

Excerpts from “75 Ways to Attract and Retain New Members”

A Handbook for the Leaders of the Masonic Family

Developed and published by the Grand Lodge of Colorado, AF & AM

A Syllabus Compiled By

Karla J. Dimond, PGM – 2008-2009 Chairman

Central Membership Committee – Grand Chapter of Colorado, OES

This publication is a large notebook designed to provide line officers with helpful strategies in planning for membership development and retention in your lodge or chapter. There are six units, called Guides that delve in to detail on the ways we should seek out, approach, initiate, and retain members in the Masonic Family. These guides cover the following topics:

Guide 1: Who are these people called members?

Guide 2: What do we know about the people who might join?

Guide 3: How do we locate, attract and receive members into the Order?

Guide 4: How do you enroll a person as a member? What are the critical first steps?

Guide 5: How do you care for your members?

Guide 6: What happens if you lose him/her?

As Chairman of the Central Membership Committee, I have read each of these Guides with great care. There is so much information here, that it is somewhat overwhelming. I have, therefore, enumerated the highlights and suggestions into a sort of syllabus that chapter leaders and committee members can use as a reference in their efforts to increase and retain members. Please understand that Membership Development doesn't just happen by itself. There is a strategy involved, and there are goals, plans and work involved. The ideas and issues presented are valid, and if taken seriously, I believe they can help us increase and retain membership for our Order.

As was said in the beginning, this book was written to assist line officers in membership development programs, so it should not be surprising that it puts the responsibility for membership development and retention squarely on the shoulders of the leaders, i.e. the Worthy Matrons and Worthy Patrons of our chapters. From the beginning of time there have been leaders and followers. Even animal groups have leaders and followers. Leaders are nothing without followers...they help you accomplish your goals. Followers “elect” leaders because of their service to the group and their accomplishments for the good of the group. The book notes that “among their many good qualities, a leader takes care of his/her members or customers. Don't get so caught up in your duties as a leader that you forget your members. But having said that, *you don't have to do it all yourself*...have a team dedicated to member relations (such as your chapter membership committee), but remember, *it is your responsibility...be sure it happens!*”

Guide 1: Who are these people called members?

Are our membership problems unique?

Lots of organizations say they pay attention to their members, but do they really?

Consider the customer service offered by Nordstrom, Wal-Mart or Home Depot.

Identify 5 ways they delight their customers.
 Identify 5 ways you could delight your members.
 If you were a new member, how would you want to be delighted?
 Take a survey of what your members want...ask each member why he/she joined.
 Their answers will include your members' needs.
 Record the answers so you can plan activities to meet these needs and check on your progress.
 Add a line item for Membership Development in your Chapter's budget.
 Consider carefully how every decision or action benefits the members of your chapter.
 Contact those who joined in last two years to ask why they joined, what's happened since they joined, what their needs are, and their current levels of satisfaction.
 Develop list of actions needed to retain members.
 Know your members available time and talents in determining activities of chapter.
 Call to talk and listen to members and how they are feeling about the organization.
 Survey different age groups on needs and satisfaction, and take corrective action on meetings and activities.
 Focus on great fellowship.
 Be ready to share the benefits of being a member of Eastern Star when someone outside the group asks about an emblem or symbol you might be wearing.
 Know the difference between hard and soft benefits.
 What are the Departments in our organization? (Think about your local grocery store departments, i.e. Produce, Bakery, Pharmacy, Meat, etc.) What are the products we offer? What benefit does each department/product offer the members?
 Does the meeting place need updating?

Guide 2: What do we know about the people who might join?

Know your prospective members...what you learn will vary with age, education, family, location, work experience, hobbies and income. These may contrast with current members, but the chapter must be able to adapt and provide benefits to all.
 Is it better to rebuild with new members than try to reinvigorate old ones?
 Experience tells us that the effort and energy spent on trying to re-enroll an inactive-often unhappy- member is frequently not worth the effort. These members may have lost interest and gone on to other things, perhaps still paying their dues and being proud that they are Eastern Star members. This is not to say that you shouldn't communicate by newsletter or some other member related form of communication. It just means that the energy you expend to get them active again, may be better spent in finding new members.
 Consider how different age groups utilize their free time.
 To satisfy prospect needs, we must exchange time for value.
 Use time efficiently.
 Involve the family in activities.
 Provide opportunities for members to make new friends and connections.
 Provide an OES role in the community with feelings of pride for involvement.
 Provide an opportunity for members to lead and be good leaders in the Order.
 Develop a plan with goals and strategies for the next few years.
 Gather a team to implement the actions of your plan.
 Establish benchmark targets against which you can measure results or take

corrective action.

