

# New Membership

## DEVELOPMENT

ONCE YOUR NEW MEMBERS HAVE BEEN RECRUITED, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU WELCOME THEM PROPERLY. ENCOURAGE THEM TO BECOME INVOLVED IN CLUB ACTIVITIES. NEW MEMBERS ARE TYPICALLY THE MOST ENTHUSIASTIC AND THEREFORE CAN BE HIGHLY MOTIVATED. THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE SHOULD GET THEM INVOLVED IMMEDIATELY.

### 1. ATTENTION TO NEW MEMBERS

To ensure that new members will become strong, supportive members, consider the following steps:

- Process the new member's application quickly. If a delay is absolutely necessary, inform the prospective member immediately and explain the reason for delay. Nothing dampens the enthusiasm of a new member more than a long, unexplained wait for acceptance.
- Greet and introduce new members at the first club meeting after membership has been approved. If appropriate, present them with a membership certificate/card at this time. Otherwise, send it with an official welcome letter.
- Be sure your new members' names are added to the club membership mailing list and taken off the prospect mailing list immediately so they receive the correct communications.
- Some clubs hold new-member meetings. Regardless of format, the goal is to welcome new members warmly, introduce them to current members, inform them about club goals and activities and encourage their participation.
- As soon as the application is approved, send a new-member kit (described at right).

- Immediately assign each new member to a "buddy" or a current member who will welcome him/her to meetings. The "buddy" should sit with the new member and introduce him/her to other members. "Buddies" should also encourage new members to participate on committees and in any club activities of interest.
- Assign hospitality hosts to each table at meetings to introduce members, talk about club activities and encourage member involvement. Carefully plan new members' seating at club meetings.
- Use special name tags/ribbons that designate "new member" so everyone can be conscientious about meeting and greeting them.

### 2. NEW-MEMBER KIT

Each new member should receive a membership kit, which will provide all the necessary information to introduce the new member to the club. The kit should include the following:

- Club mission statement and purpose
- Calendar of events
- Rolodex card with officers' phone, fax, address, e-mail
- Membership roster
- Membership card/certificate (available from AAF)

- Welcome letter from Wally Snyder, AAF president
- Welcome letter from district governor
- Welcome letter from club president
- Recent club newsletters
- Information about AAF
- Information about the district (obtain from district)
- Volunteer form to sign up for committees and/or activities

### **3. NEW-MEMBER ORIENTATION**

Many clubs make special presentations to new members to inform them about the structure and history of the club, as well as the club's activities. These events feature present or former club leaders discussing various aspects of the ad club.

In general, an information program for new members should cover the following subjects:

- The history and organization of AAF
- The history and organization of the local club
- Activities and programs of the club
- Membership responsibility
- Committee participation (Seek involvement by each new member on at least one committee or project.)

To retain membership it is important not only to assimilate, but also to involve each member in some area of activity within the club. In addition, it is critical to listen to club members so you can identify problem areas quickly and respond to solve the problems. Provided in this kit are feedback forms for four key club activities: programs, social activities, member communications and ADDY® Awards.

These forms may be altered to fit your club's specific needs, and additional forms may be developed, using these as guidelines, to monitor and evaluate every aspect of your club's activities.

It is extremely important to solicit feedback

continually and consistently so you will always know what your members think. And you must respond to potential problems or shortcomings.

### **4. MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION**

The best possible membership development tool is a satisfied membership. If your members are happy and satisfied and perceive value in their ad club membership, they will be willing to solicit new members and will be living testimonials for club membership.

This section is designed to help you develop an effective method to assimilate new members into your club and to provide feedback mechanisms to make sure you are fulfilling the needs of your members.

#### **Membership Retention**

Maintaining current membership is the responsibility of the entire club management team, including all officers, directors and committee chairs. Membership retention is best achieved by ensuring members' notification of and involvement in club activities.

The following are three key elements to effective membership retention:

- Understanding membership benefits
- Responsibilities of membership
- Opportunities for involvement

#### **Awareness and Communication**

It is important for the club to brief members continually on activities in education, public service and government relations. The message should be repeated often and in various ways. Members need to know and accept club objectives and need to understand how club activities and initiatives benefit them.

While club newsletters and other communications are valuable, the best opportunity to keep members informed is at regular monthly programs. A five-minute club update to a captive

audience will contribute to increased awareness and understanding among the members.

