



MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

RETENTION WORKSHOP

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AN INTRODUCTION TO MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

All chapters should have a planned membership development program. Whether your chapter has 10 members or 210 members, a planned membership development program is essential to a successful, healthy chapter.

Membership development often takes a back seat to other aspects of your chapter. If you are wondering if your chapter has a lack of membership development, ask yourself the following questions:

Does it feel like no one in your chapter is taking membership development seriously?

Is it a priority of just a few?

Does it seem like the same few people are always the ones doing all of the work?

Are you having a hard time recruiting people for leadership roles?

Is it only the same few faces at each meeting?

One or more of these probably hit home with most of you. Don't worry, there is hope!

There are many aspects to membership development, but there are three basic and mutually supportive elements that must be present. Those are

Recruitment

Recruitment involves the identification of those people who we feel would be an asset to our chapter. It includes seeking them out, developing in them an interest in AMBUCS and motivating them to join our chapter.

Orientation

Orientation includes those efforts undertaken to integrate the new member into our chapter family. Orientation actually begins the first time we approach someone about AMBUCS and ends when the new member is totally involved in our chapter activities. It is a process of informing, helping and involving.

Retention

Retention is the culmination of recruitment and orientation. It results from a well-rounded program of chapter activities which deliver the product we sold during the recruitment and orientation processes.

The goal of this workshop is to give you a guideline for effective **retention** within your chapter.

RETENTION BASICS

Retention is probably the most important aspect of successful membership development. To succeed, a chapter must have proper retention strategies woven into day-to-day chapter operations. Members are a chapter's most precious resource and we all must find ways to provide them with a source to meet their needs, involve them and give them real responsibility to make them feel valued. When your chapter meets these goals, you ensure a lasting relationship with the member, long after the new member application is submitted.

Why members stay members

It is obvious that we all are a part of AMBUCS™ because we want to help others and contribute to the benefit of our communities. While this is the most common reason someone joins AMBUCS™, there are some common reasons why people chose to stay members of their AMBUCS™ chapter. They include:

- Enjoy being with friends who are members
- Enjoy socializing with others in the chapter
- Feel like a contributing part of the chapter
- Have an interest in the chapter's activities
- Enjoy a particular project the chapter believe in the AMBUCS™ mission

Why members leave

While there can't be one universal reason someone chooses to discontinue membership in AMBUCS™, there are some common reasons people have given for their departure. Some of those reasons are:

- They never felt welcomed
- The chapter was too cliquish or political
- They were frustrated by the chapter; members weren't willing to try new ideas/projects
- They became burned out; too few members did all the work in the chapter
- They were dissatisfied by chapter meetings
- There was no perceived value for their time
- Poor leadership
- They never became involved

No matter what the reason, it's obvious that increased member satisfaction increases retention. It is up to all of us to take steps to build member satisfaction.

Membership Retention Committee or Friendship Committee

The membership retention committee (generally made up of experienced members and/or past chapter presidents) helps your chapter achieve success in member retention by tracking the progress of each new member and notifying your chapter's board when they see negative indicators. Check the committee guidelines about forming a member retention committee. Learn how to recognize members who may be potential drop pits and learn how to help them.

RETENTION PRACTICES

1. Leadership

The effectiveness of your chapter president, officers and board members has a significant affect on member satisfaction. A strong, effective, optimistic and confident leadership within your chapter's structure will be the driving force for successful meetings, projects and social opportunities. Chapter leadership must display chapter pride at all times, motivate members to participate and be encouraging. Officers also need to ensure that meetings begin and end on time and provide social and informational opportunities for chapter members.

2. Warmly Welcome New Members

It's sad but true that one negative experience can have a lasting impression on a new member. A new member should never be left standing in a corner or sitting at a table alone. Welcome him or her at the entrance and escort the new member around making introductions.

3. Get Them Involved

As soon as a new member joins your chapter, sit down with them and review the committee preference sheet, Form 1145. Explain to them the different opportunities available with each committee. Ask them to fill it out and return it to you. Once they are assigned to a committee, communicate with the committee chairperson. Make sure that the chairperson makes a phone call to welcome the new member and explain jobs that he or she can participate in. The quicker a new member becomes involved in chapter activities, the higher the retention rate.

4. Orientation

Orientation is one of the most neglected areas of membership development, but is a crucial element in the retention of a chapter. Your chapter should have an established orientation program and schedule. The orientation should be a special time for the new member in fact, consider asking their family members or significant others to attend too. National AMBUCS™ has an orientation workshop which helpful tips on how to plan an orientation and an outline of information to include in the orientation program.

Orientation for new members should be held as soon as possible. If your chapter has a pre-scheduled orientation each quarter and it is months away, a chapter member should sit down with the new member for a one-on-one orientation. It is important that new members understand the expectations of membership including, chapter policies and procedures, attendance and dues structures.

5. Buddy or Mentor Program

Another idea to help with retention is to establish a buddy or mentor program within your chapter. "Assign" new members to existing chapter members. Have the chapter member (not the sponsoring member) be in charge of the new member to be sure that they come to meetings and take part in projects or social events. This is also a great way to work to alleviate cliques or "closed groups" within your chapter.