

Membership Retention . . . frankly speaking

“In order to thrive in the future, associations must actively embrace growth.”

“Retaining new members starts with learning from those who have left and finding out why.”

“Social contact is one of the big reasons members join any organization.”

“Social isolation drives off more new salvageable members than all other factors combined.”

Research shows that membership retention is a very common plague with all volunteer organizations. There is this sobering truth to consider: **“If a club cannot retain its current members as well as induct and retain new, qualified members, it will not remain viable.”**

Reasons for Resigning:

- Dissatisfied
- Not involved
- Not aware
- Not educated
- Excluded from decision making

Retaining those Members is as simple as:

- Finding the source of dissatisfaction
- Making them feel welcome
- Giving them meaningful jobs
- Involving them in decision making
- Using and appreciating their skills and talents
- Valuing their contributions and input

It is of utmost importance for us to also truly understand the value of the new member. Consider the following sobering truths:

- There will be no ICES within one generation if there are no new members. That’s just how important they are.
- Without new members, there will be no new ideas.
- Without new members there will be no new talent to carry on or to benefit from.
- It is in new members we find our future.
- It is in the new members that this or any other organization will live on.

New members bring in new energy, new blood and new thought processes. They are the product of society today. They will bring to this organization education, technology, innovative sales approaches, a vision for the future . . . they are not yet, but they will become, the very lifeblood of this organization.

Leadership positions must be embraced by new blood. We greatly appreciate and honor all those who have served in the past. It’s our history. We recognize and heartily applaud the significant historical foundation of this organization. Without the foundation of the past, there would be no future.

But the very nature of life is to beget new life, or the family name is gone forever. It is in membership growth and retention that ICES must seek her future.

Current leadership (that’s all of us!) must educate upcoming members in tried and proven track records, but they must also loosen the reins of tradition so as to decisively leave room for advancements in technology, education and improved methods.

The vision for the future begins with educating the existing club leadership and club membership. It’s hard, sometimes, for the experienced member to make room for innovative methods when tried-and-true methods have worked for generations.

We must educate ourselves and we need to start with the existing membership of ICES. Technology is advancing every day and we must keep up so as to positively effect membership growth.

It's time to move into the membership growth of the future. Growth means change. It means education. It means taking advantage of available, current information that has succeeded with other volunteer organizations.

Membership growth and retention means appealing to a new age group. It means listening to and accepting and valuing the contributions of those we haven't yet installed as leaders. Sometimes membership growth means learning how to treat and appreciate each other so that we can move into the productivity of the future.

“In order to thrive in the future, associations must actively embrace growth.” Successful businesses know and understand this absolute truth.

The reason any organization gets bogged down in minutiae and ethical issues is because there is no new growth to foster.

IT'S TIME TO INVEST IN AND RETAIN NEW ICES MEMBERS.

New membership will fix all of our problems. It'll benefit us financially. It'll fix membership growth. It'll fix public meeting difficulties. Get everyone to bring a guest to convention, and they'll ALL want the General Membership Meeting to be productive and courteous. It'll breathe new life and give birth to greater expectations for a bright future.

Retaining new members starts with learning from those who have left and finding out why.

First of all, we need to be comforted with the fact that we're never going to retain 100% of our

members. There are just too many variables.

Consider the following widely accepted statistics:

It is the 1-2 year member who is most likely to drop his membership. **Pay attention to this one; it means that new members need individual attention.**

Once past the 2-year mark, members tend to get more involved and retention improves considerably.

Why do short-term members leave?

Some of the known reasons are:

The Tire Kickers: These are the curiosity seekers who want to see what it's all about but have no real commitment to the art or the club. They will leave, no matter what we do.

The “Too Busy” People: Another unreachable category is comprised of those with time constraints. They're the “too-busy” people. It might be an excuse, or it might not. They, too, will leave, no matter what we do.

Once we eliminate from our efforts the 25-50% of new member losses that are unsalvageable, there are still quite a few new members that can be retained.

Top Reasons given by Resigning Members:

Politics and Personality Conflicts: Coming from the disgruntled members who have resigned from organizations across the land, this is their universal complaint: “I got tired of all the personality clashes, infighting and club politics. It seemed like all the ‘regulars’ did was argue amongst themselves.”

Lack of Activity: “I joined (the group) because I wanted to par-

ticipate in the activities I thought they had planned. **Experience and research shows that active clubs have fewer member retention problems. The more involved a member is with an organization, the more likely he/she is to stay a member.**

Social Isolation: This is THE BIG ONE. **More than any other factor, social isolation drives off more new salvageable members than all other factors combined.**

If a new member comes to a club meeting and is not made to feel immediately welcome, only the strongest or most outgoing will stick it out long enough to break through the curtain of silence, make friends and become regular members.

Social contact is one of the big reasons members join any organization. If they don't find it, they leave. It's as simple as that.

Proven Techniques for Improving Membership Retention:

- Publish a newsletter.
- Issue name tags at meetings.
- Find the source of member satisfaction/dissatisfaction.
- Create at every level a warm camaraderie of friendship.
- Identify current member types and meet their specific needs.
- Immediately actively encourage new members to become involved at every level.
- Establish a specific Member Recruitment, Development and Retention Plan.
- Establish simple but official Meeting Conduct Guidelines and follow them.

Note: This article was widely researched from information that resourced other volunteer organizations.
—Grace McMillan