

Tips and Techniques for Retaining Members in Associations

By Bonnie Mattick, M.A. Ed., MBA

Are you concerned with having members slip away from your association? You can strengthen your membership and attract new members with some basic steps. First, look at the ways you are staying connected to your members and the new people that come to your meetings. You can develop the kind of atmosphere in your association that brings success to your meetings by creating an exceptional experience for the attendees. They will leave your meetings wanting to return again and again. Here are some tips and techniques for bringing added value to your association:

1. **Start a network of your industry's most experienced professionals** to interact and exchange ideas. Require they have 10 years plus experience. You can:

- a. Create interest groups to discuss issues, unique challenges;
- b. Make it so many members will want to be a part of it.

2. **Accommodate members with a forum/blog** which allows them to exchange ideas among *all* members of your association. This becomes a virtual library of ideas and allows:

- a. More voices to be heard;
- b. Members to feel they are supported by the association;
- c. Members to connect outside of the regular meetings;
- d. Helps leaders of association to understand areas of greatest concern.

3. **Do a lot of "crowd sourcing,"** in order to determine what they want from the association. The *best* advisors are the members themselves. If suggestions are out of scope, consider:

- a. Taking on new initiatives with courage (the members give great suggestions, but some may be far-reaching);
- b. Involve the members and gain their support in implementing ideas;
- c. Consider if suggestions fit in with topics of existing committees.

4. **Deliver effective networking opportunities** for members. In a recommendation by Bob Kelly, former Sr. Vice President of Membership Communications in the Colorado Springs, CO, Chamber of Commerce, hold an entire meeting specifically for networking, with no presentations by the association's staff. Encourage your attendees to bring business cards and marketing materials to share with other members. (I'd be happy to share more details of this process – contact Bonnie@Unforgettable-Outcomes.com for the details).

5. **Send out a short survey following a special event** (i.e. a networking event) and ask members the following questions:

- a. What was the most beneficial effect from the networking event and how are you using it?
- b. How will you be following up with the contacts you made?
- c. What is one word that comes to mind if you were asked to describe the event? ☘

Bonnie Mattick, is a speaker, author and founder of Unforgettable Outcomes, Intl. She creates exceptional experiences for hospitality organizations, associations, and the customers they serve. Bonnie earned both an M.A. Ed and an MBA, making her uniquely qualified to integrate business goals and core competencies with desired outcomes. She is a professional member of the National Speakers Association (NSA), Meeting Planners International (MPI) and the International Society for Performance Improvement.



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