

NEW JERSEY WATER ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION

50 IDEAS TO HELP RETAIN MEMBERS

By: Rocco J. Maiellano, NJWEA Membership Chair

1. Send a thank you note, or an e-mail message.
2. Include networking tips in newsletter or new member pack. Networking is a primary reason for joining and one of the most important benefits to offer. Produce a short article or checklist on how to use these networking opportunities more effectively. Add to a meeting or convention brochure. Also could fax the list to pre-registered attendees shortly before conference.
3. Use testimonials from some members who aren't active but feel membership is valuable. If members feel we understand and are trying to help them cope with challenges that are more likely to renew. Ask those who are not active but continue to renew to contact other inactive members.
4. Use Jeopardy marketing putting it in the form of a question. "Wouldn't it be great if someone were working everyday to tell the public about...?" Or "Wouldn't it be nice if every month someone brought to your door another form of continuing education and a place to find out about job openings?"
5. Conduct focus groups by phone. Members with varying years of experience focusing on the needs of a small segment. New member focus group. Send all participants an agenda and set of rules. Take attendance; let everyone know who is attending. Make a list of who speaks so you know who to ask for input.
6. Give an incentive, such as a free gift, to members who renew by a certain date.
7. Have a renewal lottery – renew more quickly to get in.
8. Communicate successes to members regularly.
9. Generate segmented and targeted renewal notices. Tell each segment how membership benefited them this year.

10. Send a special certificate of thanks to first-time renewals. The first two years produce the most drops. Maybe 50% off 3rd year if paid at same time (or 2nd year?). Focus hard on the first renewal.
11. Identify and recognize members with the most tenure. Send a message that people stay a long time. (Create something for 60 years. Put on web and hotline long-term memories).
12. Identify at least four specific contact to make with first year members that are above and beyond the normal. Phone, fax or special newsletter.
13. Add ordering options to each item on publication or discounts.
14. Develop a written retention plan. Include retention goals (retention rate, retention rates by category, % of drops that were first year members, activities to be undertaken, resources available to help, etc.).
15. Do an e-mail survey of important questions and issues as they arise.
16. Establish an involvement committee. Purpose to get members to participate in some way.
17. Involve the Executive Committee in retention efforts. The health and growth of the organization is already among the Executive Committee's responsibilities. Divide the membership among the Executive Committee and devise a retention system that awards points to Executive Committee members for each member of their "team" during the year. I.e. 1 point if they attend a meeting, 25 points if they renew, 1 point if they donate to the NJWEA. Get commitment from the top volunteer leaders to not only talk about the importance of member participation and retention but also do something about it.
18. Establish a member-mentoring plan. Assign new members to current members.

19. Color code correspondence so members can quickly identify types of information. (Such as one for educational information, one of legislative, etc.)
20. Institute a “thank you” column in publication to recognize members for involvement and leadership.
21. Send a member profile form to new members to gain information.
22. Have a special edition of your publication focus on how your organization is helping members prepare for the next century.
23. Be sure your web page has hot links to individual members for business referrals and networking purposes.
24. Offer a special listing in the directory to members who renew early.
25. Keep experienced members active through targeted involvement. Need to keep older members and new ones interested and involved. Keep the activities meaningful.
26. If your organization has corporate members, develop a system to involve top management of those companies.
27. Produce materials that clearly show what the company/employer gains by joining and participating in your organization.
28. For members recruited during a membership drive, add at least one extra contact during their first year of membership.
29. During functions, suggest that officers look for new members and spend time with them. Make sure new members’ nametags indicate their status.
30. Scan industry, professional, and community publications, as well as the Internet, for ads by members. Try to get them to use the association logo or some sign of affiliation.

31. Give members points when they participate in any activity. Like frequent flyer points.
32. Send an audiocassette or floppy to members as an informal annual report.
33. Establish a Membership Service Center for “one stop shopping”. A central place where they can receive all information and products/services they need.
34. Offer money-back guarantees on all programs and services (including membership).
35. Establish standards for responding to members.
36. When conducting focus group at meetings, invite attendees who are not leaders to participate.
37. Send mini-surveys that can be done quickly (via fax).
38. Develop a telephone orientation for new members.
39. Consider offering a multi-year membership at a reduced rate.
40. Consider offering a multi-employee discount to companies that pay for employees' dues.
41. Set up a system that allows members to renew electronically.
42. Consider allowing members to create their own membership package. For example, for a basic, reduced fee members can pick two or three services they want included in their membership with the understanding that any additional services are available for additional fees.
43. When a new member joins, e-mail congratulations from an organization leader that same day.

44. Look into posting results of meetings and conferences on the Internet.
45. Increase meeting attendance by featuring an interview with the meeting's keynote speaker in the publication that comes out a month before the meeting.
46. List new members on the Web site.
47. Put individual e-mail addresses of key leaders on the Web site.
48. Combine and coordinate all forms of member communication to support membership recruitment and retention efforts.
49. Have a special list serve and/or special section of the Web site for first year members.
50. Deliver the new member kit electronically.