Conducting a regular meeting that describes the club's mission, objectives and plans is an ideal orientation mechanism. These meetings can be interesting if they are well thought out and presented. Such meetings can generate enthusiasm and motivate involvement.

Personal contact is key. Therefore, it is a good idea to divide up the list of current club members and, on a quarterly basis, call each member. The purpose of the call is to keep them informed, encourage their involvement and maintain rapport.

Through personal phone calls, you will be able to identify if there is a retention problem.

#### **Involvement**

Members should be given regular opportunities to get involved. At every club meeting, there should be a written description of the purpose and function of each club committee with a sign-up sheet. An announcement should be made that the club wants and needs members' help on certain projects. Personal invitations to members requesting their participation on committees and/or input on issues is also valuable.

Committee recruitment receptions are another valuable mechanism for giving people the opportunity to participate. At these events, the committee chairs and key members mingle with members and encourage their involvement.

Some members may choose not to take on a committee responsibility; however, they would probably attend some committee meetings if invited. This allows members to learn about specific areas of club activity. It also enables them to develop a rapport with club leaders and may stimulate their future involvement.

Focus groups and/or task forces to deal with specific issues are also a terrific way to involve members.

Regular attendance at club functions is

member involvement. There should be an all-out effort to promote participation in club meetings and activities. To get people to attend meetings, ask them to serve as "hosts" or "buddies" for new members.

Financial support of the club or in-kind gifts are also forms of involvement. While some members will work or participate, others will give money or services. Sponsorships provide members with a spotlight opportunity. The request for sponsorship needs to be positioned correctly, and ample credit and thanks must be given publicly and privately.

Another effective technique is to turn complainers into involved members. If someone doesn't like something, ask him or her to participate in making it better.

#### **5. IDENTIFY AND RESPOND TO POTENTIAL PROBLEMS**

Failure to pay dues and non-participatory behavior are the two biggest clues to member dissatisfaction. The board should be tuned into these issues. Accordingly, it is important to monitor club dues, records and meeting/event attendance.

#### **Personal Contact**

Members need to be called by a representative of the club when their dues are late or if they do not attend regular club programs. The purpose of this call is not to collect dues or encourage attendance, but rather to determine whether there is an issue, concern and/or problem that has prompted this circumstance.

Typically, there is no problem. But if there is, the board representative needs to know about it and address it immediately.

Do not allow members to resign quietly. There should be a major effort to avoid member resignations. In the event a member does resign, or doesn't renew, specific reasons should be identified.

Sometimes members resign because they have not been involved and have no idea what the club does. In some cases the cause can be a perception that cliques exist within the club or that the club is controlled by a small group of people. Other reasons may include a member's lack of time to participate or inconvenient meeting times/locations. Regardless of the reason, member resignations can point to a potential weakness in the club. Therefore, an exit interview should be conducted.

#### The Exit Interview

In the exit interview, which is typically conducted by phone, the club representative asks the resigned member a series of questions pertaining to membership activities and benefits/services. The purpose of the call is to identify what prompted the membership resignation. Exit interviews are an excellent source of information and input.

It is up to the board to monitor exit interview responses and determine if there is a pattern. If a pattern surfaces, it is essential to address the problem.

In cases where members are resigning for personal or career reasons, thank them for their previous support. If appropriate, encourage them to seek club membership elsewhere and ask them to provide a recommendation of someone else from their organization who might become a member. In every case, give them best wishes for future successes.

#### 6. RETENTION IDEAS

- Obtain a photo/bio of each new member and recognize him/her (and his/her company) in the monthly newsletter and on the Web site. Distribute a questionnaire to new members to gather appropriate information about them. Include a return envelope or conduct the survey online.
- Hold a new-member orientation or special

gathering at certain times of the year to recognize new members. Include a date for the function(s) on a yearly calendar of events and insert it into a folder/membership kit.