If you structure your organization so that it meets the very personal needs of members for their own development and provide them benefits they want, you will have solved your membership problems.

The joining process must be appealing and fun...meaningful and significant as an event.

Four steps:

Improve Engagement – attempt to amaze & delight.

Better Communication – answer questions openly and candidly, share goals of the organization and explain the important role the new member can play.

Know Member's Expectations – understand what he/she wants from membership and their expectations so you can provide them.

Increase Follow-Up – don't leave new members behind, involve them.

State the Benefits of belonging to OES and try to Offer More for Less.

Be sure first impressions are good ones. Develop a "First Impression Audit" through the eyes of a new member.

Guide 3: How do we locate, attract and receive new members?

Most people expect to be asked to join an organization.

Identify two new ways you can invite a person to join.

Write a dialogue of what you can say to a prospect that encourages him/her joining and which they would consider an invitation.

Identify the characteristics of those persons who would most likely join OES.

The more you know about your potential prospects (i.e. values, characteristics, talents, Masonic Family relationship if applicable), the easier it will be to formulate a plan of contact.

Determine features and benefits of belonging to the organization and use them to sell membership. (Ask a salesman who belongs to your group for help with this.)

Match these features and benefits to the needs and wants of prospects.

Develop four key ideas that would benefit the prospect as a member:

Meeting and making new friends with like minded values and principles;

Involvement in the Masonic Family;

Community service;

Personal growth and leadership development.

Complete Fellowship Audit to be sure your chapter can provide the benefits and features you profess to provide.

Consider an Orientation session for new members.

Where are the people we want to join located?

All around us...They are in every walk of life. They are your friends and your neighbors.

They are friends of friends. They attend events in the community, volunteer in the schools, and provide you and your family with goods and services. They are former Rainbow Girls and Job's Daughters; wives, daughters, granddaughters and nieces of Masons...or Masons themselves. ***People with whom you have an established relationship are the best prospects.***

If you want your more youthful members to appeal to other members, you will have to first ask them to help, give them the tools and meet their expectations in terms of events and programs that are interesting to them and to their friends. Your current, active members may find these programs and activities at odds with their interests and

expectations, so you need to try to effect a balance for all concerned.
Set realistic new-member goals for the chapter.
Establish new-member teams among active members by age groups and train them.
Host several young-members nights with events that include a sports or athletic orientation.
Assess your success by asking recent members how well the process for membership development you established worked in attracting and interesting them.

The Key to Membership Development: Potential members all have certain expectations or needs when they join. No organization can survive without paying special attention to these member needs. Paying attention to member needs *develops* and *retains* them as members, encourages their *participation*, motivates them to *refer* new members and asks for their *support*.

Not all members have the same needs, so it is important for leaders to know what their individual members need and provide them with opportunities to satisfy those needs.

Make a computer profile on each new member so you can involve them in areas of interest and need.

Involve members with others who have similar interests and needs.

Communicate often with new members and make each one feel very comfortable during the first several months after joining.

Involve the family in chapter or Masonic Family activities.

Provide incentives to those who bring in new members.

Strategies for recruiting:

Get your chapter in the news. Those that make positive news and are active in the community attract the interest of those looking for an organization in which they can feel proud.

Go where the prospects are.

Support school, sports and community activities...these are fertile recruiting grounds.

Let others know what you do in your spare time...when you are asked what you do and how you spend your spare time, tell them and why.

Don't forget your best friends...they may be just waiting for you to ask them to join.

Make known what your group stands for and how people can join.

Improve signage, advertise in local papers and get articles about community involvement in paper.

Talk about importance of the organization and the Masonic Family with others.

