

Does Your Board Have a Member Retention Strategy?

Member retention strategy you ask? Why do we need one? Membership renewal is unpredictable and we don't really have control over it.



But is it really out of your control?

Yes, there are some instances that you can't control, like when a member leaves because they change industries. However, there are a lot of opportunities to engage members to get them to remain in your chapter.

When you hear a member may leave because of financial difficulties, consider providing a year of membership at a reduced, or free rate. That generosity can have a big impact. For those members getting close to retiring, or for those who retire, offer renewal at a reduced rate. They stay involved and active and can be your ambassadors, sharing all the chapter has done for them. And, for those who leave because of a

move, link them with a chapter in their new area, to help them connect and remember you fondly (and perhaps refer additional members to you.)

Change your benefits to give members what they need

Yes, some members will leave regardless of what you do, say, or offer. However, by recognizing and understanding the reasons they give for leaving, you can adjust some of your benefits and improve the chances some will stay.

Here are a few ideas:

Provide promotional opportunities. Give your members the opportunity to promote their



organizations – or promote themselves if they're a sole proprietor – to your membership via your various communication channels, like your website, blog, and social media. Everyone likes free advertising, right?

Recognize your members. They need to know you appreciate them for more than just the dollars they provide. Find ways to mention members in your public content—social media, on your website, and in your emails—and award them for things they've done, and/or achieved, like membership anniversaries, number of volunteer hours, job changes, etc.

Ask for referrals. Members are your best leads for new members and even new sponsors. Provide something in return for those referrals, like free entrance to a meeting, a new headshot, or a free lunch for a year at your monthly meetings.

Get feedback from those who matter. Considering changes to your membership package, your benefits, your monthly meeting format? Are you sure they're changes your members really want? Who better to give you feedback on those changes than current members, who not only have valuable information to provide, but also want to feel like you value and listen to them?

Start a loyalty program. There's no need to go so far as providing loyalty cards, but there are things you can do to give them the feeling they're getting something tangible in return for membership. How about free admittance to a monthly meeting if they've attended the previous two, free attendance to your annual conference if they've been a member for 5 years, or gifts after certain volunteer milestones?

As you consider your options, it's important to remember how you communicate to your membership about your benefits, which can be just as important as the benefits themselves. Segment your communications and tailor them to send members what they want and need in the ways that work best for them. Keep communications relevant and, to the best you can, only send communications that have value to the person receiving them.

You may want to periodically reevaluate your communication program, and periodically ask your members to update their contact information. That way, even if they change companies, or if their company name changes, etc., you can still find them and help ensure they stay active and engaged.

