

## How-To-Suggestions - Membership Plan

All neighborhood associations are dedicated to supporting their community. Recruitment and retention is an ongoing process that must be actively pursued each year to ensure the growth of the association. Benefits of belonging to association must be shared with current and potential members.

### Understanding Your Membership

Many associations describe their membership by saying “We have 97 members this year” or “Our membership is down 3%.” Both are accurate, but neither provides the necessary information to understand who belongs to your association, who is leaving, and what opportunities are available to build your association.

#### “Net” vs. “Turnover”

In the example above the association had 100 members in the previous year, lost 3% or 3 members, and now has 97 members. Were all 97 members also members last year? Or, did 5 members leave and 2 new members join this year? On average, how many association members in a given year fail to return as members the following year.

#### Who are Your Members?

Is the average age of those leaving similar to the new members coming in?

- Is the association serving an audience that is different than it was 5 years ago?
- Are new members experienced bowlers?
- Should the association provide some introductory sessions?
- How many have family members who would enjoy a family tournament or adult/youth league?

There are many factors that an association can use to build a member profile that will help your association find members and provide the programs and services that will keep current members. It is important that the association creates and maintains a database of the addresses for all residences within the boundaries of the association. The database should contain at a minimum, the street address, resident names if possible, type of housing if appropriate, telephone number, email addresses, etc. This database will form the foundation for any recruitment plan.

An association can also survey members to find out general profiles or specific program preferences. Ask new members what their expectations are – why did they join and where did they hear about the association. Evaluations of event participation – or non-participation – will also help the association deliver programs that keep members involved and attract new members. Finding new members requires knowing which residents are already members.

Successful recruitment campaigns will evaluate new opportunities and develop targeted communications for those residents who were members but did not renew their

membership and those residents who have never been members. Understanding how the demographics of your community have changed will help generate new ideas.

The best way to understand the association's membership is to talk to and listen to them!

### **Elements of Successful Recruitment Campaign**

- Establish a committee to take ownership of specific responsibilities. This eliminates confusion and potential misunderstanding. The underlying rule should be that each committee represents one part of the overall plan.
- Be energetic and excited about association's membership. When members talk about the association, they should express how they honestly feel about being an active member and what opportunities membership has provided.
- Should be prepared to explain what the association membership has to offer and what the association stands for – operating principles and the vision and mission statements.
- Promote the benefits of participating in USBC certified leagues (scholarship opportunities, philanthropy, tournament participation, etc.)
- Make it as easy as possible to become an association member.
- Recruitment is an ongoing project.

### **Recruitment Plan**

The following elements should be included in an association's Membership Plan.

- **Define the Goals** of the Campaign and how it will be measured for success.
- **Welcome Letter** for Potential Members. The letter should be concise and include a list of membership benefits, as well as local, state, and national activities and projects. It also should contain the names of the association recruitment committee, contact numbers and best times for contact, and should be properly "branded."
- **Recruitment Materials** – At all gatherings, a brochure should be available describing the association and its activities, goals, and achievements.
- **Committee Chair** - Select an Energetic Committee Chair to Coordinate Recruitment. This person will be very visible, so select someone who is at ease with groups of people and has the stamina to oversee all aspects of recruitment events from start to finish.
- **Orientation Program** - Develop an Orientation Program for New Members. Hold an orientation meeting to find out from new members what interests them and where they would like to get involved. This program could be combined with a board meeting so the new members could meet the board.
- **Create Partnerships with Proprietors** - It is good practice to involve management in local area businesses in association activities. Ask the proprietor how association

activities such as recruiting can benefit their business. Also ask if the proprietor would like to be included on the communication distribution list.

- **Follow Up** - Establish regular contact with new members immediately to actively demonstrate support and appreciation. Ask them if they have any questions. Also, DO NOT overlook the value of regular communication with the rest of the membership.
- **Troubleshoot** - . After each recruiting effort discuss the positive and negative aspects of the effort with the recruitment/retention committee. Generate and record suggestions for improvement for upcoming recruitment projects, and review ways to incorporate the suggestions.
- **Follow the Plan** - Staying on task (efficient meetings and following through on job responsibilities) demonstrates professionalism and dramatically increases the success of activities.
- **Routine Reporting** – The chairperson should report at least monthly to the Board of the Association on the progress toward the stated goals.