

EAPA Chapter/Branch Leader's Toolkit

RETAINING MEMBERS

While it's true that staying connected or "plugged in" to the membership includes an active outreach through telephone or e-mail correspondence, it also means tapping in to their desire to be *active participants* in the chapter/branch. Retention is greatly increased when individuals feel that they are more than simply members, but are stakeholders in the Association. There are several ways to increase the involvement and simultaneously, the retention rate of your membership.

EXTEND A DIRECT INVITATION

It's time tested and proven that members who are actively involved in the inner workings of an organization or group are more likely to renew. However, sometimes people don't readily express interest or even know whom they should express it to. This is where seasoned members and chapter/branch leadership come in. Simply, ask them. You may create a fact sheet that lists all of the chapter/branch committees and initiatives that require volunteers and leadership. Make sure to highlight the expectations of that committee and how it supports the larger mission of the chapter. Along with your fact sheet, include a direct invitation to the membership to share their particular talents and lend their time to support one or more of the committees or programs listed.

PUBLICIZE AND SHARE YOUR SUCCESS – *The Annual Chapter/Branch Progress Report/Evaluation*

More and more groups are moving toward presenting an annual report. The annual report is a snapshot of everything from the financials, to membership overview, to assessment of programmatic efforts over the last year. Additionally, it can be used as the chapter/branch's premiere marketing tool. Here the facts speak for themselves and the chapter/branch can say, "Look what we've accomplished together!"

RUN FOCUS/INTEREST GROUPS

Tap a random group of members, some new, a few who have been members for a couple years and the "lifers", to join a general or more targeted chapter/branch focus group. Make sure to stress that their input is key in selecting, for example, which programs will be developed, how policies are implemented, and more importantly determining the direction the chapter/branch will take in the near and distant future. Here is an opportunity to really find out what members think and want. The atmosphere of informal focus groups provides a "safe" place for members to share their insights without being in the spotlight. You are sure to get some very candid and useful information from these gatherings.

FORM A CHAPTER PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Seek the input of your chapter/branch members throughout the year, but specifically when you are planning your meetings and training programs. Consider forming a program committee tasked with choosing topics and presentations for your meetings. As recipients of the program offerings, the committee can give you an assessment of your previous programs, and suggest content and/or presenters for the coming year. A chapter/branch program committee allows you to tap into the member demographic that is well-versed in content development and public speaking for EAPs. The chapter/branch gains an infusion of ideas from the actual professionals, and members provide specific contributions to the chapter and to their own professional development.

MAKE MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS IS EVERYONE'S JOB!

Another good way to involve all members – *whether new or old* – is to draft everyone for the Marketing and PR Team! Encourage the entire chapter/branch to be an “army of one” in spreading the word about chapter/branch programs and events. This will help the chapter/branch build alliances with other groups [as your members may hold numerous affiliations], and increase the number of non-members and potentially future EAPA members at your events.

PROVIDE TOP-NOTCH RESOURCES TO MEMBERS

Make your chapter/branch *THE* spot for EA dialogue and resources in your local area. Make sure your chapter/branch is the provider of the most innovative programs and the most cutting edge resources in the EA industry. If it concerns your membership, it should be on your chapter/branch's agenda. In all that your chapter/branch does, make sure that your focal point is providing the content and resources that EA professionals need to be more effective in their jobs. Your efforts in this area not only enhances the value of chapter/branch membership, but assists EAPA on a larger scale in expanding its role as the global voice of Employee Assistance.