

HOW-TO GUIDE FOR CLUBS

# MEMBERSHIP MANAGEMENT



**AA** AMERICAN ADVERTISING FEDERATION

Getting and keeping members is the most critical function of a local AAF club. Therefore, the club membership committee must be aggressive and creative in their efforts in the three key area of membership: recruitment, retention and involvement.

This guide has been developed to help the membership committee establish and accomplish membership objectives. Specific ideas and recommendations are provided that will contribute to the effective execution of a membership campaign.

# Table of Contents

## **GET ORGANIZED**

Committee Responsibility . . . . .	4
Committee Size & Composition . . . . .	4

## **EVALUATE YOUR CLUB . . . . .5**

## **DEVELOP THE SALES TOOLS**

Club Newsletter or e-Newsletter . . . . .	6
Program Promotions . . . . .	6
Press Releases/Coverage . . . . .	6
Personal Notes . . . . .	6

## **MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT**

Prospect Lists . . . . .	7
Personal Contact . . . . .	7
New Membership Categories . . . . .	8
Membership Recruitment Ideas . . . . .	8

## **CARE FOR NEW MEMBERS . . . . .10**

## **MEMBERSHIP RETENTION**

Awareness & Communication . . . . .	9
Involvement . . . . .	10
Define Reasons to Belong . . . . .	10
Retention Ideas . . . . .	11

## **ACQUAINT CLUB MEMBERS WITH THE AAF . . . . .12**

## **AAF RESOURCES . . . . .12**

## Get Organized

### **Committee responsibility**

The membership committee is responsible for recruitment, retention and involvement. Collectively these activities can be termed “membership development.”

### **Committee Size & Composition**

While the size of the membership committee should depend upon the club's membership size and scope of planned membership activities, it is important to have multiple people in addition to the chairman on this committee. This will encourage more involvement in the primary areas of membership development: recruitment, retention and involvement.

If the membership committee is large, it is a good idea to organize members into subcommittees, each with its own chairman. This structure facilitates productive meetings and provides a mechanism for easy reporting. It also involves more members in a leadership capacity that is important for grooming future committee chairs.

Whether the membership committee operates as a whole or by subcommittee, it is the chairman's responsibility to coordinate membership development activity, establish objectives and monitor execution and progress.

Close coordination of committee activity is critical as the areas of membership development are interrelated. For example, involvement is also a membership retention tool.

In addition, close coordination with other club committees is essential. For example, club programs are a primary membership recruitment and retention tool. Therefore, the membership committee has a vested interest in making sure the meetings have good content, are valuable as networking opportunities and are entertaining.

Because membership committee members represent your club to current and prospective members, the chairman should be selective in choosing people and making assignments. Committee members must be knowledgeable about the club's mission, areas of operation and programs.

Membership committee members should also be respected in the advertising community and the local community at large. Ideally committee members should be well connected within the industry and involved in other volunteer organizations so as to expand the club's prospect reach.

In addition, committee members must be available to meet regularly and contribute their time.

In selecting committee members you should seek a balanced representation of all elements of the advertising profession in your community. It should reflect advertisers, media, advertising agencies and suppliers. Balance on the committee will help keep representation of advertising segments within the membership balanced.

## Evaluate Your Club

The first task of the membership committee chairman is to evaluate the club in terms of membership composition, benefits and services, and the competitive environment.

The following specific membership composition data should be compiled:

- Age
- Gender
- Industry segment
- Level of professionalism
- Income
- Individual and Corporate membership

Also evaluate your club's membership benefits and services. Define every club benefit and service and ascertain the current membership's assessment of each in terms of value and how good a job the club is doing in this area. For example, find out whether your current membership feels club participation in public service projects is valuable, and then if they think the club is doing a good job in public service.

In addition, the competitive environment in your market must be considered. Therefore, it is important to identify all other advertising related organizations in your community and define their target markets, e.g., the local chapter of the American Marketing Association's target audience is marketing professionals.

Once you have this list, determine which local organizations are directly competing with the AAF club for members and develop a membership dues and benefits comparison. This information will be valuable in developing prospect member lists and exploring possible joint meeting event opportunities. Obviously this evaluation process involves research. A membership survey and/or a series of focus group interviews are recommended.

## Set Objectives & Define Strategies

Research will determine club strengths and weaknesses, which should serve as the basis for developing general club and membership committee objectives and strategies. Committee objectives should be drawn from membership statistics and the strategies to achieve these objectives should come in the form of activities and tasks. This will provide the committee with the necessary tools to achieve membership goals in recruitment, retention and involvement.

