

**MRPA Fitness & Wellness Section Notes**  
**January 9, 2009**  
**10:00am**  
**New Brighton**

**Attendance:**

Michelle Snider	MRPA Representative
Patrice Atkinson	New Brighton
Drew Wurst	Shoreview
Scott Berggren	Crystal
Carrie Anderson	New Ulm
Jen Graham	Inver Grove
Amy Cary	Inver Grove
Mark Daly	Fridley
Jason West	New Brighton
Nancy Lundberg	USTA Northern
Kelly Hansen	Burnsville
Laura McNiff	Stillwater River Valley Athletic Club
Jodi Sarles	Chanhassen
Pam Schmitz	Robbinsdale
Jay Grammond	ISD 728 Community Ed

**1. Agenda:**

Meeting was called to order by Patrice Atkinson at 10:05am.

**2. Welcome and Introductions** - Members introduced themselves.

**3. Approval of Agenda** - Agenda was Approved

**4. Approval of the Minutes** - Minutes were approved.

**5. Sizzling Topic: Membership retention/appreciation and the competitiveness it brings:**

Patrice handed out packet of tips for implementing successful member retention.

The group had discussion on the following

-Be sure to acknowledge renewals – send thanks you cards to the members when they renew the membership, have a appreciation day for members, Holiday parties, pool night w/movie, special events to show that you appreciation the members.

-USTA brings in lunch and works with local sub shop

-Community centers how to balance the daily's vs. members balance

-Guest pass programs work well to get new customers; members get them quarterly to hand out to friends.

- Water bottle program – members who do so many programs/classes get a water bottle or you can pick different prizes each month.

-Newsletter to members

Undated class schedules

Send them electronic

Have a monthly health article

Have a monthly health recipe

- Have a special speaker come in to talk about a health/wellness related topic
- Survey you members that are not attending on a regular basis to find out why they are not coming and maybe there is something you can do to help that member come more often so you can retain them as a member.

-Join into others programs, like 10,000 steps incorporate these into your programs.

Other options -

- Have a designated new member contact group

- Recognize current members for sponsoring new members

**6. Discussion roundtable or workshop ideas**

- a. Youth health and wellness round table sign up was passed around.

**7. MRPA Updates – USSSA Hall of Fame day Jan 16**

**8. Step up to Health Update/Active Living MN Update: Michelle Snider**

Michelle informed us that they are meeting Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>, and are continuing discussions with Blue Cross Blue Shield to use DO campaign.

**9. Section Liaison updates – looking for (Aquatics, Programs, Admin)**

**11. Facility Tour - People took tour of facility**

## **EIGHT TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING A SUCCESSFUL MEMBER RETENTION PROGRAM**

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1. Create a synergic relationship between the personal training and programming departments and the fitness manager.
2. Proactively ask the members how they're doing and what you can do to better serve them.
3. Give out a team bonus to reward employees for an increase in the retention rate.
4. Offer a frequent user program to your members to encourage them to attend group exercise classes regularly, visit the day spa or buy drinks at the juice bar.
5. Keep your sales and customer service teams separate by hiring employees to service members during and after a sale.
6. Front-line employees, who are often the first point of contact for members, need to be trained to read between the lines and be empowered to help solve a member's problem.
7. Rather than e-mailing or mailing a member survey, ask your front-desk staff to ask the members a few questions, record their answers and look for ways to actively address their suggestions.
8. Hire sales and service team members who have good listening skills, a sense of empathy, look people in the eye and have a strong handshake.

Source: Bob Esquerre, Esquerre Fitness Group

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## **MEMBER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION TIPS**

1. Start the year off right. Have a specific, written, aggressive and well-communicated retention plan in place.
2. Create an "activity" or "participation" field on each member's record in your database. Keep track of contacts the member makes (attending meetings, ordering publications, etc.) Use this information to customize your service to members.
3. Be sure to acknowledge renewals. Don't let a canceled check or credit card statement be your members' only notification that they've renewed.
4. Think about what information you need to be able to get to effectively manage your retention efforts. Talk to the person or people who can help you get the information you want.
5. Send a "thanks for renewing" letter or card when someone in your squadron renews their membership.

