

Easy stages guide to Retention

Introduction

There are many reasons why a Club becomes vulnerable and needs strengthening; some of the more common reasons are:

- Club has a small membership of 10-15 members
- Divisions or cliques within the club
- Average age of members is over 70 years old
- Nobody will take office or actively participate in running the Club
- Club lacks a positive direction
- President/members with personal agendas

This situation can be overcome if all Club members work together to find a positive way forward. A successful Club displays all of the factors detailed below. We hope the questions and comments

How do you encourage success?

- Focus on Programme Action
- Hold effective meetings
- Involve and engage every member
- Build a team who work together
- Help each other to accept change
- Communicate! Communicate! Communicate

Hold effective meetings

- Focus on programme action
- Be prepared/Keep it brief
- Do you have an agenda? Do not overload it
- Stay on track
- Decide what you can communicate in another way – e.g. Club newsletter/emails
- Do you spread the workload so that more than one voice is heard in the meeting?
- Do you encourage members to participate? Is there a lively exchange of ideas?
- Are interruptions and/or bad behaviour dealt with?
- Are suggestions encouraged and accepted?
- Are they well attended? Do you have any attendance trends?
- How do your members act during meetings – Interested? Enthusiastic? Bored? Impatient?
- What is the atmosphere during the meetings? – Friendly? Tense? Lively? Boring?
- After meetings, are members inspired and motivated?
- Attitude is infectious
- Remember to involve your Club in any changes

Good meetings accomplish their goals, are relevant and interesting to members, and start and finish on time – can you make reference to other easy stages guides that deal with meetings?

Involving and engaging members

- Does your Club warmly welcome new members?
Hold an informal gathering with them to allow them to ask questions
Acknowledge all work done on the Club's behalf and show praise freely
- Does your Club involve new members in activities straightaway?
Make new members feel comfortable so that they are able to "dive" into an activity
But do not overload new members
Don't squander new members' enthusiasm by making them feel they need to wait before actively participating in Club activities.
- Do you encourage members to actively voice their opinions?
Create a suggestion box or location for soliciting member ideas
Hold brainstorming sessions to discuss new ideas
Evaluate activities at their conclusion

Involving and engaging members continued

- Do you encourage members to become involved in activities that interest them?
- Are members actively involved in your Club?
- Are Club members excited and enthusiastic when performing their duties?
- Are “important” activities and responsibilities “reserved” for certain members
- Have Club members held the same committee positions for a number of years
- Do any of your members seem bored or restless?
- Has attendance at your meetings dropped?
- Has participation during your programme action activities dropped?
- Do you know your members’ interests and skills?
- Do you encourage members to try new challenges?
- Do you encourage members to take on leadership roles?
- Do you emphasise social involvement?
- Do you hold an annual review of your Club’s activities?

Members join to participate in the Club’s activities. The key is to offer meaningful involvement opportunities for all members and keep their participation at a comfortable level for them.

Build a team and work together

Many of the questions under “Involving and engaging members” are also relevant here as well.

- Do you have a diverse membership? Are we suggesting this is good or bad?
- Is there friction between Club members?
- Are there people in the Club that members are uncomfortable talking to?
- Do your Club members appreciate differences between one another?
- Does your Club avoid stereotypes? What does this mean?
- Are your Club members willing to listen and accept a different point of view?
- Does your Club feel like a unified team?
- Does your Club have common goals?
- Do all your members know the common goals?
- Does your Club have established Meeting Manners?
- Does your Club have negative cliques?
- Does your Club suffer from Club politics?

Members will respond positively if they feel they have a role to play and are part of the team. Team building requires shared goals, cooperation and communication. Clubs that are unable to bridge differences and unite for a common goal will create dissatisfied members

Accept change

- Do you evaluate your Club each year and consider making changes?
- Do you evaluate your programme action projects and social events and learn from them?
- Do you involve members as you implement change?

Always tell them:

What changes are being made?

Why you are making them?

When they will be implemented?

How they will affect them?

- It is normal to go through a range of feelings when faced with change from fear, denial, anger, sadness, disorientation, frustration, uncertainty and a sense of loss through to resentment, low morale, low productivity, anxiety, scepticism, and finally to acceptance, high energy, openness to learning and renewed commitment to their role.
- It is a journey and some members will move quickly through to acceptance and others more slowly.
- Regular and frequent communication as well as engaging and involving the members in the changes proposed helps lead them to acceptance more quickly

Today's experiment could be tomorrow's new tradition.

Communicate constantly

Identify the people you need to communicate with

- Identify your key messages to each one
- Be prepared and have a clear "Call to Action"
- Communicate regularly with them in a timely and effective manner
- Make it open & transparent – available to all
- Use all of the channels open to you. For example: Club meetings, newsletters, social media or website

Communicate! Communicate! Communicate!

How you can use this information

- Look at each heading in a Club meeting so that you engage all Club members in the discussions what does this mean? May be an example would help?
- Use it as the agenda at your Reflection Event
- Use the headings and their content to help you deal with any concerns or problems in the Club discussions what does this mean? May be an example would help?

Tips for success

- Focus on good Programme Action projects
- Motivate and value your existing members
- Engage your members in what is happening
- Communicate, communicate and communicate!