The membership committee should establish at least one goal for membership recruitment, retention and involvement. Formal goals provide committee members with direction and serve as the foundation for measuring success. Specific strategies to achieve objectives should also be defined.

For example, a club's objective may be to decrease membership attrition by five percent. Specific strategies to achieve this could include: response to member input that luncheon meetings are more convenient; response to research indicating the need for better quality speakers on more pertinent topics; response to the members' need for more advance notice

on program content; response to members' feelings that there are no real opportunities for involvement by creating and/ or expanding current club committees; and response to member input that increased personal contact and networking opportunities are necessary.

The rationale for membership committee objectives and strategies should directly flow from the research process, common sense and creative thinking. In setting membership retention objectives be sure to consider normal annual attrition rates.

Objectives should be reasonable and realistic based on the potential for membership in your community, financial and human resources and the club's ability to effectively and efficiently serve more members.

To start, focus a majority of your efforts on industry segments that are not well represented in the club membership and strive for balance between the industry segments.

Clearly, some of the strategies to achieve membership objectives will involve other club committees and individual members. In fact, membership committee strategies should in some cases include the objectives of other club committees.

For this reason, the membership committee must secure the support of the club board and other committee chairs. A mechanism to ensure cooperation and coordination between the membership committee and other club committees needs to be established. Regular meetings are the best way to ensure effective communication between club committee chairs.

Remember, every club activity can be a membership and public relations tool if packaged correctly. The membership committee is responsible for the packaging and use of the sales tools to get and keep members.

## Develop the Sales Tools

Through the research process, club activities, benefits and services should have been identified and evaluated by the members. Based on member feedback the club should determine which activities and membership benefits and services should be emphasized, and these should be promoted and communicated through various membership development tools.

Note: Some projects may need to be cut in order to provide the financial and human resources to expand or enhance areas of operation that the members consider to be valuable. In addition, any project that is not considered valuable by the members should be cut.

Some examples of membership development tools are membership brochures, applications and an annual report of club activities and accomplishments to the members.

In addition to these, all club communications can be used as membership development tools. The following are some specific recommendations on how this is accomplished.

### **Club Newsletter or E-Newsletter**

Highlight new members and members' job changes and promotions in a club newsletter or e-newsletter. While the newsletter or e-newsletter should only go to members, many nonmembers probably read it which makes them potential new members. Therefore, include a membership application in your newsletter (or link to an application in an e-newsletter) so that if someone is interested in joining, the information on how to join is there at the time of interest. Newsletters should also be used as leave-behinds on recruitment calls.

### **Program Promotions**

Club programs are perhaps the single most valuable membership benefit. They provide networking opportunities, professional education and entertainment. Be sure to sell the value of all programs to your current and potential members. Also, make it clear that nonmembers pay more—a lot more—to attend programs.

### **Press Releases/Coverage**

Make sure you exploit membership development opportunities by keeping current and potential members informed about what the club is doing.

### **Personal Notes**

It is important to remember to include a personalized note when sending club materials to prospects. The note should describe the club and why he or she should be a member. Be sure to provide them with information on how to become a member (e.g., a phone number, membership application, e-mail, mailing address or URL for the club's Web site, etc.)

## **Membership Recruitment**

### **Prospect Lists**

An extensive and up-to-date prospect list is the most valuable membership recruitment tool. Ideally the prospect list should include key people from every nonmember agency, advertiser, media company and advertising service company in the area. Freelancers and sole proprietors should also be included.

Ad 2 club prospect lists should also include college seniors who are studying advertising or a related field.

The list should be coded by industry segment and specific company type (e.g., media, newspaper, etc.). If possible, it is also a good idea to code by job title (e.g., sales or creative). The more specific you can be in coding your list, the more targeted your membership recruitment efforts can be.

The following are various sources from which the club's prospect list can be developed:

- Recently resigned members
- Nonmembers who attend club programs and/or events
- Nonmembers who participate in the American Advertising Awards
- Chamber of commerce membership list
- Membership lists of other advertising related organizations in your area
- Asking current members to identify nonmembers
- Monitoring local media for business news
- Other advertising-related local organizations

It is critical that the membership committee qualify club prospects. That is, make sure the individual is eligible for membership. The club bylaws should include a membership eligibility statement. Typically, club members have to be employed in advertising business or a related field and must demonstrate high business and personal standards.