6. As new members join, use email to immediately acknowledge their applications and dues payments. Don't wait until the New Members Kit is sent.
7. Have a "congratulations on joining" message go to new members from someone with whom they have some affinity. This could be another member located near them or someone in the specialty area, etc. Be sure it is someone other than the organization's top staff or elected officer.
8. Go back and review the presentations made at your organization's recent annual meetings or conventions. Reprint some of the best ones and send them to members who have joined since the presentation was made. Tell them this is the quality of programming they'll get if they come to your next event.
9. If it is geographically feasible, hold a new member orientation where new members are invited to meet organizational leaders and learn more about the organization. Doing group orientations creates a feeling among new members that they made a good decision in joining because they see other who made the same decision.
10. When members drop out, use some sort of exit interview (via email, mail or phone) to try to determine their reason(s) for leaving. You might learn something that can help you avoid losing other members for the same reason and it gives you one last chance to get the member to reconsider dropping.
11. If you think that your retention problems are unique to your organization, think again. Many groups are struggling with retention right now. Contact your counterpart in another similar (but not competing) organization and ask what he/she is doing to increase member retention.
12. Check your squadron/wing calendar for the rest of the year and identify opportunities to set up a recruiting booth.
13. Consider giving some sort of special incentive to members if they renew early in the retention cycle.
14. Pick a theme that is unique to your squadron, wing or CAP as a whole. Use the theme throughout the year in all promotions, correspondence, conferences, etc. These themes create a sense of consistency and shared purpose among members.
15. Identify your most at-risk members. Target them for additional contacts during the program year.
16. Do a member survey but just survey your least active members. By asking their opinion you are actually getting them "involved" in the CAP. It will come back to help you at retention time.

17. Make sure that when you take a member survey you find some way to “close the loop” and let the respondents know that you listened. Tell them what you’ll be doing with the input they gave on the survey.
18. Consider giving retention incentives the same way many organizations give recruitment incentives.
19. Get members involved in focus groups via telephone groups. It’s not as good as getting them to actually sit down and give you their opinion but there is a lot better chance of getting them to participate.
20. Not enough activity is one of the most frequently given reasons for dropping membership. Pre-empt the excuse by getting new members involved as soon as possible and keep them busy! They make good greeters at the meetings because they get to meet all of the current members as they enter.
21. Use email or faxes to tell members of squadron or wing successes. Don’t wait until the next regularly-scheduled publication. Tell members that details will be in the publication.
22. Statistics don’t tell the whole story but they do help identify some trends and can help keep your retention program on track. Each month look at retention figures in three ways: year to date overall retention; retention this month vs. one year ago; and retention vs. year-end projections.
23. Have a designated New Member Contact group. The only job they have is to contact new members immediately after they join. The message to the new member should be “Congratulations on making a good choice,” not “Do you want to serve on a committee?”
24. If you recognize current members for sponsoring new members, why not give additional recognition to members when the member they sponsored renews for the first time? It raises the chances of getting that first renewal and it keeps the sponsor involved in membership.
25. Develop a New Member Newsletter, a quarterly publication that members get only during their first year of membership. In it, give some additional background on organizational information that is sent to all members.
26. Create a New Member section on your web site. Use the section to promote upcoming activities and encourage new member involvement.
27. Send a monthly email to members entitled “The Month in Review”. Summarize the activities and accomplishments for that month and identify why those activities are important to members.

