P.M. This marks the very first time in recent years that our club has rented a venue to host a guest speaker. Based on the increased attendance at our recent in-person events, we felt confident taking this step to elevate our programming and provide greater value to our members (EXHIBIT 3.4).

Results of Goal 2: During our Headshot Happy Hour Event, we connected with two individuals who expressed interest in joining Ad 2. Through our partnership with the ERC, our following on social media grew, and we established new connections that helped us further promote our events with the community. One of the panelists who volunteered for our July webinar played a key role

in helping us secure the venue for our upcoming professional development session at a more affordable price. Recently, one individual who saw the upcoming event on social media reached out to express interest in joining Ad 2.

Goal 3: Fill all available board positions and strengthen team communication.

Method 1: Connect with potential members via in-person or Zoom Meetings.

One of our goals this year was to recruit additional individuals to our board, not only to strengthen the stability of the club, but also to highlight the diverse, young, and talented professionals in the creative fields within our region. To achieve this, we focused on establishing genuine connections through personal introductions.

- **Execution of Method 1:** Whenever someone expresses interest in joining the club or is referred to us, the president follows up to schedule a meeting. The focus of these meetings is to explain what Ad 2 Roanoke is, learn about the individual's career and current job, outline the benefits of joining our community, and, for those interested in developing leadership skills, explain the role board members play. Individuals can choose to join as regular members or take a board position if available. So far, most people we met expressed interest in becoming more involved in the club and joining the board.

Method 2: Understanding our external communications to improve team collaboration

Ad 2 Roanoke's communications operate under the AAF Roanoke umbrella. This means our official emails are sent through our local AAF, and event webpages are managed by the AAF's Communications Chair. Ad 2 Roanoke maintains full control over its social media accounts. At the beginning of this fiscal year, it was challenging to draw attention and promote our events because the communication between Ad 2 and AAF Roanoke was limited.

- **Execution of Method 2:** Our team has become more proactive in maintaining consistent communication with AAF. As soon as we have all the creative materials for our events, we ensure they are shared promptly so AAF can feature them in their newsletter and on the website at <https://aafroanoke.org/events/>. Additionally, we are placing greater focus on our social media platforms, organically promoting events on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn weeks in advance, with AAF providing economic support to boost content when needed. We are posting more photos and videos to boost engagement.

Method 3: *Improving our internal communications.*

When it comes to keeping the Ad 2 Roanoke team connected, our internal communication strategy has become essential.

- **Execution of Method 3:** Each month, we host board meetings and maintain an active group text that includes all board members. The current president regularly shares updates on event logistics, reminders, and important announcements to keep everyone aligned and informed about what's ahead. While Slack channels are available, we have found that, for now, text messaging is the most effective way to keep the team engaged and up to date. Since individuals join at different times throughout the year, it can be challenging to keep everyone aligned, and it may cause board members to drop out and leave the club. To address this, we are hosting, for the first time in at least two years, a formal onboarding session for the Ad 2 Roanoke board members, scheduled for Saturday, April 11, at noon. While there is still room for improvement within our team, membership drive, and programming, we are confident that, through resilience and a strong internal communications strategy, our members will be well-positioned to thrive in their roles and contribute to the club's continued growth.

Results of Goal 3: Ad 2 Roanoke is on track to successfully close the 2025-2026 year with a full board of ten members, making it a significant milestone for the club. There is great power in listening to people's stories and making them feel seen. By fostering interpersonal connections from the start and clearly outlining the responsibilities they hold not only as board members but also as emerging leaders, our club has become more authentic and genuine.

Conclusion:

This has been a strong and transformative year for Ad 2 Roanoke. We have made intentional strides to rebuild and grow our membership, focusing on revitalizing our event strategy and gradually expanding our presence within the community. The journey has not been easy, from hosting events with zero external attendees to taking the exciting leap of renting a venue for a guest speaker as our attendees grew; it has been a story of resilience and progress. Just two years ago, Ad 2 Roanoke was a team of one. Today, we have grown to ten strong. afroanoke.org/ad-2/

The projects that we have undertaken have opened the doors for us to execute initiatives more proactively. We are currently organizing a webinar in May focused on AI in marketing, in collaboration with a college professor from Virginia Tech (EXHIBIT 4.1). On top of that, we are exploring a potential partnership with WSL10, a local TV station, for an exciting event in June. It has taken time, dedication, and persistence, but we can finally say: we are not just growing, we are thriving, making connections, and inspiring our local creative community!