### **Personal Contact**

Nothing is more valuable than one-on-one contact with prospects, particularly when the person representing the club is a professional peer or personal friend.

The following procedures will facilitate personal contact:

1. Distribute the prospect list to all club leaders (officers, committee chairs and board members) and ask each to identify whom they know and whether their relationship with the individual is personal or professional.

2. Cross-reference your current members with the prospect list and determine if there are any relationships (e.g., agency/client, agency/media, etc.).
3. Recruit club leaders and members who have contacts to assist the membership committee by making the membership recruitment call or arranging for a club representative to make the call. The first is only preferable if the club leader or member is well versed on club activities and membership benefits and services. If they are not, use the latter method.
4. In addition to using personal and professional connections to arrange membership recruitment meetings, a cold call can work. Match membership committee members with prospects based on industry segment and professional level. Matching does not mean that a sales person who is a member should visit a nonmember sales person at a competing business. In fact this could be a disaster. Instead matching means identifying the membership committee member who could have influence with the prospect based on what they do and for what company. For instance, an agency media buyer could exert considerable pressure on a nonmember media sales person.
5. Once matching is completed, assign each committee member a specific list of prospects to contact. The successful committee members can be assigned additional prospects. Sometimes incentives such as awards or recognition are necessary. Remember membership committee members are a sales force.
6. Committee members should call or email prospects to arrange a meeting.

Whether a membership recruitment meeting is achieved through professional or personal contact or through a cold call, the following procedures should be used:

1. Once the meeting is arranged, attempt to tailor the membership recruitment presentation to the needs and interests of the targeted prospect. Try not to talk about club activities or benefits and services that have no relevance to the prospect. Try to determine the prospect's "hot button" and focus the presentation around it. Sometimes only one area of club operations will be of importance to the prospect. The person making the call needs to know this and emphasize it in the presentation.
2. Be sure to conclude the sales call by asking the prospect to join. Often times, people write the check on the spot.
3. Leave behind a membership brochure, application and any other pertinent sales tools utilized by your club.
4. Write a follow-up letter reiterating the membership activities, benefits and services addressed during the meeting and enclose a membership application.
5. Check-in with the person by phone or note regularly and make sure they are aware of club operations in areas relevant to their interests.
6. If the meeting was arranged through professional or personal connections, get the person who has the connection to call the prospect and reiterate the sales pitch.

### **New Membership Categories**

In addition to the traditional approach to membership recruitment, your club may be able to generate new members by creating new membership categories. (For example, educator, student, nonresident, etc.) If there is no AAF Ad 2 club in your city, a young professional category could also be established.

It is important that the new membership categories do not have the potential to cannibalize the club's current membership. In other words, new categories should be established to target people who would not be involved with the club otherwise. If new membership categories are established, be sure the club is prepared to accommodate the needs and interests of these new member types.



### **Membership Recruitment Ideas**

- Conduct a “New Member Day” program and offer current members a reduced price if they bring a new member.
- At each meeting, ask members to write the name of a prospective member on the back of their business card. Collect the cards and conduct a drawing for a prize.
- Conduct a membership drive halfway through the club year, prorate the membership fee accordingly and promote it as a limited-time reduced dues offer.
- Conduct a new member contest. Each month award prizes to the current members who recruit the most new members.
- Offer a “transitional membership” at a reduced fee to advertising students in their senior year of college or to young professionals in their last year of Ad 2 membership.
- Conduct special events and/or competitions targeted at specific prospect groups. For example, if targeting creative professionals, conduct a logo contest. This type of activity will generate interest in the club.
- Send prospects a letter of invitation and two free luncheon tickets. Send two tickets so the prospect doesn’t have to come alone and is able to bring another prospect.
- Establish a “club information center” at all club meetings that includes a bulletin board and a table featuring club publications and membership applications.
- Hold joint meetings with other local advertising related organizations so their members (your potential members) are exposed to the AAF club.
- Secure membership discounts with local merchants and restaurants and promote these as savings to prospect members.
- Encourage members who are relocating to get another representative from their company to join the club.

## Care for New Members

Once your new members have been recruited, it is essential that they be properly welcomed. Encourage them to become involved in club activities. New members are typically the most enthusiastic and therefore can be highly motivated. The membership committee should get them involved immediately.

