



THE QBR MOMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP

Why the carwash industry needs a better way to measure membership performance.

In 2011, ESPN introduced a new statistic called Total Quarterback Rating, better known today as Total QBR. The idea was straightforward, even if the math behind it was not. Traditional passer rating could tell you something about completions, yards, touchdowns and interceptions, but ESPN believed it did not tell the whole story of how a quarterback affected the outcome of a football game.

Total QBR attempted to look at the quarterback more completely. Passing mattered, of course, but so did rushing, sacks, fumbles, game situation, down and distance, field position and the value of what happened on a particular play. Instead of looking at a handful of statistics independently, QBR tried to put them into context and produce one number that gave you a better picture of overall quarterback performance.

Not everyone loved it.

Any time you introduce a new way to measure something people have been measuring for decades, there is going to be skepticism. Football fans argued about it. Analysts questioned it. People picked apart individual results. ESPN itself continued to refine the methodology after QBR was introduced. The important part is that they kept working on it.

Today, QBR is part of the football vocabulary. It did not replace every other quarterback statistic, nor should it have. Instead, it gave people another lens through which

to evaluate performance. More importantly, it recognized something that should be obvious in hindsight: No single traditional statistic could adequately explain the total performance of a quarterback.

I believe the carwash industry has reached a similar point with unlimited membership.

PLENTY OF NUMBERS, BUT NO ONE, COMPLETE PICTURE

Membership has fundamentally changed our industry. For many operators, recurring membership revenue is now one of the most important parts of the business. We talk about member counts, monthly recurring revenue, churn, conversion, usage, penetration and dozens of other numbers. Most good operators are tracking at least some of them.

The problem is that we tend to look at those numbers independently.

One operator may proudly tell you he has 5,000 members. Great. Is that good? It might be fantastic. It might also be underperforming badly based on his wash volume and market opportunity.

Another operator may have incredible conversion but terrible attrition. Someone else may have very low attrition but barely sells new memberships. A wash may have a huge member base, but those members are using the wash so frequently that the economics are becoming uncomfortable. Another wash may have healthy usage and

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retention, but membership saturation in the market is still far below its potential.

Which one has the stronger membership program?

That question is harder to answer than it should be.

For years I have believed our industry needs a more complete way to look at membership performance. Not another vanity metric. Not another number that makes a good wash feel good and a struggling wash feel bad. We need a diagnostic tool that helps an operator understand where the membership program is healthy, where it is leaking and where the next opportunity may be.

That idea became the Membership Performance Quotient, or MPQ.

THE 4 PILLARS

MPQ is built around four measurements that I believe tell us a tremendous amount about the health of a membership program: conversion, usage, attrition and saturation.

Conversion asks a simple question: When we have a legitimate opportunity to sell a membership, how often are we succeeding? This is the front door of the program. If conversion is weak, there may be a training issue, a compensation issue, a scripting issue, a staffing issue or simply a culture that does not prioritize membership.

Usage looks at how often members actually use their plans. Usage matters because unlimited membership is not just a revenue product. It is also a service commitment. Healthy usage can signal engagement and value, but extreme usage can change the economics of the program. Very low usage can create a different concern, because customers who stop seeing value may eventually cancel.

Attrition tells us how many members we are losing. This

S OF THE MPQ



is the hole in the bucket. A wash can be terrific at selling memberships and still struggle to grow if too many members are walking out the back door every month. Attrition can also tell us something about the customer experience, billing, perceived value, service consistency and the quality of the members we are acquiring.

Saturation looks at how deeply membership has penetrated the available customer base or market opportunity. It provides context. A membership program with 3,000 members can be extraordinary at one wash and disappointing at another. Saturation helps us understand the difference.

None of these numbers lives in isolation. That is the point.

A great conversion rate does not excuse runaway attrition. Low attrition does not mean much if nobody is joining. A large member count needs context. Usage can be good, bad or somewhere in between, depending on everything happening around it.

MPQ brings those four pillars together and attempts to answer a broader question: How healthy is this membership program, really?

WHY I AM NOT PUBLISHING THE FORMULA

I wrestled with this part of the article more than anything else.

My instinct as an educator is usually to show the work. If I tell an operator that something matters, I want to explain why. Professional Carwashing & Detailing has given me an incredible platform to do exactly that, and the support I have received from the publication and its editorial team has allowed me to reach operators I never would have reached on my own.

So, I understand the natural question: If MPQ is supposed to help the industry, why not print the formula right here?

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remained the same even as the model improved. MPQ needs that same freedom.

The formula is proprietary, but the tool will not be hidden behind a paywall. My intention is for operators to be able to use the MPQ calculator for free at membershipguy.com. You will enter your numbers and receive your score. As the database grows and the benchmarks improve, the model can improve with them.

I would rather give an operator the most relevant answer I can today than defend a formula I printed six months ago simply because I printed it.

MORE THAN A YEAR IN THE MAKING

MPQ did not come from a weekend with a spreadsheet.

I have been working on this concept for more than a year. During that time, I have talked with owners, operators and industry partners across the country. I have looked at membership programs from single-site independents to larger groups, from express exterior operations to other wash formats. I have challenged my own assumptions, changed the way I think about certain measurements and kept coming back to the same conclusion.

We need this.