Members become delighted with their decision to join when a combination of the following occurs. These represent goals for every chapter:

Time is not wasted;

Events are fun;

Value is received;

Joining is easy;

Meetings aren't boring;

Fellowship is real;

Food is good;

Cliques disappear;

Friends are supportive;

Leaders know their jobs;

Pride is a result.

Guide 4: How do you enroll a member...bringing him/her from candidate to member?

What are the critical first steps?

Enrollment begins when satisfaction occurs.

The Leadership team and all members have a duty and responsibility for this enrollment.

This is important because the opposite of enrollment is disengagement.

Enrollment occurs in stages: first impressions are lasting. Good impressions last a while...bad impressions last longer.

Examine the first signs a new candidate receives about the chapter and determine if they create satisfaction, pride and enrollment.

Taking corrective actions to eliminate distractions to enrollment are the responsibility of the leader.

Develop a checklist of the first 10 things a new member notices when he/she first attends chapter (ask recent members for help);

Assess the current status of these ten factors and determine where they are on a scale of excellent or needing significant improvement.;

Develop an action plan for each serious deficiency;

Check with a recent member to see how well you have eliminated a distraction.

When a person says he/she wishes to join and become a member, a few *right things* have to happen:

Send letter welcoming him/her to chapter;

Meet with new member (Visitation team) and listen to and answer the questions he/she has about the organization and chapter.

Find out what they expect of the organization and what their perceptions are, tell them what will happen during initiation, the proficiency requirements afterward, and explore what ideas he/she can bring to the group.

Share opportunities for family involvement in activities and community service projects, as well as Masonic Family groups.

During the new member visitation, include the spouse and make introductions warm and personal. Bring information you can leave behind and give prospect phone numbers to call with further questions.

Develop a question and answer sheet of the most-frequently asked questions and use them during the visit. Be sure both husband and wife understand the organization and the responsibilities of joining.

Write a thank you note after the visit.

Do a debriefing and evaluation after the visitation.

Most members join primarily for fellowship...how does your chapter measure up in offering fellowship to new members? ***It is the leaders' responsibility to be sure we excel in this category.***

Leaders should mix with your members.

Do your planning before the meeting, not when you get to the meeting place.

Let your members know that good fellowship is their responsibility as well.

Publish photographs of new members with their names and something about them so they are not total strangers.

Have a function in the chapter that encourages people to mix.

Match a new member up with peers or those with similar interests;

Be sure the new member's first visit to the chapter meeting is interesting.

Definition of member: A member is one who understands the goals of an organization and decides to support these goals through his active support, attendance and participation and who recommends the organization to others.

What are the benefits we offer that will satisfy the needs of the candidate and enable them to become a dedicated member?

A new member needs to know that he/she has a voice in the organization and that he/she made the right decision by joining.

He/she needs to be able to support this decision when friends ask “why” and needs answers to his/her questions, no matter how difficult.

The first six months are the most critical, because that is when the most members are lost.

Reasons most often given: boring meetings, nothing different happened, the same people were there all the time; tired of ritual.

Need to develop programs that cause members to have fun.

Offer programs where members can bring family or friends.

Match promises delivered to promises made.

Develop six-month score card of events offered and satisfaction received. Check this out with the new member and record your progress.

Graph the percent of time the chapter spends on each of the following categories:

Socializing and meeting with friends;

Opening chapter;

Introductions;

Conducting business;

Programs for members;

Guest speakers;

Closing chapter;

Food and beverage service;

Other.

Start timer 30 minutes before meeting actually begins. What supports your intention to “delight” members? What changes in time management does your graph suggest?

Assign a Mentor with similar interests to the new member for 6 months. The purpose is to help the new member feel at home and to increase his/her levels of satisfaction.

Mentors set examples for new members by being active.

Mentors are involved and set high standards for fellowship and for fun.

Mentors explain things that are happening in a non-threatening manner and promote the discoveries the new member is making.

Develop a handbook of four or five pages with the most frequently asked questions included to assist the Mentor. (OES New Member booklet available at Grand Chapter Office is a good source)

How do you know you are satisfying the member’s needs? When he/she is present in chapter and being active as an Eastern Star member.

What do you do if they’re not?