To ensure that new members will become strong, supportive members, consider the following steps:

1. Process the new member’s application quickly. If a delay is absolutely necessary, inform the prospective member immediately and explain the reason for the delay. Nothing dampens the enthusiasm of a new member more than a long, unexplained wait for acceptance.
2. As soon as the club board approves the application, send welcome letters from the president and other appropriate club officers. This mailing should include at least a list of the club’s upcoming events, its activities and an invitation to participate in club committees. Follow up on your invitations to participate immediately and assign responsibilities.
3. Greet and introduce new members at the first club meeting after membership has been approved. If appropriate, present them with a membership certificate or card at this time; otherwise send it with an official welcome letter.
4. Immediately assign each new member to a “buddy,” or a current member, who will welcome him or her to meetings. The “buddy” should sit with his/her new member and introduce him/her to other members. “Buddies” should also do their best to encourage new members to participate on committees and any activities of interest.

5. Assign hospitality hosts to each table at meetings to introduce members, talk about club activities, and encourage member involvement. Carefully plan new member seating at club meetings.
6. Use special nametags or ribbons that designate “new member” so everyone can be conscientious about meeting and greeting them.
7. Some clubs hold “new member” meetings. Regardless of format, the goal is to welcome new members warmly, introduce them to current members, inform them about club goals and activities and encourage their participation.
8. Be sure your new members are put on the club membership mailing list and taken off the prospect mailing list immediately so they receive the correct communications.

## Membership Retention

Maintaining current members is the responsibility of the entire club leadership team that includes all officers, directors and committee chairs. However, the membership committee is charged with directing the efforts and carrying out the day-to-day tasks associated with membership retention.

Membership retention is best achieved by making sure the members are aware of club activities and initiatives and by getting members involved.

### **Awareness & Communication**

It is important for the club to constantly brief members on activities in education, public service and government relations. The message should be repeated often and in various ways. Members need to know and accept club objectives and need to understand how club activities and initiatives benefit them.

While the club newsletter and other communications are valuable, the best opportunity to tell members what the club is doing for them is at regular monthly programs. A five-minute club update to a captive audience will contribute to increased awareness and understanding among the members.

Conducting a regular meeting that describes the club’s mission, objectives and plans is an ideal orientation mechanism.

These meetings can be interesting if well thought-out and presented. Such a meeting generates enthusiasm and motivates involvement.

Personal contact is key. Therefore, it is a good idea for the membership committee to divide the list of current club members among them and, on a quarterly basis, call each member. The purpose of the call is to keep the informed, encourage their involvement and maintain a rapport.

Through personal phone calls the membership committee will be able to identify if there is a retention problem that needs to be addressed.

### **Involvement**

Members should be given regular opportunities to get involved. At every club meeting, there should be a written description of the purpose and function of each club committee with a sign-up sheet. An announcement should be made that the club wants and needs member help on certain projects. Personal invitations to members requesting their participation on committees and/or input on issues is also valuable.

Committee recruitment receptions are another valuable mechanism for giving people the opportunity to participate. At these events, the committee chairs and key members mingle with members and encourage their involvement.

Some members may choose not to take on a committee responsibility; however, they would attend some committee meetings if invited. This allows people to learn about specific areas of club activity and enables them to develop a rapport with club leaders and may stimulate their future involvement.

Focus groups and/or task forces to deal with specific issues are also a terrific way to involve members.

Regular attendance at club functions is member involvement. Obviously all efforts to promote participation in programs and events should be made. To get people to attend meetings, ask them to serve as “hosts” or “buddies” for new members.

Financial support of the club or in-kind gifts are also forms of involvement. While some members will work or participate, others will give money or services. Sponsorships provide members with a spotlight opportunity. The request for sponsorship has to be positioned correctly, and ample credit and thanks must be provided. Turn complainers into involved members. If someone does not like something, ask him or her to help make it better.

### **Define Reasons to Belong**

In addition to keeping members informed and getting them involved, the club needs to provide specific reasons for someone to belong and pay dues.

People need to know what they will get out of being an ad club member. The ad club has to answer this question.

In answering the question the membership committee needs to remember that people join an organization for one or a combination of three reasons: giving back to the community, professional/personal advancement/value and/or recognition. Therefore, the benefits for joining have to be communicated to appeal to one of these three motivating factors.

The membership committee also needs to understand that the tangible benefits, such as an annual membership roster, monthly newsletter, and discounted fees, are not the only benefits.

