

# Membership Recruitment and Retention

## THE MYTHS & REALITIES OF MEMBER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

<b><i>Myths</i></b>	<b><i>Realities</i></b>
<i>The membership department handles retention</i>	Although the membership department may develop and spearhead member services, strategic retention is everybody's job, volunteers as well as staff.
<i>Retention equals renewal</i>	Renewal is only the last step in the long process of retention. Members pay their dues again (and again) if they are satisfied and feel they have received value throughout the year.
<i>Recruitment and retention get equal resources</i>	Many associations give the lion's share of resources (time and money) to recruiting new members. Recruitment shows short-term payback, while retention is a long-term strategy that requires hard work. In the long term, however, <u>emphasizing</u> retention is the wisest investment your association can make.
<i>There are always more new members to recruit</i>	When you lose a member, you must recruit two in order to show growth. When you retain a member, however, growth occurs with every new recruit. Most associations have a limited pool of prospects that is often narrowly defined. Money is much better spent on keeping the members you have rather than locating possible new recruits, some of whom will never join no matter what you do.
<i>There is one ideal retention rate</i>	Retention is a complex process affected by various forces. It is unique to each association. The retention rate may vary over time, depending on what is happening in the association and member environments.

## Membership Recruitment and Retention

<p><i>High revenues from sources other than membership eliminate retention worries</i></p>	<p>Members form the primary customer base for most associations; to lose members is to lose customers. If all your members disappeared tomorrow, so would your market base for other revenue-generating activities.</p>
<p><i>Our members will renew no matter what we do</i></p>	<p>Associations can no longer depend upon inertia to ensure high retention rates. Members continually evaluate the value of their membership. As they look to reduce expenditures and simplify their lives, many are picking and choosing among several memberships. To be among the memberships renewed and not dropped, associations must 'deliver the goods'.</p>
<p><i>All members are the same</i></p>	<p>Members are neither identical nor interchangeable. There are many different reasons for joining and retaining membership. Maximizing retention requires segmenting and targeting products, services and efforts to meet individual member needs.</p>
<p><i>Just send a new member a kit</i></p>	<p>The kit is just one part of the special handling of new members. Paying <u>special attention</u> to new members can convert them into lifetime members.</p>
<p><i>Retention begins the moment a member joins</i></p>	<p>Retention is tied to how a member was recruited; it starts with the first contact, even before joining.</p>

Adapted with permission from:

*Farber Sirkin, A. and McDermott, M.P. (1995)*

**Keeping Members: CEO Strategies for 21st Century Success**