

HOW TO RETAIN MEMBERS

Baronessa Giovanna Adimari
Deputy of Recruitment and Retention

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- When we talk about recruitment, we are talking about bringing in new members to the Society and to our local groups.
- When we talk about membership retention, we can be talking about two separate issues:
 - 1. Ways to help get newcomers involved and to keep them coming back to our groups.
 - I.E., establishing our membership.
 - 2. And how to keep already existing members active and happy with their level of participation.
 - This second goal is the focus on this presentation.

WHY RETENTION?

- ◉ There has been a lot of fantastic work on how to recruit new members in the SCA, but not as much work on how to keep membership numbers.
- ◉ The importance of recruitment should not be understated, but it should also be equally important to try to find ways to keep current members
- ◉ We need to analyze why we lose participants, and to reevaluate our regional and local goals in order to keep our groups fresh and exciting for people that have been involved for 1 month, 1 years or decades!!

MOTIVATION

AN IMPORTANT INGREDIENT FOR RETENTION

- ◉ Established members need to be motivated to continue their participation in the Society.
 - People want to feel like they are a part of your organization and are invested in your activities.
- ◉ Focus on creating situations which bolster the two types of motivation:
 - Intrinsic Motivation
 - Self-serving needs
 - Give members opportunities to shine!
 - Extrinsic Motivation
 - Desire to have friends
 - People with similar beliefs and ideas
- ◉ What motivates members of your group?
- ◉ Learn about your local group:
 - Membership Questionnaires

MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRES

- A great way to find out about your local group is to send out a “getting to know you” questionnaire
 - This can be used for both newcomers and established membership.
 - Questions can be adapted to the needs and situation of every local group.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONS:

- ◉ 1. How long have you been involved in the SCA?
- ◉ 2. How did you first learn about the SCA and what circumstances caused you to get involved?
- ◉ 3. Would you consider yourself an active or inactive member? How many hours per/week do you feel you spend participating in SCA activities?
- ◉ 4. If you are not active, but are still a member of the Society, what keeps you from participating?
- ◉ 5. If you are involved, what types of activities do you participate in?
- ◉ 6. What types of activities are you interested in, but don't participate in? Why?
- ◉ 7. How do you feel your local group could recruit more effectively?
- ◉ 8. If you are no longer an active member, but once were, what changed?
- ◉ 9. Are there activities or other situations which would cause you to get more involved again?
- ◉ 10. What do you feel your local group could do to retain members more effectively?
- ◉ 11. Do you have children and if so, does this affect your ability to participate in SCA activities?
- ◉ 12. What is your age? Gender? Occupation?
- ◉ Feel free to not answer any question you do not feel comfortable with. However, the more detailed information I receive the better informed I (and the group in general) can be about recruitment and membership retention planning.

DELEGATION VS. EMPOWERMENT

◉ Delegation

- Usually a form of management where someone is assigned a specific task.

◉ Empowerment

- Give members a greater sense of ownership and autonomy by allowing them to make some decisions about their particular task.
- Try to be a coach, not a manager
- However, do not set people up to fail - make sure they have the knowledge to succeed!
 - Mentorship Programs are a great way to do this. Connect people with experienced members who already know how to do a skill, run an event, and so forth.
 - This works not only for recruitment, but retention as well. Perhaps existing members want to learn a new craft, or take over an unfamiliar office?

ASKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

- ◉ The most effective way to ask for volunteers is by face-to-face contact
- ◉ Sign-up sheets have their place, but they make people feel like anyone can do the job and take away from its value.
- ◉ Get volunteers feedback to make them feel like valuable participants.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THANK YOU!!

- ◉ Recognition is an important part of every aspect of our lives, not just in the SCA. People do not necessarily ask for a great reward as part of the work that they do, but they do thrive when given praise and appreciation. Recognition shows personal respect, but it must be specific and it must be sincere.

TYPES OF RECOGNITION

- ◉ Awards (Kingdom and Baronial)
 - ◉ Be careful that this is not the ONLY form of recognition used.
- ◉ Tokens
- ◉ Publically recognize volunteers/members
- ◉ Certificates - non-SCA awards
- ◉ Presents, cards, etc. that are personalized
- ◉ Acknowledge special members with head-table or in newsletters or otherwise
- ◉ ***Most important form of recognition is face-to-face acknowledgement!!!
 - ◉ This is something that is often overlooked and taken for granted.

REASONS WE LOSE MEMBERSHIP

- Fatigue
- Frustration
- Lack of fulfillment
- Boredom
- Personality Issues
 - This list is not exhaustive, but it is a starting point!
- What is the list of things that we can control?
 - Recognition, motivation, empowerment
- What can't we control?
 - Time, money
 - Brainstorm with your local groups how you might be able to overcome these obstacles.
- **Finally, do not publically admonish anyone, ever.** This is a sure way to lose membership.

GETTING MEMBERSHIP FEEDBACK

◉ Get feedback from your members

- After an event
 - Post-event survey or questionnaire can help get information about the success or needed changes of an event.
- After a certainly period of time
 - Has attendance slowed? If so, why is this?
 - Make contact with people by phone or email, if possible.
- After they have stopped participating
 - Why did they leave?
 - How can we get them back?

EVENTS AS A RESOURCE FOR RETENTION

- ◉ We need to continue to effectively engage our current members. If events are one of the main focuses within the SCA, then it is important for us to reflect and refocus on how we run events, particular if they have become static or unchanging. Most not-for-profits will analyze growth and organizational effectiveness every five years.
- ◉ Are members getting high quality events?
- ◉ Why have other groups (such as Steampunk) gotten so much excitement and membership increases where we have not?
 - These are thing to think about and discuss within your local group.

FINAL WORDS

- These ideas are not just meant for the Chatelaine. These ideas can be used by everyone within a group.
 - Recognition, for example, does not need to come from the top down. Rather it can come from everyone at every level.
 - Example - Thank you for taking the time to read this!!
- Try scheduling activities with your local groups in non-SCA activities/locations. These activities can help increase group cohesion and membership retention.
 - Bowling anyone?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ◉ <http://www.coloradocollege.edu/campusactivities/Leadershiprec.htm>
 - “For your organization to be more successful you must decrease the number of inactive members and increase the number of active. By having a GREATER number of ACTIVE members within your organization then the members will less likely suffer from burn-out.”
- ◉ <http://www.energizeinc.com/art/subj/Reten.html>
 - “When volunteers are recruited honestly, have meaningful work to do, receive orientation and training, get supervisory attention and feedback, and feel recognized...they'll be satisfied enough to want to remain engaged.”
- ◉ http://www.ieee.org/societies_communities/geo_activities/volunteer/recruit.html
- ◉ <http://www.charityvillage.com/cv/research/rvol58.html> - Great article on Membership Retention!

THANK YOU!!

Feel free to contact me with questions
or thoughts: astevensonhp@gmail.com