In fact, intangible benefits are typically more valuable to members, but members need to understand that they exist. This is the membership committee's job: packaging and communicating reasons for belonging.

The following is an example of how to package various membership benefits into one effective marketing tool. AAF club membership provides you with the opportunity to...

- Gain influence in a professional club that impacts the future of advertising in the (local) community and nationally through its affiliation with the American Advertising Federation.
- Interact professionally and personally with local industry leaders through the club's programs and events.
- Benefit from the club's participation in the industry's only grassroots legislative network, providing an effective lobbying coalition that opposes taxes and restrictions on advertising.
- Receive timely information on local and national advertising issues including government relations, public service, self-regulation, education and recognition of excellence in advertising and by its practitioners.
- Enjoy professional development through club meetings and events.
- Take advantage of exclusive club benefits provided through the AAF such as discounts offered through our national partner goods and services providers.
- Receive recognition and honor for accomplishments in advertising creative and industry contributions.
- Participate in public service initiatives that directly impact the well-being of the (local) community and enhance the public's perception of our industry.
- Participate in programs that encourage high industry standards and elevate the consumers' perception of the ad industry.

### **Retention Ideas**

- Establish a small exhibit area at each meeting and feature one or more of your members.
- Create an “Unsung Heroes” award to honor those who make valuable contributions to the club but are not usually recognized for their efforts.
- Provide members with every opportunity to be involved and personally invite their participation.
- Promote member attendance at meetings. Work with the club's program committee on meeting content and promotion.
- Respond to expressed member needs and interests. Ask for member input and feedback.
- Recognize and honor longtime members on their significant anniversaries of membership, such as their fifth, 10th, 15th, 20th, etc.

## Identify & Respond to Potential Problems

Failure to pay dues and non-participatory behavior are the two biggest clues to member dissatisfaction. The membership committee should be alert to these issues. Accordingly, it is important for the membership committee to monitor club dues records and meeting and event attendance.

### **Personal Contact**

Members need to be called by a representative of the membership committee when their dues are late or if they do not attend regular club programs. The purpose of this call is not to collect dues or encourage attendance. Instead, it is to determine whether there is an issue, concern and/or problem that has prompted this circumstance. Typically there is no problem, but if there is, the membership committee representative needs to know about it and address it immediately.

Do not allow members to resign quietly. The membership committee should put forth a major effort to avoid member resignations. In the event a member does resign, the membership committee needs to identify, as best they can, specific reasons.

Sometimes members resign because they have not been involved and have no idea what the club does. In some cases cliques and the perception that the club is controlled by a handful of people can be the cause. Other reasons may include no time to participate or meeting times/locations are inconvenient. Regardless of the reason, member resignations can point to a potential weakness in the club. Therefore, the club membership committee should establish a policy of exit interviews.

### **The Exit Interview**

An exit interview is typically a phone call during which the club representative asks the resigned member a series of questions pertaining to membership activities, benefits and services. The purpose of the call is to identify what prompted the membership resignation. Exit interviews are an incredible source of information and input.

It is up to the membership committee to monitor exit interview responses and determine if there is a pattern. If a pattern surfaces, it is important to bring the problem to the attention of the full club board.

In cases where the members are resigning for personal or career reasons, thank them for their previous support. If appropriate, encourage them to seek club membership elsewhere and ask them to provide a recommendation of someone else from their organization to become a member. In every case, give them best wishes for future successes.

## Acquaint Club Members with the AAF

The American Advertising Federation advises local clubs to promote their national affiliation among their members. Member clubs of the AAF support the mission of the AAF which is: to protect, promote and advance advertising interests. Achieving this purpose benefits your local members. Therefore, your members should know about the AAF mission, programs and initiatives. A brochure entitled, “Local Influence With a National Presence” is available free of charge for your club’s use.

## AAF Resources

In addition to this How-to Guide, the AAF publishes Award-Winning Ideas to showcase the club achievement winning entries. The membership section of Award-Winning Ideas provides summaries from the winning membership initiative entries. The past year’s Award-Winning Ideas is available on our website, [aaf.org](http://aaf.org).



1101 VERMONT AVENUE NW, 5TH FLOOR, WASHINGTON DC 20005

**P** (202) 898-0089 **E** [AAF@AAF.ORG](mailto:AAF@AAF.ORG) **W** [AAF.ORG](http://AAF.ORG)