28. If you have a Member Services display at meetings, include an on-site connection to the organization's web site so people can get more information on programs, products, and services right there.
29. Ask new members to arrive early to their first meeting. Get leaders to greet them and ask the new members some questions that will allow the organization to better understand each member's needs.
30. Put together a list of your "Most Wanted" delinquent or recently dropped members. Bring the list to a leadership meeting (a Board meeting, etc.) and ask leaders to make personal appeals to these people to ask them to reconsider and join for another year.
31. In addition to new members and inactive members, other at-risk members are those who renewed very late in the renewal process last year. Many of these late renewals had some reservations about renewing. Don't wait for that to happen again this year. Identify these members and make some special contact with them during the program year-especially just before sending the next renewal notice.
32. Have a special incentive for the first year members to attend your annual meeting. When these newer members see the energy and scope of the organizations at these functions they are certain to be convinced that joining was a good thing to do and that staying makes sense.
33. At the end of a specified period of time (i.e. six months after a member joins) send a "How Are We Doing?" survey. Find out if your organization is meeting members' expectations long before they start getting renewal notices.
34. Send new members a list of ways to "network" effectively at your organization's meetings. Some people are a little uncomfortable attending meetings where they don't know many others, and these networking tips will help them get the most out of their participation (and will encourage them to come back).
35. Have a renewal contest. Each member who renews by a certain date qualifies for a drawing for a special prize.
36. Send a special letter from the squadron commander to first time renewals. Tell them how glad the squadron is to have (apparently) kept its promise to provide worthwhile programs and services during the first year.
37. Pay attention to "milestone members" – members that are reaching milestone anniversaries like their 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, etc. Recognize these members publicly. It will impress other members and send the signal that when they reach these milestones they will get similar recognition.

38. Allow members as many options as possible when ordering publications, registering for meetings, etc. Allow fax, email and telephone purchases and registration in addition to the forms you use.
39. Develop a system of “mentoring” where an experienced member is assigned to stay in touch with a new member throughout member’s first year.
40. If your squadron or wing has a web site, add a “recognition page” to your site. Have a link on the home page that connects to it. Highlight the link by saying something like “Click here to meet the heroes of our organization.” Find as many reasons as possible to add names to the page.
41. In order to get more members to participate in the organization’s volunteer structure, try to “think small.” To get people started in leadership you have to break down some of the big jobs into smaller, less time-consuming jobs. In order to get members involved, you first have to get them engaged.
42. One way to keep former officers/leaders active (and to keep their membership) is to ask them to serve as liaisons to other affiliated and partner organizations. It allows them to keep a leadership role without having to go back “through the chairs” again.
43. Create a chat room via your organization’s web site that is just for people who are new to CAP. Let them talk with others who are facing the same challenges.
44. Everyone knows that “involved” members don’t drop out. To get more members involved, be sure to set them up to be successful in their leadership roles, whatever those roles may be. Provide written guidelines for all volunteer positions.
45. Acknowledge renewals just as quickly as you acknowledge new member applications. Renewing members are paying just as much as the new ones (sometimes more) and they deserve the same reassurance that their payment has been received.
46. Don’t underestimate the value of CAP’s image when it comes to retaining members. Make sure that there is some form of public relations or publicity effort going on in your squadron or wing. Members want to hear about CAP other than when the organization itself is communicating with them.
47. Try to let members know from the very start that they are valued as members rather than as numbers. Somehow all members to indicate their preferred method of communication (mail-fax-email).
48. Copy the old ‘Member Get A Member’ theme that many groups use for membership recruitment drives, and use that theme for retention. Have a “Member Renew A Member” drive, where every member commits to getting another member to renew.

49. Create a “problem-solving” chart. Determine what problems the organization can help members solve and then identify the programs/products/services you have to help members in those areas.
50. Publish a summary of important highlights from your meetings/conferences on your organization’s web site. This allows those who missed the program to feel they still got some current information from the program without having to wait until a summary comes out in the newsletter/magazine.
51. Another way to promote meeting attendance (and retention) is to have an interview with your featured speaker(s) on your web site or in your newsletter/magazine *prior* to the program or event.
52. Don’t be afraid to use ideas from other organizations. Find out what is working for other organizations and adapt some of those techniques to your organization. Send a summary of these ideas to your squadrons.
53. Keep a file of members who have dropped in the past few years. Send them a letter that says “We want you back!” Highlight those benefit and services that your organization has developed since they left.
54. In order to solidify the support of key corporate members, try to arrange “Executive Briefings” with the top management of these companies. It increases your organization’s exposure within the company and helps assure that someone in the firm will want to keep its membership even if there are changes in some of the management positions.
55. Don’t always refer to membership dues- start calling it a Membership Investment. The word investment leads people to assume there will be a return, and that’s just what they should expect.
56. Identify three people you know who are successful in membership retention. Get on their mailing lists and see how they communicate with their members. Borrow and adapt ideas that could work for you.
57. Randomly select members to be “Retention Partners.” Their main job during the year is to communicate with their partners and make sure that they renew during the next cycle.
58. Develop a news release document that shows members how they can publicize the fact that they are their company/institution has become a member of CAP. In some communities, especially smaller ones, local media pick up news releases about the activities of local businesses, institutions, and individuals.
59. When a “hot” issue comes up, take an email or telephone survey of some of your least active members. They’ll give you some insight regarding the importance of the issue to your members and they’ll remember (at renewal time) that you asked their opinion.

