90 Ways to Keep Your Members

This list of programs, activities and ideas has been compiled from suggestions made by hundreds of organizations around the world. Some of these ideas can be used by almost any organization, while others are applicable only in certain situations. The list is organized according to the five steps in an effective retention program, and when an idea applies to more than one step you'll see a notation to that effect.

1. Organize your efforts into a formal retention system. Retention is a year-round priority and needs to be planned. Nothing is more important than viewing retention as a system or program. Any organization that is, or wants to be, successful at retention must be able to identify the specific steps it takes to increase its retention rate. In addition to having a series of activities that make up a retention program, your organization should be able to identify resources that can be allocated to help implement the program.

2. Create a new member welcoming committee. Setting up a welcome committee is really very simple. When a new member joins ask someone who is already a member to call the new member. The member should say that they have just learned from the organization that the person or firm has become a new member. They should tell the new member what a good investment membership has been for them and congratulate the new member on making a great decision to join. In as little as ten seconds the welcoming member has validated the new member's decision to join by making that person feel more welcome in the organization. At the same time, the member making the call now feels more involved in the organization. The person making the call doesn't necessarily have to be a member who is part of your organization's leadership group. In fact, it is probably better to ask a member who is not very active in the organization to make this welcoming call because it gets that member involved and solidifies their pride in their own membership.

3. Give members a sample news release they can send to local papers announcing that they've joined your organization. In some organizations there are members who live and work in communities where local papers are eager to get information about activities of businesses and professionals in their area. Your organization can provide a news release form that new members can fill out with the appropriate information about themselves and the organization. Once the new member sees his or her name in the local paper, they'll be reminded of the fine organization they've just joined.

4. When new members join, send directory updates. In professional societies, the directory listing provides peer recognition and has networking value. In chambers and trade associations, the directory is used as a marketing tool.

5. If you are planning to introduce a new service, try to announce it just before renewal time. Organizations with an effective planning process have the opportunity to time the introduction of new products and services to support their retention efforts. When new programs, services, or publications

are being planned, you can try to time the announcement of their introduction to have the most impact on retention. Organizations should announce that the new program or service will start right after the largest number of members is due to renew. Be sure to remind members that they have to renew to take advantage of this service. Some organizations even remind members of new services right on their renewal invoice.

6. Make recruiters responsible for the first renewal, too. Many organizations provide incentives for members to recruit other members but few offer any incentives to members who help keep members. If your organization has a sponsorship program where the recruiter is known, write to the recruiter at renewal time and let them know the new members they brought in during the past year are about to get a renewal notice. Ask that recruiter to call his or her recruits to let them know they are looking forward to having them with the organization again next year. It reminds the recruiter about his or her efforts, and helps keep those efforts from being wasted if the members they sponsored drop out a short time after joining.

7. Send a special newsletter to new members during their first year. New members are special because they are the least likely to know everything that is going on in an organization, the least likely to be involved in a leadership position, and therefore the most likely to drop out. Several groups have developed new member newsletters that new members get throughout their first year of membership. These newsletters are basically a summary of the most important information that has been sent to them via other formats, such as newsletters or magazines, with further explanation and background. These publications usually go out three or four times during the year. New members stop receiving it as soon as they renew for the first time.

8. Invoice your members in a way that gives them the maximum allowable tax advantage. Having the renewal process begin prior to the end of the calendar year will allow members to have some financial flexibility. They'll appreciate your organization's understanding of their needs.

9. Let members attend their first meeting for free. This might seem like a tool available only to smaller organizations or chapters that meet frequently, but it can easily be adapted to any organization. Larger organizations often replace the free meeting with a free publication or other product.

10. Give new members a free ad or other opportunity to promote their products or services. Organizations that allow advertising in their publications can give new members free ad space during their first year of membership. This really shows that your organization is trying to do everything possible to promote members' businesses.

11. Keep members' names and addresses current and accurate. It is common courtesy and good business practice to keep your membership records as accurate as possible. This becomes even more important because members' expectations increase as they compare your organization's communications to those they receive from other sources. If virtually every organization and company that wants to sell them something can get their name correct, think of how disappointed they'll be if your organization can't!