- After a designated period (three to six months), new members should be surveyed on their satisfaction with their membership, changes needed, etc.
- Maintain a database or directory of all members with company name, address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address. An e-mail directory is ideal. You can contact members quickly and efficiently to keep them abreast of new developments in the club. Leave room for the contact information on the new member/enrollment form.
- Send a thank-you letter to the owner/principal/manager of each board member's and committee member's place of employment. The letter should thank them for the time allowed for their employee(s) to be involved, highlighting the employee's activities and the benefits that the club, the local advertising community and the community in general receive as a result of that involvement.
- Conduct an exit interview survey for any memberships that lapse.
- Place a phone call to members who have missed several meetings. Let them know they are missed.
- Provide quality programs that interest the entire membership, and vary the program topics. Issue a calendar of events/programs for the year.
- Establish a small exhibit area at each membership meeting, and feature one or more of your members.
- Create an "unsung heroes" award to honor those who make valuable contributions to the club but who are usually not

- recognized for their efforts.
- Provide members with every opportunity to be involved, and personally encourage their participation.
  - Promote member attendance at meetings. Work with the club's program committee to ensure that meeting content and promotion go together hand in hand.
  - Respond to expressed member needs and interests. Ask for member input and feedback.
  - Recognize and honor longtime members on their significant anniversaries of membership (5th, 10th, 20th, etc.).
  - Assign a new member to be a greeter or to introduce a guest speaker or program.
  - Encourage new members to attend district meetings. Much can be learned about AAF and its activities by attending district meetings. A new member's view of the club and its activities will be greatly enhanced.
  - Invite new members to attend a board meeting to learn more about the club. Use this opportunity to obtain feedback concerning what he/she wants to receive from membership in the club.
  - Have all new members work together on a special project for the club.
  - Ask each new member to solicit another new member from his/her peer group. When one sells the benefits of membership to others, the member becomes more committed to the club.

## 7. AD 2

Ad 2 is a national network of local advertising federations whose members are age 32 and younger. Ad 2 clubs give young professionals a chance to interact with their peers, and they help to bridge the gap between college graduation and entry into the professional world by providing professional development and

public service programs.

Today, Ad 2 is over 1,000 members strong and boasts 15 clubs nationwide.

Working with your local Ad 2 club or creating an Ad 2 division within your club is actually a built-in, nationally supported tool to help increase your membership.

Too often, Ad 2 clubs are viewed as a threat to local ad clubs and federations. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ad 2 clubs exist specifically to help nurture the introduction of young people into the advertising industry and groom them into the future leaders. These become the cream-of-the-crop prospects for your ad club.

Why is there a need for Ad 2 clubs to take on this nurturing and grooming? First, most young graduates are intimidated by joining a full-fledged ad club straight out of college. Second, many times the leadership positions they need to gain the experience are taken by longtime ad fed members. The fact that these members are often high-profile individuals in the local advertising community also adds to the intimidation factor. Let Ad 2 be that step between your local college chapters and your ad club.

By working with your local Ad 2 club or by forming an Ad 2 division within your own club, you will create a funnel of still-fresh and young, but experienced members. A prime and long-running example of this symbiotic relationship exists in the Ad 2 division of Los Angeles. Ad 2 Los Angeles boasts over 300 members, all of whom are considered Los Angeles Ad Fed members. The Los Angeles Ad Fed depends on its Ad 2 division to groom its future leaders.

For more than 30 years, local Ad 2 clubs have produced comprehensive public service advertising and marketing campaigns for nonprofit organizations in their communities. The Ad 2 commitment to public service is one of the qualities that set Ad 2 apart from other advertising-related organizations. Each year, local clubs select a client, research the client's needs

and author a complete marketing plan. Then, based upon that information, Ad 2 members create television, radio, print, outdoor and interactive advertising elements. Some campaigns also include logo design, production of collateral materials and public relations initiatives.

Each year, Ad 2 clubs compete in a Public Service Advertising Competition, pitting the local campaigns against one another. Participating clubs submit a written report about their campaign, followed by an oral presentation at the AAF National Conference. A select panel of judges evaluates the campaigns and selects the best among that year's work. The winning Ad 2 club receives an \$800 award from the G. D. Crain Foundation and the opportunity to present its campaign to all attendees at the AAF National Conference.

For more information on how you can contact your local Ad 2 chapter or create your club's very own division, please check out the National Ad 2 Web site at [www.ad2.org](http://www.ad2.org). There you will see a comprehensive history of Ad 2, plus all the information you'll need to start your own Ad 2. In addition, you can contact the National Ad 2 board for assistance.

Remember, Ad 2 clubs are available as the perfect step between college chapters and full-fledged ad clubs. Taking advantage of this built-in, nationally supported division of the American Advertising Federation will grow both membership and club vitality.