60. Don't underestimate the use of testimonials in your retention efforts. Use the credibility of your members to convince other to stay. Get quotes from a representative cross section of your membership that explain what value they've received from their membership. Put them on your web site, or in a retention brochure.
61. Immediately after your annual meeting, have some of the attendees send a "You should have been there" letter or email to members who didn't attend.
62. New Member Orientations are important in retention because they get the membership off to a good, solid start. If your organization is geographically small enough, visit members at their offices and do some type of personal orientation.
63. Fall is the time to start planning your spring retention activities. Make sure everything is lined up and all staff and members who will be involved in those activities are briefed before the summer vacation period hampers your communications efforts.
64. To attract more members to your upcoming conference or meeting, send an email from the featured speaker that says "I'm looking forward to meeting you at the conference".
65. Keep an eye on the key trade and community publications that report on the activities of people and businesses in your area or field. Send congratulatory notes to members when they are recognized for service to their companies, communities or other volunteer organizations.
66. Don't let ideas that have worked for some of your squadrons (within your wing) go unreported to others. Send a regular (i.e. monthly) newsletter to squadrons to share successes from other squadrons.
67. Create a brochure that shows the value of volunteering. Let your members know that involvement has its rewards, as well as challenges. One organization titled their brochure "What's In It for You To Get Involved."
68. Make up a mock "While You Were Out" memo and send it to delinquent members. Have a message that says that the organization's President called and wants to know why their renewal form hasn't been received.
69. Instead of concentrating on getting members involved, concentrate on getting members "engaged". We have a tendency to equate involvement with leadership, and only a small percentage of members will ever be involved at that level. Instead, try get every member to participate in any way at all, including answering surveys, responding to emails, etc.
70. Many organizations have a "Welcome New Members" section on their web sites or in their publications. Consider doing the same for members when they renew, at least for that critical first renewal.

71. Identify your least active members. Bring that list to your leadership meetings at the squadron or wing level. Let your leaders contact the members with whom they have some affiliation or influence.
72. After you've tried everything else to get members to renew, have a member (peer) send a note or email that says "I just learned that you've dropped your membership. I hope this isn't true. Call me."
73. Do an annual cleanup of your membership records. Be sure to remove anyone whose dues are not current. Don't cheat other members by giving the same benefits to those who haven't paid.
74. Membership retention is a year-round job, but many organizations cut back on activities during the summer months. Fill in this void by using email to keep members "engaged" even if they are not physically involved. Use the summer months to promote fall programs and activities.
75. Use your publication or web site to recognize "members of the month." It not only gives those recognized a lift, it gets others thinking that maybe they'll have a chance to be a member of the month (if they retain their membership!).
76. In professional societies and other organizations, send congratulations to members' supervisors upon member's election/appointment to a leadership position in your organization.
77. Make sure that new members are easily identifiable at functions. Be sure to get officers and membership committee members to look for the special identification on new member badges, etc. and to seek them out for inclusion in the activities.
78. Do everything possible to make members' involvement in leadership positions a positive experience. Provide leadership training for volunteers at every level of the organization. Set your members up for success.
79. Pick a couple of "representative" dropped members and actually visit them and do exit interviews. Find out why they left and see if the information you get can help save some other members. Also, ask these members once again to reconsider and renew their membership.
80. At you annual wing conference, hold a "Town Meeting" where CAP leaders answer questions from members. It shows that the leadership really cares about the concerns of members and is willing to listen to any suggestions for improving the organization.
81. Safety is a key concern to everyone in today's society, especially CAP. Remind your members of the steps your squadron takes to make meeting and events safe, and to keep electronic communications secure.

82. Publish the results of your member surveys. It keeps members informed and they get to see what happens to their ideas.
83. Focus groups are an excellent way to get members engaged in any organization and to gain important information. Select a group of your less active members and get them together. By having them in a focus group setting there is no question about whether or not CAP is listening to them.
84. Many people actually prefer communicating with the organization electronically. Today's "chat room" technology allows organizations to get members engaged.
85. Sometimes we make the assumption that members who have been in for a long time will always be in. That isn't necessarily true. Focus good member service on ALL members regardless of how long they have been in CAP. When CAP loses a long time member, a great deal of experience goes with them!
86. You know that first year members are among your most at-risk members, so have a plan of action ready to deal with that fact. Be able to identify at least 3-4 contacts you will have with first year members above and beyond the normal contacts you have with all members.
87. One way to get members feeling comfortable with your organization is to offer many options (fax, email, etc.) as possible for communicating with your organization, whether to order a publication, to register for a conference, to renew memberships, etc.
88. Even former leaders need some attention to keep them as members. One way to keep these people engaged after they have been through their leadership positions is by asking them to write articles for your publications.
89. Interview key industry/community leaders by telephone and then use those interviews as articles in your newsletter. It's easier than trying to get actual interviews. Be sure to send the leaders copies of the article.
90. Develop a publication that members can take (or send) to their employers that shows the benefits to the company when they support their employees' active membership in CAP.
91. Looking for some community service projects to help broaden CAP's exposure in your local area? Contact your neighborhood high schools. Many of them now require students to do community service in order to graduate, and they make great partners for your group. It also raises your profile (and member awareness) in your community.
92. Get on the mailing list of "in-house" publications of key employer organizations. When members are noted on any accomplishments within their firms, send them a congratulatory note. They'll be impressed that you noticed.

93. If your organization does any type of lobbying, advocacy, or other governmental interaction, try to get a public official to give a testimonial to your organization's effectiveness. It impresses members and helps retention.
94. The internet has made almost all organizations "international" to some extent. Consider making some or all of your publications and information available in other languages. Some of your members who have English as a second language will appreciate the effort to make your organization more inclusive.
95. Establish a standard for member response (i.e. returning all phone calls within three hours). Communicate the policy to members and show them you're committed to effective service.
96. Develop a "Congratulations" message you can send to members who take on leadership roles at the squadron level. Let them know the wing/region/national is ready to help them in any way possible.
97. When recruiting new members, identify **why** they joined – what specific program or service attracted them to CAP. Take note of that and contact the members when something in their specific area of interest is coming up. It shows you paid attention when they joined and are trying to customize your member service.
98. Determine your cost of recruiting one member and compare that to the cost of keeping one member. Most organizations spend far more on membership recruitment than membership retention. Is that always the most efficient way to spend your membership dollars?
99. Find newspaper and magazine articles that mention your organization in a favorable way and send copies of the articles to your members with a note that says "In case you missed it..."
100. Keep a "samples" drawer or file filled with marketing and solicitation materials you receive from other organizations and businesses. When something catches your attention in a positive, note that, and when you're ready to produce new membership materials see if you can adapt that idea to your organization.
101. Keep the "member" in membership. Find ways to get current members (not just leaders) involved in membership retention. Sometimes it's easier for volunteers to ask a member to stay than it is to ask someone to join.
102. With the traditional welcome letter, send members a "thank you" note.
103. When using testimonials, include some from members who aren't active in the Section, but still feel membership is valuable.
104. Identify and recognize members with the most tenure.

105. Identify at least four specific contacts to make with first-year members that are above and beyond the norm.
106. Do an e-mail survey of important questions and issues as they arise.
107. Color code correspondence so members can quickly identify types of information.
108. Institute a "thank you" column in your Section newsletter and Web site to recognize members for involvement and leadership.
109. Keep experienced members active through targeted involvement.
110. During Section functions, suggest that officers look for new members and spend some time with them. Make sure new members nametags indicate their status.
111. Give members "points" when they participate in any activity.
112. Send mini-surveys that can be done quickly (via fax or e-mail)
113. Develop a telephone orientation program for new members.
114. When a new member joins, e-mail congratulations from a Section leader.
115. Increase meeting attendance by featuring an interview with the meeting's featured speaker in the Section newsletter and/or Web site, before the meeting.
116. List new members on the Section Web site.