12. When members drop out and say they didn't get anything out of their membership, try to find out exactly what they mean. More and more organizations are trying to identify the specific reasons why members are dropping out by surveying former members to pinpoint these reasons. When a former member says that he or she never got anything out of your organization, there is usually more to it. Your

organization should prepare questions that probe beyond the surface and get to the heart of why members are leaving.

13. When contacting those members who are overdue on their renewal payments, be sure to highlight both the international and local/regional benefits they are losing. A member may not be happy with local association service but may still renew if he or she enjoys getting the international magazine or other international education or networking benefits.

14. Describe how an international membership adds value to a state or local membership. This can help retention by giving members some "inside information" about the international programs and services that they receive in addition to their local or regional benefits. This will help create a picture of a larger benefits package.

15. Have an annual open house at your organization's offices. One of the most important images members get of an organization is the image of the headquarters office. Members call or write to this office but few members get to actually see the organization's headquarters. By holding some sort of function at the main offices of your organization, you let the members see where a large amount of their money is going.

16. Send a mini-survey to members six months after they join to see how they rate your organization's service. One educational organization called this their "six month report card." It was sent to new members halfway through their first year and asked the members to grade the organization in several service areas. Any members that rated a program below an A or B was given a phone call to get more information. Then the organization used that information to try to correct the problem. The organization was also able to spot potential dropped members by noting which new members didn't even bother to return the card. These members also got a phone call.

17. Have new member orientation at new member's place of business. Regional and smaller organizations should take advantage of the opportunity to do more personal follow-up with new members. Your staff should visit new members at their places of business and do brief new member orientations. By doing this in the comfort of the new member's own environment, you can show the member that there is no pressure in being a member - only opportunity.

18. Have new member orientations at the organization's office. Local chapters, chambers, and the headquarters location of organizations have an opportunity to invite new members to come to their organization's offices to receive their new member orientation. Having the orientation at the organization's headquarters limits outside distractions.

19. Have group orientations so new members see others who have made the same commitment. Some organizations have new member orientation sessions at regularly scheduled times. One of the values of group orientations is the fact that new members are impressed by the number and stature of the other people and companies who have also just joined the organization. It reinforces to the new member that he or she made a good decision by joining.

20. Make up a form that reads, "Here's what you got for 1/365th of your dues." This technique can be used effectively to show members that their dues investment is working for them every day. The form can be sent at anytime during the year

21. Develop a check list to use when trying to determine why members don't renew. Send a survey that lists the most common reasons for dropping out to those people or companies who have recently dropped their membership and ask them to check off the reasons that apply to them. Be prepared to follow-up and address each of the reasons. While a written form is not as effective as actually talking to these members, it does give the organization one more chance to reinforce the value of membership and to personalize the next contact.

22. Publish an annual report and send it to all of your members. Publishing an annual report allows your organization to summarize all of the accomplishments from the previous year. Annual reports are part of the normal business operations of most successful companies and businesses. By issuing an annual report, your organization will show that it is being run in a business-like manner and will remind any members thinking about dropping out that they would have to give up all of the benefits listed in the report.

23. Set up a speakers' bureau and arrange opportunities for speakers to talk to other organizations within your profession, community or industry. Organizations are always trying to spread the word about their group and its activities. One of the best ways to do this is by finding speaking opportunities for your organization's leaders. Rather than handling all requests for member speakers on a case-by-case basis, you can establish a system for taking advantage of these opportunities by maintaining a speakers' bureau. This is a pre-qualified group of members who are capable both in terms of knowledge and speaking ability to represent your organization internally to chapters or committees and externally to the media, potential members, and other groups. When these representatives speak, current members are instilled with a sense of pride in membership which can make a difference at renewal time.

24. At your next meeting or convention have a service fair where your committees are the exhibitors. In addition to having your regular supplier exhibitors at your next meeting or convention, have a series of exhibit booths that are staffed by volunteers and are designed to show members what each of your organization's committees or program areas is accomplishing. It's a great way for members to get a picture of the many services available.

25. Hold a new member reception at your conventions and meetings. Whenever your organization sponsors a meeting or educational program, use that opportunity to invite new members to attend a special reception. This reception provides an excellent opportunity to invite new members to meet representatives from the state and regional areas as well. These receptions are usually held prior to the start of the convention or educational program. In addition to talking about the organization and learning about the expectations of the newer members, it is also a chance to explain to the new members how to get the most out of their participation in the event.