While our membership remains modest, we are confident that by delivering high-quality programming, creating engaging networking opportunities, and intentionally welcoming new members, our success will continue. Although we did not attend national events this year, we are actively laying the groundwork to better prepare our members for greater participation in the Ad 2 National 2026 Mid-Year Retreat and ADMERICA 2027.

EXHIBITS



EXHIBIT 1.1: Facebook Post – Event Recap

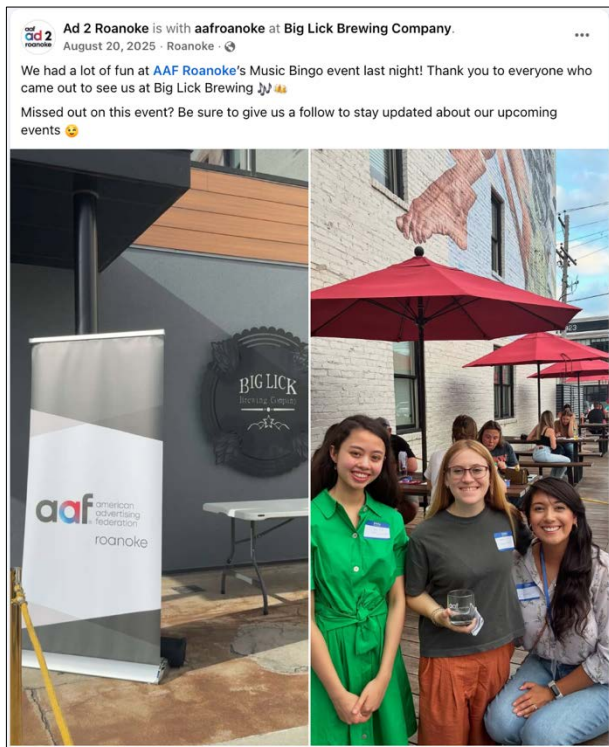


EXHIBIT 2.1: Facebook Post – Event Recap

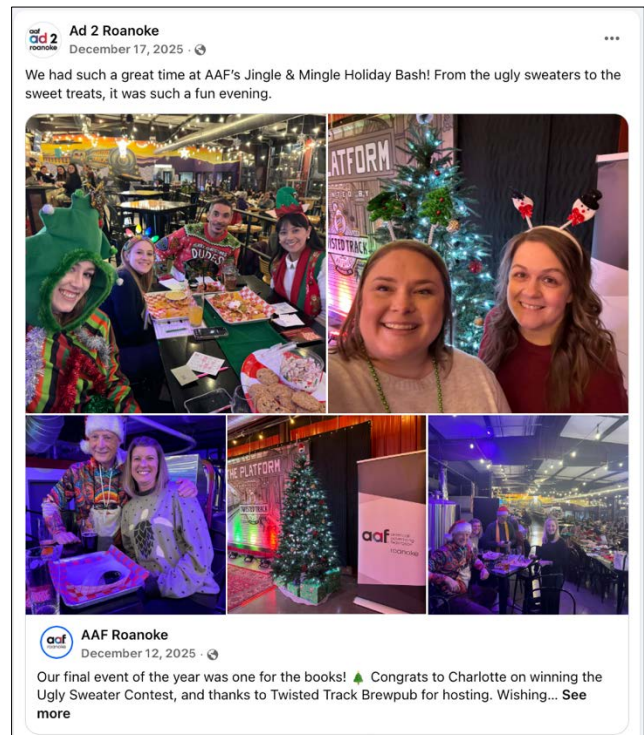


EXHIBIT 2.2: Facebook Post – Event Recap



EXHIBIT 2.3: [Facebook Post – Event Recap](#)



EXHIBIT 2.4: [Facebook Post – Event Recap](#)



EXHIBIT 3.1: [Facebook Post – Event Recap](#)

[Click here](#) to see the event's video.



EXHIBIT 3.2: [Facebook Post – Event Recap](#)