Ask for regular attendance reports for new members.

Check with the mentor to see what they know;

Ask friends if something is wrong;

Call the member at home to discuss his/her concerns;

Take corrective actions based on information received;
Ask new member to assume a role in the chapter and become involved.

Guide 5: How do you care for your members?

Trying to care for and keep a new member satisfied takes far less time than trying to replace him/her. Leaders must attend to member relations (you don't have to do it all yourself...delegate to Membership Committee and enlist member help) and provide what they want and need to make them satisfied customers, ie. satisfied members.

Most members want to meet new friends; want to have fun; want to feel proud; want to be well led; want a role for their family; want the chapter to be active in the community.

Grade how you are doing in each of these areas and correct those that are substandard.

It is the leader's job to be responsible for member satisfaction and when he/she sees a member beginning to lose interest it is his/her duty to try and do something to stem the loss.

Communicate with members through newsletter, flyers, email, phone, etc. Share news about activities, members, human interest. Keep it simple and interesting.

Find out what members think about your chapter and address both the positive and negative issues.

Involve the family and community in activities.

Have someone designated to plan regular family activities or community involvement.

Get involved in a school; this helps members feel proud of a chapter's accomplishments; members consider this a personal contribution; all family members approve of this involvement; bosses and co-workers approve of this involvement; good place to meet future members and make friends. If your group is too small, partner with another organization.

Right things to do for member relations:

- Know each member by name;
- Have information about your members at your fingertips;
- Call them when you have something good to offer;
- Communicate with the family on special occasions;
- Check frequently with members to determine your standing;
- Never let a member go away unhappy.

Pride or feeling proud is the result an individual leader or member feels when a personal goal or a goal for the organization is achieved. Pride is an important member satisfaction. Pursue activities that create pride and thus increase member satisfaction and support or wonder where our members have gone.

Members who are satisfied with the programs offered by your chapter and with the quality delivery of benefits are very important assets to your chapter. As such, 3 important behaviors need to be considered:

- Recognize their contributions to the chapter in ways that are important to them;
- Consider making him/her an ambassador for the chapter responsible for working with a group of newer members to see that they have the good feelings he/she has towards his/her organization;

Increase his/her satisfaction by continuing to ask about his interests and needs and make adjustments so that his/her involvement and his/her needs go hand in hand.

Add value for the cost of dues.

When dues must be increased, value must be increased. Plan activities that add value to membership.

Guide 6: What happens if you lose a member?

Leaders are not only responsible for the current and active members, but for the lost ones as well.

Try to determine why the “recently lost” members left and do everything you can to get them back.

Address the issues and correct what you can in order to improve the satisfaction of all members.

Make meetings interesting and provide programs that delight members.

Make fellowship a priority.

When telltale signs of disinterest appear, take action with mentor, member relations, and personal contact.

Keep member records current and communicate one on one with them.

Try to get them involved in some activity that needs his/her help.

Plan a special meeting with members who have not been active for 3-5 years, not necessarily at the lodge building, and ask what it would take to get them interested in chapter again.

Plan a special meeting to reintroduce them to active members and start from there.

If you cannot revive inactive members, move on to new members and build from there.

When a member leaves, contact him and wish him well. Leave the door open for a return in the future.

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Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The information presented above was formulated and written by members of the Grand Lodge of Colorado AF&AM to help their Blue Lodge line officers prepare for the responsibility of Membership Development. Many years of research have gone into the publication, and we cannot take their suggestions lightly. The resulting guidelines presented for our consideration apply equally well to the appendant bodies, and my fervent hope is that you will take this information back to your respective chapters and begin using the ideas presented to strengthen your own membership program. The task at hand is not easy, and results will not happen over night. But the Masons are making good strides in their Membership efforts, and with steady effort, we can too. Catch the Vision...know what you want your chapters to look and feel like. Set goals to make that vision a reality, and plan for the future of Eastern Star. Nothing happens by accident... there is hard work involved, but the results will be rewarding, and you will all feel a sense of pride and accomplishment as our numbers and quality of chapters increase. Good Luck, and remember, your Central Membership Committee is available to assist every chapter at any time.

*Fraternally yours,
Karla Dimond, PGM*