26. Hold new member orientations at other organizational functions such as educational programs. The idea of getting new members to attend a special new member orientation at a special time and place is wonderful, but it isn't always possible. When your organization holds a meeting or conference in a city away from your headquarters city, invite new members from that area to come to an orientation at the meeting facility just prior to the start of the function. This allows the orientation process to be brought to the members and might also encourage the new members to attend the rest of the function. Ideas to

27. Know the warning signs of potential dropped members and do something before you send the renewal notice. Try to create a profile of a potential dropped member. Some of the characteristics of

potential drops, such as lack of participation, late payment of dues, or no response to surveys, are easy to identify. By identifying these characteristics your organization can begin contacting the members who are likely to drop long before the renewal notice is mailed.

28. Feature a service-of-the-month in your organization's magazine or newsletter. Each time an organization communicates with its members, there is an opportunity to remind them about the value that the organization is creating every day. In each issue of your main publication, try to highlight a specific service or program. You can feature your legislative activities in one issue and your educational programs in the next. Each service will be important for different groups of members so mentioning it reinforces the benefit for those members. At the same time you are reminding every member about that particular service.

29. Hold a retention contest. If your members respond well to incentives and competitions consider having a retention contest among your leaders. Divide the membership roster among the organization's board or membership committee members and assign a leader to a certain number of current members. Give prizes for the leaders who renew the most members. Help them out by giving them suggestions on how they can get reluctant members to renew.

30. When important issues come up, call some of your least active members and ask them for their opinion. It's natural for organizations to contact their leadership group when an issue of great importance arises, such as a legislative crisis, a local election, or the setting of a new standard. These issues and events are also opportunities to involve some of the organization's least active members simply by asking their opinion. When the opportunity comes up, have a list of inactive members ready to call, fax or write and ask for their opinion on how the organization should react. The fact that the organization cared enough to contact them might make the difference at renewal time.

31. Offer plenty of member-only programs and benefits. Your organization needs to constantly remind members of the exclusive benefits they get as regular, dues-paying members. Depending upon the legal requirements of your organization, there will be many services and programs that can be reserved for members. These programs need to be highlighted whenever possible.

32. Recognize members who reach milestone membership anniversaries. If members stay in your organization for five, ten, twenty, or more years, they are probably not among those who are likely to drop out. When members reach one of these membership milestones, it provides two retention opportunities for your organization. First, it is another opportunity to recognize a member or group of members for their support. Doing that just solidifies their membership even more. Also, by publicly recognizing these member milestones, you inspire other members to strive to earn the same recognition by maintaining their membership, too.

33. Sponsor recognition events or social functions for the support staff of your members' businesses. A number of groups have had success by holding functions to recognize their members' support staff. Since these support people are often the ones who control access to decision makers, it helps to have them become familiar with your organization and to think of it in a very positive way.

34. As members renew, send them a deck of cards that has the organization's logo on the back of the cards and different messages on the face of each card. This idea was used very effectively by a chamber of commerce a few years ago. It gives you an opportunity to get 52 messages across to members. It can

also be an excellent recruiting tool if nonmembers notice the unique playing cards and inquire about the organization.

35. Get members involved at some level because involved members don't drop out. Your organization needs to try to find ways to get members involved in a meaningful way without taking up too much of their time. This is especially true with newer members.

36. Have a retention committee and give it goals! There is a need for member involvement in the recruiting process and there should also be member involvement in the retention process. Your organization should have either a separate retention committee or a retention subcommittee of your membership committee. The retention committee needs to have goals and a plan of action with very definite steps that can be taken to raise the organization's retention rate. The retention committee should be assigned to develop these steps and undertake them.

37. After you send a few written invoices begin making personal calls. When members fail to respond to dues notices, it isn't always because they intend to drop out for a particular reason or because they are generally disappointed with your organization. Some members just want to know if the organization cares that they are out there. A personal call to let members know they are missed can make a big difference at renewal time. Larger organizations must depend upon their chapters and affiliates to handle some of these personalized contacts.

38. If you ask a member to volunteer to do a job, make sure it's a worthwhile job! Even the smallest volunteer jobs need to provide some sense of accomplishment for the members assigned to do them. Although there is a lot of pressure to get members involved in the organization's leadership structure, just having a title is not enough to justify the valuable time members have to give up in order to participate. Be able to pinpoint the contribution each member makes to your organization's success and be certain to mention that contribution when thanking the member.

39. Keep activity charts on members so you can identify the less active members early in the year and do something to get them involved. Members who don't participate are the most likely to drop out, so your organization should keep track of member activity as closely as possible. By doing so it is possible to identify inactive members several months before the renewal notice is sent out. By making contacts before the invoices go out, your organization shows it is watching out for all of its members.

40. Bring your lists of least active members to leadership meetings and ask their peers to contact them. It's an important sign to members when a volunteer leader takes the time to contact a member simply to say that the organization misses them and wants to be sure they are getting their money's worth.

41. Pay special attention to members who were the last to renew during the previous renewal period. Keep track each year of members who pay their dues last. These are among the most likely to drop out next year. As your organization begins identifying the non-active members it needs to contact, add these late payers to the priority list.

42. Send members note pads imprinted with your organization's logo and the date of the next annual meeting or convention. Everyone uses those self-adhering note pads to attach messages to their paperwork. This is a chance to make each time they use one of those notes a reminder of your organization's upcoming activities. Have your organization's logo and the date of your next annual meeting or convention printed on these pads and then send several to each member along with their

renewal acknowledgment. They'll see that date as well as the organization's name over and over again. A side benefit is that others in their workplace will see it too. The note just might encourage a co-worker to ask about the organization.

43. Assign an officer to contact a certain number of inactive members each month. To some members it seems as though the only time the organization contacts them is when it needs money, information, or support. This impression is strongest among the less active members. To alleviate some of this feeling ask board or membership committee members to make some random phone calls on a monthly basis to your inactive members. These courtesy calls will remind these members that the organization knows they're still out there and that their opinion is valued. Be sure to give members who are doing the calling something substantial to talk about, such as getting input on an upcoming legislative issue or asking the member's opinion on proposed new services.

44. Be sure non-members pay a substantially higher fee than members for all functions. There are two ways to make this idea support your retention efforts. First, be sure that your organization charges more for nonmembers to participate in any of your functions or to purchase any of your publications or materials. Second, be sure to remind your current members about this additional fee that nonmembers pay. This serves to remind members of the money they save each time they take advantage of your organization's services.

45. Get more than one person in your member firms to be active. Just because your chamber or association's key contact leaves a company doesn't mean that the company can't be saved as a member. Your organization needs to develop a network of contacts and support within member companies that goes beyond the firm's primary representative. This can be done by adding other company personnel to your organization's newsletter or magazine mailing list, by inviting others from member firms to attend meetings or serve on committees, or by going into the company on a periodic basis to meet with management personnel to update them on your current programs.

46. Get members to attend your convention or annual meetings. Members who attend an organization's most important function are bound to be impressed enough to renew their membership. Even if they don't attend every year, the stature of the event and the impression they get by attending will help remind them of the benefits of membership. They will certainly have made contact with many new people at the meeting and they'll want to remain a member to assure that they will see some of these people again.

47. Hold leadership training programs (such as those in the Business Skills webinar series) to give members the tools to be successful volunteers. It is important for members who do get involved to have a good experience during their involvement. Leadership training is becoming one of the best services that organizations can give their members. The skills developed through leadership training are transferred back to the members' workplaces. At renewal time, members and the people or companies they work for will remember where these skills were developed.

48. Hold regular town meetings where members can have an open forum to discuss anything they want with your organization's leaders. Here's a technique that your organization can borrow from politicians. At least once a year, hold a town meeting for members to question the organization's leaders about anything and everything pertaining to the organization. Politicians have done this for years as a way to show their constituents that they actually listen to them before determining how to represent them. It's a good message to get across to your organization's members, too.

49. Have the organization's staff put handwritten notes on correspondence sent near renewal time. People want to personalize their membership so your organization needs to help personalize it for them. Your association should make an extra effort to add a brief handwritten note to as much member correspondence as possible.