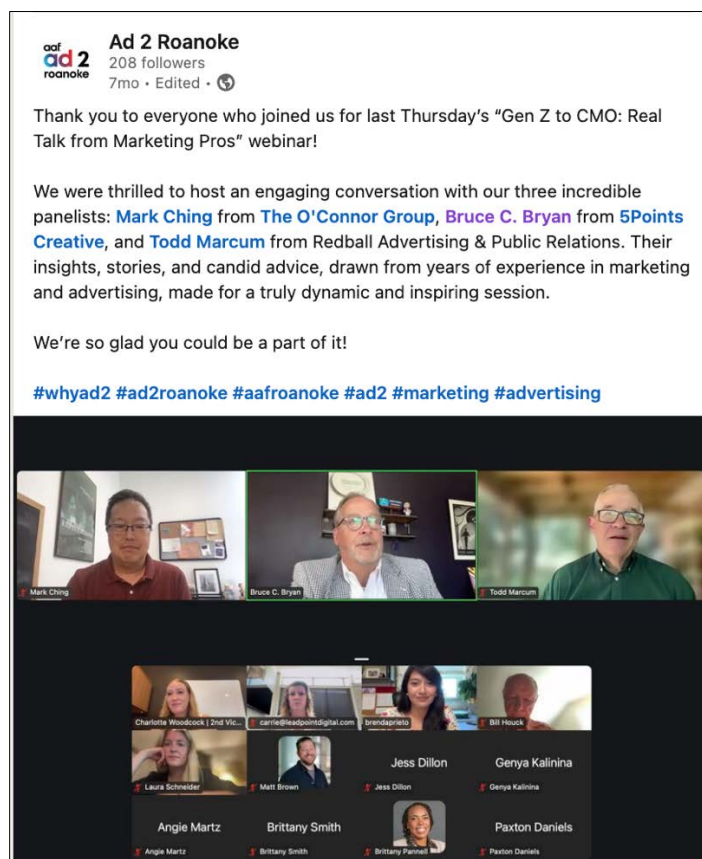


EXHIBIT 3.3: [LinkedIn Post – Event Recap](#)

ad 2 Roanoke
February 19 at 12:21 PM · 🌐

We are excited to announce our next event featuring guest speaker Prof. Alexander Scott of [Virginia Western Community College](#)!

Networking can connect you with potential employers, clients, partners, or investors. But it can also feel awkward, intimidating, or downright exhausting—though it doesn't have to. If you're tired of the same old "What do you do?" questions, join us for this professional development session and learn how to move beyond small talk to create meaningful connections.

You'll walk away from this session with practical skills, a memorable experience, and the confidence to network like a pro!

👉 Register for this event through the following link: <https://aafroanoke.org/event/network-beyond-the-job-title/>

NETWORK BEYOND THE JOB TITLE

Move Past "What Do You Do?" and
Turn Small Talk into Real Connections!

📅 **Thursday, April 9**

🕒 **5:30 to 6:30 PM**

📍 **The Spot on Krik**

**Presented by Guest Speaker
Alexander Scott**

Associate Professor of Foreign Languages,
Marketing, and Public Speaking at
Virginia Western Community College



Key Takeaways:

- ➊ Approach networking with structured curiosity.
- ➋ Learn two techniques to reduce your anxiety and increase others' comfort.
- ➌ Brainstorm "human hooks" — go beyond your company name and job title.

• Free for Ad2 & AAF Members

• \$10 for Non-Members

**ad 2
roanoke**

EXHIBIT 3.4: [Facebook Post – Event Recap](#)

Event Website Page:

<https://aafroanoke.org/event/network-beyond-the-job-title/>

 **Brenda Prieto** · [brendaprieto125@gmail.com](#)
to Lewis, shilpa22, Yariane · Mon, Feb 16, 2:55 PM ☆ 😊 ↩ ⋮

Hi Shilpa,

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us today. It was truly a pleasure connecting with you, and we're excited to partner with you for the webinar on **Thursday, May 14th, from 12:00–1:00 P.M.** We're really looking forward to it!

Once we've had a chance to review the video and discuss it internally, we'll follow up with any additional thoughts to help shape the session. In the meantime, would you mind sending us a short bio and a headshot when you have a moment? I also wanted to mention that at the end of the webinar, you're more than welcome to share information or announcements about yourself. Whether that's your involvement with AAF, your work building the group in the Blacksburg area, or anything else you'd like attendees to know.

Once we settle on the key talking points for the webinar, we'll work on the marketing materials and share everything with you, along with the event agenda, so you'll have a complete overview.

Thank you again for partnering with us, and we will be in touch soon!

Best,
Brenda Prieto
**ad 2
roanoke**
Ad 2 Roanoke President
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[linkedin](#) | [instagram](#) | [facebook](#)

EXHIBIT 4.1: Event Confirmation Email

EXHIBIT 5.1: Members' Meetup Survey



We want to hear from you!

We're so glad to have you as part of our Ad2 community! To help us better achieve our club's goals and create programming that's valuable to you, please take a moment to answer a few questions.

1. What's your field of studies?

2. What motivated you join Ad2?

3. What type of programming are you interested in attending?

- a. In-person Networking Events
- b. Career development webinars
- c. Group community volunteer sessions
- d. All of the above
- e. Other: _____

4. What are you hoping to get out of your experience with Ad2?

5. Please share any additional comments or event ideas you may have:
