

Society of Government Meeting Professionals
Membership Retention Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

As one of the Membership Retention Task Force's goals, this Guideline has been developed to provide and share new and existing ideas for chapter membership retention activities. Chapters are encouraged to utilize these ideas to increase success in their retention efforts.

Dwindling organization membership can be a signal of problems in seemingly unrelated issues, including credibility, leadership, agenda, personal service, and communications. The heart of every organization is its reputation as reflected in professional behavior and conduct. As a volunteer organization, our members are SGMP's most valuable assets and it is essential to instill membership satisfaction! When determining future programs, SGMP should identify and fulfill the needs of members, not just the needs of the organization. Chapter Meeting agendas should focus on clearly stated objectives that address member educational needs. Those needs can be identified and refined by chapters performing an annual survey as well as seeking input from monthly program evaluations.



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GOALS AND ACTIONS

Initial Goals

- Help national organization reach a 90% retention rate and meet its goal of maintaining a 50/50 planner to supplier ratio for all chapters
- Help each chapter maintain their existing membership
- Prevent inadvertent drops via miscommunication
- Encourage chapters to develop retention policies and assign a Membership Retention Coordinator to serve on the chapter's Membership Committee
- Utilize the assistance of the Task Force in developing chapter retention policies

Actions by National Headquarters

- Members are given 90 days from their anniversary date to renew their membership. HQ to monitor anniversary dates and issue three renewal notices/invoices and a drop letter.
- Maintain anniversary dates in monthly membership reports, share reports with Chapter Presidents and Membership Chairs

Actions by Chapters

Suggested subcommittee missions:

- Value Added/Education ideas **(V/E)**
- New Members Participation Involvement ideas **(P/I)**
- Communications to members **(COM)**

V/E:

- ✓ Utilize all available chapter resources to provide the best possible education to keep members focused on SGMP's mission, without being repetitive with program presentations.
- ✓ Continued membership and involvement is encouraged (use newsletters and personal contacts) as an "investment" in oneself for personal and professional development (*See sample "Value Points" by Sacramento Chapter)
- ✓ Give all members opportunity to take ownership in their chapter by being asked for their ideas and assistance.
- ✓ Develop methods to keep members actively involved and not to just come to monthly meetings.

- ✓ Have chapter consider providing transportation when doing regional meetings or events
- ✓ Conduct membership appreciation events to thank them for their participation and volunteerism.

P/I:

- ✓ New Members are sent a “how are we doing” survey at their 6-month mark in their first year as a member. Responses provided to the MRTF for summation with CPR and SLR and national board on quarterly basis.
- ✓ Buddy up new members with an existing member who will serve as mentors, especially at Educational Conference. Mix planners with suppliers and vice versa. Rotate partnerships every four months.
- ✓ Identify new members by putting special code on their badges that is plain to see w/o being obvious
- ✓ Enter new members into a special drawing just for new members at Chapter’s Educational Conference
- ✓ All new members are given individual recognition and introductions at chapter meetings and events.
- ✓ All new members from a chapter’s Educational Conference are invited to attend a special reception and meet/greet with the chapter Board members.

COM:

- ✓ Encourage each chapter to personally contact members who are up for renewal w/in 60 days. (Use Board members as well as membership committee) (Utilize national board when appropriate)
- ✓ Contact past members to encourage their return OR solicit information from drops (because of job changes or retirement) to determine if there is replacement staff that one could target and recruit in drop’s place.
- ✓ Provide summary of responses received from those outreach efforts and surveys to MRTF Co-Chair for accumulation and synopsis.
- ✓ Promote a “Frequent Meeting Plan” that allows a member to prepay their annual meeting fees and earn a discount
- ✓ Individual renewals are acknowledged as “Happy Anniversary” in chapter newsletter or website

- ✓ List in newsletter or website any upcoming renewal reminders
- ✓ Send pre-printed postcards to absent (members not attending meetings in a while) as a way to encourage them back to meetings. Focus first on members nearing renewal dates. Inexpensive postcards can be printed up on card stock at Kinko's for about \$35. ***See Example provided by Heart of Illinois Chapter**
- ✓ Utilize information reaped from the National Membership Retention Task Force to address any issues specific to the chapter.
- ✓ Chapter President to send letter of thanks to new member's supervisor outlining what the member should expect to receive as an ROI. ***See sample provided by San Francisco Bay Area Chapter.**
- ✓ All membership categories receive same retention attention

Actions by Task Force

- Spot-check members in Task Force Member's region to determine if they have heard from their chapter membership chair (or designee) about their renewal. During conversation (be it e-mail, fax, phone) stress membership benefits and convert cost to per month cost to show value and ROI. ***See sample from Sacramento Chapter**
- Task Force members to individually contact members on the 'drop list' and in danger of losing their membership at the end of that month. Using a Task Force Survey, survey members on the 'drop list' about their reasons for non-renewal. ***See sample survey**
- Task Force Members to stand ready to assist their assigned chapters with membership retention activities.
- Task Force Co-Chair to Prepare report to national board sharing synopsis of findings
- Share synopsis of responses, and new ideas with chapters via CPR and SLR and online newsletters. **(HQ to define lead for this task)**



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Comments from other organizations:



MPI, No. Calif: All members are personally greeted at the monthly meetings, we have new member orientations, we had one really great leadership training workshop, and last but certainly not least, we have worked really hard at improving our speakers/topics at the monthly meetings. Frankly, I think the most important thing of all is good programming (highly educational, not social). If the planners come, the suppliers will come. Planners will come if they can justify the need to their bosses.... education can be seen as a reason to stay active.

American Geological Institute: The geological societies generally recognize that they need to continue providing meaningful service to their members (and usually doing more with less), and constantly remind their members what they do for them through their newsletters, government affairs activities, publications, etc. Some of the societies if not most are profession oriented (specialties such as petroleum, mining, mineralogy, etc.), although they all have a stake in education. It is a constant endeavor.

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Membership Retention: A World Without End... Amen! Forum (05/04) Vol. 88, No. 4, P. 10 ; Harris, Mary B.; Vossburg, Don

Steve Testa, Testa Environmental Corporation, speaking for the American Geological Institute

All SGMP Chapters responding to the Task Force Surveys and inquiries

Mellisa Millor, American Cancer Society

SGMP Membership Retention Task Force

- Kristi Griffith, Chair, Texas Lone Star Capitol, National Capital, and Wild West Chapters
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- Jennifer M. Anderson (stepped down 9/1/04) Central Florida Chapter



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Samples and Examples

1. Heart of Illinois Chapter's post cards
2. San Francisco Bay Area Chapter's letter of acknowledgement
3. Sacramento Chapter's "value points"
4. Sample Survey used at the 90-day drop point
5. How Are We Doing Survey