50. Send press releases to newspapers when groups of new members join. Include photos when possible. In smaller communities there are opportunities to get members' names and photographs in the local papers when they join or are given some type of an award by a prestigious organization. A group photo of a number of new members receiving their membership plaques might very well be picked up by a local paper in the community where the members live or work.

51. Provide and encourage the use of logo sheets. There are good reasons for members to want to display your organization's official logo or insignia. In trade associations and chambers of commerce, a logo can be a marketing tool for the members' businesses. In professional societies, it is a symbol that promotes peer recognition. Your organization should urge members to use the logo on their stationary and business cards, and in their advertising and promotional material. In one organization, a former member of a trade association continued to use the organization's logo in their company's print ads. When the organization informed the former member that its policies did not allow nonmembers to use their logo for any reason, they also asked the former member if it would be less expensive to renew than to reprint all of the company's ad copy and stationary. The former member checked and indeed it was less expensive to renew than to go through that process, so the company renewed its membership. The point here was to remind the company that when you stop paying dues you stop receiving the benefits of membership.

52. Be sure to acknowledge the receipt of renewal checks just as you do new member applications. Your organization makes a big deal when new members join by sending welcome letters and new member kits and by putting their names in your newsletters. Yet few organizations do anything to acknowledge current members when they renew other than sending them a canceled check! Your organization should find some way to thank members each time they renew. After all, these renewing members are making the same financial commitment as first-time members and they deserve some recognition.

53. Have outside speakers promote your organization. Don't be reluctant to ask your guest speakers to promote your organization. Prepare a very short paragraph about your organization and how its activities apply to the speaker's topic. Ask the speaker to insert the paragraph into his or her presentation at the appropriate time. The fact that someone outside of your organization mentions these activities adds credibility and prestige to the organization. This is a good way to make members feel proud of their group. Hopefully, they will feel proud enough to want to keep their membership.

54. Send congratulatory notes to members when they are recognized for service to their company, community or other organization. Your organization certainly has members who are active in other not-for-profit organizations. You also have members who perform community service. You should try to keep up with members' activities outside of your organization and, where possible, send personal notes to members who do noteworthy things in these organizations. You can also highlight their accomplishments in your newsletter. When members are recognized for these kinds of activities, it shows that the organization is interested in them as individual people or companies.

55. Reward renewal efforts as much as you do recruitment efforts. There is nothing wrong with building in an incentive or recognition program for retention efforts. Such a program can even be integrated into your recruitment incentives by giving the member who recruits a new member some form of appropriate recognition when the new member joins, and then recognizing him or her again if the member he or she sponsored last year joins for another year.

56. List those who do renew in your publication and thank them. “Welcome New Members” is a headline that many people see in their organization’s newsletters and magazines. You need to remember that when members renew, they are making the same investment in the organization that new members are. Your organization or its local affiliates also can list the members who have renewed and say thank you to them, too.

57. Use the benefits of being an international association as an additional reason to renew. Use the IAIP membership brochure that emphasizes the benefits provided by our international status. For some people, that additional scope of benefits is worth keeping.

58. Offer incentives to the first members who renew. Why not have a contest among your members to see who can send in their renewal dues the fastest? If competition is traditionally a part of your organization, give some type of incentive to those who renew before a certain date or are among the first to renew. This incentive could be a free publication, discounted registration fees for an event, or a reduction in dues.

59. Start a regular column in your publication to thank members for their involvement. One organization featured a column in their monthly newsletter that was called “Tip of the Hat”. This column’s sole purpose was to say “thank you” to those members who had helped the organization in some way since the previous newsletter. The member’s name, his or her employer or affiliation, and the specific service they had performed were all mentioned. It became the most popular feature in the newsletter because every month the members saw their name or the name of someone they knew.

60. Recognize your members as often as possible. Be sure to thank them for their participation at each and every level. One enterprising executive director at a professional society had a special sheet called a “thank-you-gram” made up to enable her to send notes of appreciation quickly with some impact. Another executive had a note pad made up with a picture of a bloodhound on it along with the words, “Just trying to track you down to say thanks”. It made saying thank you quick, easy and humorous. Whether you do it formally or informally, it pays to express appreciation to members whenever possible.

