

Welcoming New Members

A very good point was raised at the ICES General Membership Meeting at convention. The speaker said that many of our new members are unintentionally neglected when they first join ICES because they receive no ICES communication for several months. Right after convention we're all exhausted. School starts a few weeks later. Then come the holidays: Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas, and we're all very busy. The international newsletter is not printed in September, so if a member joins in July or August, he/she doesn't receive a newsletter for the next two or three months. The upshot of it all is that many times no communication is received by a new ICES member for quite some time.

A good ICES Rep can help us address this situation. ICES Reps receive local membership rosters every two months. That roster contains names, addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of all the members in your area. Please compare recent lists with past lists, determine who your new (and lapsed) members are and let's rectify this communication problem immediately!

One of the key ways you can impact your member retention rate is to start at the beginning! Membership retention starts when a new member joins the association. There are a number of meaningful gestures and activities local ICES groups can

sponsor to make members feel welcome, obtain their input and encourage their involvement in the local chapter or cake club. Here are a few suggestions:

A Welcome Letter/E-Mail or Phone Call

ICES Representatives should immediately execute an outreach program for new members. A simple welcome phone call that introduces you as the ICES Rep and invites them to the next Day of Sharing or local event is a great first step in establishing a long-term relationship with the local ICES group. If you only have a small group or one individual tasked with making this connection, consider developing a welcome postcard or e-mail message that you can send each new member, which acknowledges their joining the local ICES chapter or group.

Create a New Member Kit

Navigating a new environment can sometimes be somewhat challenging for new members. They need to find out about events, who to contact about various issues, and how to maximize the networking opportunities offered by the local ICES group or chapter. Leaders may want to develop an "Everything You Wanted To Know About ICES" guide that could include:

- A welcome letter/e-mail
- ICES contact information
- Current ICES membership roster.

- Local ICES Day of Sharing or Meeting Schedule
- Directions to meetings
- List of committees
- URL of the local ICES Chapter web site plus international web site: ices.org.
- Copy of local ICES newsletter or upcoming events.

New Member Welcome Program

Nothing says, "Welcome!" like public recognition. Publicly acknowledge new members at your next Day of Sharing. The ICES Representative should include this as part of the standard agenda at every Day of Sharing, or he/she can create a special event focused on welcoming new members. Suggestions for new member programs include a quarterly networking mixer or the occasional informal get together over coffee.

Recognition

Put it in print! Does your ICES Chapter or group have a web site or newsletter? Use this media to tell the rest of the membership that you have new members. Develop a section or page on your chapter/local web site that announces who the new members are, and perhaps even provides a bio with information about their career, ICES involvement, areas of expertise, etc.

—Adapted by Grace McMillan from the Employee Assistance Professionals Association's web site: www.eapassn.org.