I am fortunate to have a large network of carwash owner friends who are willing to share what is really happening inside their businesses. Not the conference version. Not the social media version. The real numbers: the wins, the ugly

Because doing that would actually make the tool less useful. The MPQ formula is not intended to be frozen in time. The benchmarks underneath it need to move as the industry moves.

Right now, for example, operators across the country are dealing with unusually high levels of membership attrition. That matters. A reasonable attrition benchmark in one period may be a poor benchmark in another. If I publish a fixed equation today and national performance changes materially three months from now, I have two choices: I can leave the formula alone and knowingly give operators a less accurate result, or I can change it and make the published equation obsolete.

Neither makes sense.

QBR offers a useful precedent here. ESPN introduced the statistic, studied how it behaved and refined it. The underlying goal

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"THE FIRST VERSION OF MPQ IS NOT THE FINISH LINE. *IT IS THE STARTING POINT.*"

months, the cancellations, the conversion struggles and the things they are trying to fix.

Those conversations have shaped MPQ and will continue to shape it.

Eventually, I want the calculator to become more specific as the data becomes deeper. An express exterior wash should be able to identify itself as an express exterior wash. An in-bay automatic operator should be able to do the same. As enough reliable data develops, the feedback can become increasingly relevant to the type of operation, market and circumstances behind the score.

That is where this gets exciting.

The first version of MPQ is not the finish line. It is the starting point.

THIS IS A DIAGNOSTIC, NOT A TROPHY

There is another distinction I want to make very clear.

I do not want MPQ to become a number people brag about

without understanding what is underneath it.

If your MPQ is excellent, great. I want you to know why it is excellent. If your score is weak, that is not an indictment of your business or your team. It is an invitation to look deeper.

Maybe conversion is dragging the score down. That gives us somewhere to work. Maybe conversion is excellent and attrition is the problem. That is an entirely different conversation. Maybe the fundamentals are strong but saturation tells us there is still enormous room to grow.

The value is not the score by itself. The value is what the score makes you ask next.

That is also why I believe MPQ can become useful beyond individual operators. Imagine being able to have better conversations between owners and managers because everyone is looking at the same framework. Imagine benchmarking locations inside a multi-site organization without reducing the discussion to member count alone. Imagine having a common language for membership health across the industry.

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WHY THIS MATTERS BEYOND MEMBERSHIP

I have spent much of my professional life thinking about what happens when an industry changes and established businesses do not change with it.

Before carwashing, I spent decades in restaurants. There was a time when concepts like Outback Steakhouse represented the center of the casual dining universe. Then consumer behavior changed. Fast casual concepts grew. Chipotle, Five Guys, Subway and others offered convenience, speed,

customization and a different value proposition. Full-service restaurants did not disappear, but the competitive landscape changed dramatically.

Carwashing is not restaurants, and I am not suggesting the same story will repeat itself. I am saying that no business model gets to assume the world will stay exactly as it is.

Membership has given professional carwashing an extraordinary advantage. Recurring revenue creates stability. It deepens the customer relationship. It can make a wash more resilient and more valuable — but only if we operate membership well.

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That matters especially to me, because I care deeply about independent and family-owned operators.

I want the mom-and-pop wash to stay strong. I want that owner to employ more people, build a better business, compete effectively and, when the day eventually comes to sell, receive as much value as possible for what the family built.

Better membership performance helps make that possible.

In my current career position, my job is to help operators succeed. Outside of that role, through writing, speaking and working with operators, the mission is essentially the same. I want to help people get better at membership, because stronger operators make for a stronger industry.

That is what MPQ is ultimately about.

OCT. 5

My goal is to have the MPQ calculator live and available by Oct. 5, 2026, as our industry gathers in Atlantic City for Carwash Con East, the event many of us have known for years as the Northeast Regional Carwash Convention.

The calculator will be free to use at membershipguy.com.

More importantly, it will continue to evolve.

As more operators participate, as we collect better information and as industry benchmarks change, MPQ should become more useful. I expect we will learn things. I expect operators will challenge parts of it. I expect there will be changes.

Good. That is what happens when you try to build something that measures a moving target.

When Total QBR appeared in 2011, football did not suddenly stop using passing yards, touchdowns or interceptions. Those statistics still mattered. QBR simply tried to put more of the quarterback's performance into context.

That is what I want MPQ to do for membership.

Keep tracking your member count. Keep watching conversion. Know your attrition. Understand usage. Measure saturation. Those numbers matter.

But perhaps it is time we also had a way to step back, put them together and ask the bigger question: How is our membership program really performing?

If MPQ helps an operator answer that question more clearly, find one leak sooner, retain a few more members, develop a better salesperson, protect a few more jobs or build a more valuable family business, then it has done exactly what I built it to do. **PC&D**

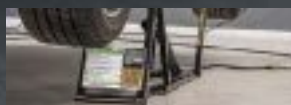
Sean Pashley is vice president of partner success at EverWash and a carwash consultant known throughout the industry as The Membership Guy. He serves on the board of directors for the Carwash Association of Pennsylvania and Leadership Worth Following (LWF). Pashley has worked with and trained carwash owners and teams across the country, with a focus on membership sales, culture, leadership and operator performance. He is a regular contributor to Professional Carwashing & Detailing and other industry publications. Learn more at membershipguy.com.

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