69. Feature a “member of the month” in your publication. Highlighting an individual member on a regular basis is one way to assure that members who are featured will renew, as well as getting members who would like to be featured to renew. Be sure that the “members of the month” aren’t all current or past organization leaders. It’s important to highlight members who do nothing other than support the organization by paying their dues on time and participating at a level that is comfortable for them.

70. When members are elected or appointed to a leadership position, send a note of congratulations to their supervisors. In all organizations, especially in professional societies, some members have to justify the amount of time and money that is spent being a member of and participating in the organizations. Whenever possible and appropriate, your organization can send a note to the supervisors of those

members who assume leadership roles in the organization. This note should recognize the member and tell the supervisor that his or her employee's involvement in your organization is accomplishing three things. It brings honor and recognition to the company or institution for which that member works, it helps the organization make a bigger contribution to the industry or profession or community, and it helps develop leadership skills in the member (who brings these enhanced skills back into the employing company or institution).

71. Get testimonials from prominent nonmembers (politicians, etc.). Members like to hear about their organization from people outside of the organization. If the only time your organization's name is ever mentioned to a member is by the organization itself, it can cause the member to wonder about the impact and effectiveness of the organization. If you get a prominent person from outside of the organization to mention the group and its work, it will send positive signals to members and instill a sense of pride about their membership. This can be a big plus at renewal time.

72. Give members a special ribbon to wear. Identifying newer members by having them wear a special ribbon or name tag does several positive things. It lets the new members feel special and it reinforces for them the fact that joining was a good idea since there are others who have the same designation. Most importantly, it allows the organization's leaders to spot new members and try to make them feel welcome. One organization has a policy that no two officers talk to each other during a social function if there are any new members in attendance.

73. Send members a membership plaque, certificate or card each year. While most organizations send some form of membership identification to members when they first join it is just as important to send these symbols of membership to members as they renew. It is worth sending these identification pieces to members each time they renew in order to reinforce the organization's role in their businesses and careers.

74. List first-time renewals in a special section of your publication. In addition to giving special recognition to new members, list those who are renewing for this first time in a special section of your organization's newsletter or magazine. This will remind these members that the decision they made a year ago to join the organization was a good decision. It will also remind them that the organization is glad to have them back again for a second year.

75. Refer to your annual fees investments rather than dues. Referring to your organization's membership fees as an investment will create an image that your organization isn't spending the members' dues but rather is investing it in programs and services that bring value to the members.

76. Make it as easy as possible for members to go through the renewal process. Every extra step that members must take in order to renew is one more chance for them to reconsider the membership itself. If you understand the concept of the lifetime value of a member, then the small amount of money spent to provide a return envelope is a good investment in the renewal process.

77. Send second or third renewal notices via a personal email. Sometimes the format of a member communication is almost as important as the message. Show urgency and show the lengths to which your organization will go to assure that the members don't lose their valuable membership benefits.

78. Send members who have just dropped their membership a newsletter that only has a copy on the front and back covers. Inside put a message that tells the members what they would be reading about

right now if they had renewed on time. Your organization's publications are among its most valuable membership benefits. When members drop out, they need to be reminded that they are losing these valuable benefits forever. By sending one of these publications with nothing in it except the table of contents listing all of the valuable information the former member isn't getting, you graphically describe the lost benefit. In corporate membership organizations, this technique can be effective because more than one person in a company is usually getting the publication. When these secondary subscribers find out they are no longer going to be getting the publications, they might contact the decision maker and ask that person to reconsider and renew the company's membership.

79. Give discounts for members who renew early. One of the hard parts of retention is trying to figure out who among those who are late renewing is really a potential non-renewing member and who is just putting their renewal off. One way to help resolve this problem is to give some sort of small discount for members who renew early. Your organization's financial managers need to work out the appropriate discount and accounting methods, but having the early renewal money in interest-bearing accounts may more than offset any discount given. In addition to the financial rewards of your organization, there is the main benefit of being able to identify the organization's most likely drops earlier in the renewal process.

80. Send next year's membership renewal form already filled out and ask your members to make any necessary corrections and sign it. In sales and marketing terminology this technique is known as an "assumed close" since it involves telling the member that your organization already knows that they are going to renew. You just want to be sure you have the correct information.

