

How to Keep your New Members Happy

Call Minutes November 6, 2008

Illinois Affiliate/Chicago District Activities

1. Target dietetic internship programs to engage them. Discounted membership rates to reach out to students.
2. Annual dinner meeting is popular – state level, district and non-ADA related association hold a meeting. This builds brand recognition and potentially increases membership.
3. Plan smaller social events for members.

Massachusetts and Socials for Success

Designed to engage new dietitians in the field and promote networking and retention activities. The relaxed, informal atmosphere to allow people to talk about what they do and want their career to be. Individuals in their first few years of membership are eligible to attend. This year's activities included:

- a. Hiking – 20 people went
- b. Apple picking and winery tour
- c. Paint your own pottery events
- d. At the 2009 spring conference they aim to do socials for success. Specifically, it will be a “socials for success” sponsored presentation where only members who qualify for socials for success participate.

There is a small budget set aside for socials for success. They focus on planning low cost activities – for the paint your own pottery, MDA covered for studio fee and snacks, attendees paid for pottery supplies.

Discussion Questions

Do you know what your members value? How do you figure out?

Great Atlanta District (Georgia): Sends out a survey to members asking them to identify what they would like for their membership benefits. By and large networking was more popular than education. They used surveymonkey.com to complete the survey.

Pennsylvania: Had a membership chair conference call with co-chairs, district presidents and district membership chairs where they discussed available budget and other options. They plan to 1) draft a template for the President to send to each new

member 2) find out if Web site at district and state level are able to send automatic messages to members 3) test pilot waving district membership fees to see if membership increases 4) survey members at the district levels to determine interest in member benefits

-Philadelphia district: Trying to do a lot online. When people register to join, they send them an automatic e-mail with instructions on how to access Web site. HOWEVER, many e-mail end up in spam blockers. Another affiliate recommended using "Constant Contact," which is a company targeted at non-profits that helps them determine click-thru rates for their e-mails.

How do you engage your members?

Arizona: Has a listserv for anyone that can sign up. This year they began adding people automatically to listserv and giving them the option of opting out.

New York: Follows the same practice as Arizona. They post job postings and updates on the listserv. They also use evite for their events – it's a cheap, attractive way to track registrations.

Oregon: Has a very active listserv – especially useful for legislative updates.

Pennsylvania: Has a district-level listserv with monthly 'hot topic' discussions. Each month, dietitian 'handling' listserv posts hot topic (Oct – how do dietitians feel about recommending or non-recommending items that have a high content of fructose corn syrup.) They also post speaking requests to the listserv so that dietitians can connect with and volunteer their time for local organizations.

Great Atlanta District (Georgia):: On every meeting evaluation they ask the question if someone is interested in volunteering. If so, they are invited to a "coffee talk." There, they can speak with current volunteers and discuss opportunities for volunteers (and the benefits of volunteering.) These talks last 1.5 hours each – GDA provides coffee and some light refreshments. They communicated this event through evite.com. Arizona mentioned they have a volunteer interest question on their membership forms.

Massachusetts – The board asked committee chairs to submit at least 3 volunteer opportunities with roles. An example for socials for success, one opportunity would be to organize an event (ad hoc opportunities by time – one hour, five hours etc.) These shorter volunteer opportunities were promoted to the membership, thereby increasing involvement.

Virginia- Offered new members attending annual meeting a little gift bag with ADA promotional items. Unfortunately not many were picked up.

What were your most successful membership retention and/or recruitment campaigns?

Many affiliates send postcards that include the affiliate 'discount' code. Great Atlanta District (Georgia): used vistaprint.com to do this.

Virginia: includes volunteer contact information in the welcome letters. To increase carry-over from pre-meeting workshops to the annual meeting, they planned a Sunday networking event – this increased attendance and helped with networking.

What percentage of time do you spend on executing events versus membership recruitment?

Great Atlanta District (Georgia): Previously focused on educational sessions and when there was a drop in membership, focused more on recruitment and retention. However, these are linked – without benefits, you won't recruit members; without members you won't be able to hold events. To help the board and volunteers focus on the right issues, they always ask what they can do to provide networking in every event (the number one member request.) For instance, they now provide meals at meetings to help people to feel more comfortable and to increase networking.

Indiana –They offer to waive registration fee for annual meeting during a member's first two years of membership. This has seemed to increase renewal, although it is a new program so they have yet to see if members drop off during their third year.

How do you recruit/retain student members?

Indiana: Has a student member on board of directors. In addition, they offer a one hour annual meeting session for students. There they meet with membership chair and discusses benefits of joining ADA and IDA. In addition, the members in their first 1-5 years attend to speak with and 'mentor' the students.

Philadelphia: Has a scholarship for students (\$1000). Traditionally the students who win these remain members, as long as they don't move out of state.

Great Atlanta District (Georgia): At last meeting, had cake and champagne reception for all student members where every student was introduced and recognized.