81. Send renewal notices that look like formal invitations. When people or companies begin to take their membership for granted, there is always the chance that renewing is not high on their priority list. The invitation technique reminds the member that membership in your organization is not automatic and in fact is an honor. It is just human nature to prefer being invited to participate rather than being billed for it.

82. Have your president send a pre-invoice letter on his or her letterhead a few weeks before the invoice is mailed. It is common for organizations to enclose a year-end report or letter from the president with their renewal notices. This is usually done to remind members of all of the value they received during the past year and to tell them what they can expect in the future. By sending the report or letter prior to the invoice you alert members that the invoice is coming and raise their anticipation level and need to respond. This usually raises the number of early renewals, giving the organization a chance to earn interest on the money that much sooner. Having the letter on the stationery of your volunteer leader adds to the credibility of the message and increase the chances it will be opened promptly.

83. Send a card with wording down one side that says, "Here's our side of the story" and list your member benefits. On the other side have an empty space and above it say "We'd like to hear yours." This technique is really a last resort. This should be sent just before the member has to actually be dropped from your organization's roster. Sending this type of card can be used to gather useful information about why members drop and to remind them one more time about all of your organization's programs and activities. It also presents the members with one last chance to reconsider their decision to leave.

84. Remind members how much money they saved by participating in programs at the member rate rather than the nonmember rate. This is another example of how important it is to track the involvement of your members. One large technical society which keeps careful records on member involvement attaches a brief note to their members' renewal notices. It indicates how much money the member saved during the past year by attending meetings and purchasing material at the member discount rate. In many cases their savings were equal to or greater than their annual dues.

85. Send a mock ledger sheet listing all of the benefits you've credited to your members' accounts this year. Encourage your members to think of their membership on terms of an investment and to think of the membership benefits as their return on that investment. Make up a statement that looks like a ledger sheet and show members all of the benefits they have been getting throughout the year. When balanced against their dues payment, the return on their investment will be substantial!

86. Bring a list of names of non-renewing members to board and membership committees leadership meetings. Create a "Ten Most Wanted" list. Every member is equally valued, but in many instances there are specific members whose absence would hurt the organization dramatically. Some companies have a bigger impact in terms of financial support (in trade associations), in terms of prestige (with leading professionals in societies), or in terms of influence by companies with ties to local government (in chambers of commerce). Once your organization pinpoints these people or companies, you can get your leadership involved in personal contact to make sure they renew each year.

87. Send members a pledge card and ask them to fill it out with the name of a dropped member they'll pledge to bring back. Send a list of people who haven't renewed to those who have renewed and ask them to contact someone they know on the list to seek their renewal. Have the member tell you who they are going to contact and get that name back to your organization's headquarters. Keep track of those who eventually renew and be sure to thank the member who contacted them.

88. Do exit interviews with dropped members. Why guess about why members are leaving? Your organization should be able to review a list of dropped members and identify why they left. "Failure to pay dues" is not an adequate reason. The whole point of exit interviews is to determine why they didn't pay their dues!

89. Use the renewal invoice to promote other programs. You can put the date of you annual meeting or convention right on the renewal notice along with a thank you message to your members. This eliminates the need for a separate insert to promote the meeting and allows members to handle just one piece of paper while getting several messages.

90. Do everything you can to be one of the reasons why your members want to renew. For many members, the members and leaders are perceived to be the association, chamber or society to which they belong. If they perceive that they have a group of dedicated, qualified staff and volunteer leaders, they'll probably be back. (This idea applies to every step in the retention process!)

This list of *101 Ways to Keep Your Members* was reprinted with permission from the author Mark Levin, CAE, CSP. This list is featured in his book *Membership Development: 101 Ways to Get and Keep Your Members*! For over 25 years, Mark Levin, CAE, CSP has been helping not-for-profit organizations throughout the world master their most basic challenge – getting, and keeping, members. When Mark talks (or writes) about membership development, he speaks with the voice of experience. In addition, tens of thousands of not-for-profit leaders have attended his public seminars on Membership Development and Leading the Organization. A graduate of the University of Maryland, Mark currently serves as the Executive Vice President of the Chain Link Fence Manufacturers Institute.