

This member-related e-mail is a service offered to you as an Academy Member.

Date: September 13, 2007

To: State Ophthalmology Society

- Presidents
- Presidents-Elect
- Membership Chairs
- Councilors/Alternate Councilors
- Executive Directors

From: Cynthia Bradford, MD, Secretary for State Affairs
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Re: State Society Membership Development

Over the past few years, state societies have identified membership as a primary concern and have sought input and support for their membership development efforts. The Secretariat for State Affairs hopes to work with societies to identify tools and resources that might assist in membership recruitment and retention efforts. To this end, over the coming months we will periodically send you tips and ideas on how you can improve membership, and we will highlight state society efforts, such as those by the **Michigan** and **Indiana** societies listed below. Below is the first in the series of these tips and ideas that you might want to adapt for use in your society's membership development program.

Membership Committee Chair

If you do not already have someone in place, we encourage your society leadership to appoint a Membership Chair who will focus on the society's membership recruitment and retention program in cooperation with the society executive director. Additionally, all societies should have a membership development plan that de. In response to the 2007 State Organizational Survey, only 21 of the 49 responding societies indicated that they had a plan in place.

Developing a Relationship Management Plan

To be truly effective, associations cannot view their membership recruitment and retention efforts as limited, once yearly campaigns marked by distribution of the membership packet and dues bill. Association leaders must reorient their thinking to include membership recruitment and membership retention components in each of the society's activities, to: A) over the course of time, convince nonmembers that joining your society would be to their benefit; and B) to continually remind members that it is to their benefit to remain members of the society.

As Membership Chair, President or Executive Director of your society, consider that the effort to get a non-member to join the society is actually quite like a courtship: it

requires constant attention, and lots of communication to give the object of your interest every opportunity to get to know the Society. This courtship is a period of guided discovery, wherein you give the prospective member time to develop trust in the organization, so that the prospective member ultimately makes a commitment to the organization (i.e., joins!). Similarly, the effort to get a current member to renew each year can be likened to maintaining a marriage – you can't take the member for granted; must communicate well and often; and the relationship must evolve over time as the member's circumstances change.

In developing your membership plan, think of it more as a Relationship Management Plan. With respect to recruitment, you should develop a **Prospect Relationship Management Process** that is essentially a systematic courtship of the prospective member. Throughout this courtship you will offer information about your organization in small manageable bites; complimentary services as a sample of what the society offers, opportunities to interact with society members during social events or meetings, testimonials from members about what they've gained by joining the society, and more.

Similarly, your retention efforts should include a **Member Relationship Management Process**. In this case, you will develop a system in which you regularly remind the *member* of the variety of programs and services the society has to offer, opportunities to get more involved via committee participation, or other volunteer activities, etc. Even your most committed members should be reminded of all that the society offers them, and hopefully this will make them even more willing to share the message among prospective members. The **Tennessee Academy of Ophthalmology** and the **New York State Ophthalmological Society** (NYSOS) do an excellent job of summarizing the work of their societies in their annual reports, reminding their members all that the society does on behalf of Eye M.D.s and patients, and highlighting the value that membership in NYSOS might bring to the prospective member.

Examples of State Society Relationship Management Processes

The **Michigan Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons** (MSEPS) uses the concept of a Prospect Relationship Management Process in developing its relationship with residents:

- Ophthalmology residents attend the MSEPS educational meetings free, and their attendance is promoted by the residency program directors.
- MSEPS has a resident research competition at its annual meeting. The best papers from each residency program's annual resident day are presented during the MSEPS summer meeting, with a cash prize and complimentary housing for the participant.
- MSEPS holds a Resident Advocacy Program with interested residency programs.
- MSEPS holds a resident welcome party in July/August, providing free food and drink to attendees.
- Residents are invited to MSEPS' Young Ophthalmologist events, such as Detroit Tigers game, bowling, bumper cars, etc) during the year.
- MSEPS participates in the Academy's Advocacy Ambassador Program, and sponsored four residents in 2007

The **Indiana Academy of Ophthalmology** (IAO) utilizes the Member Relationship Management Process model in the context of its member newsletters, "Eyeball to Eyeball" and "Political Action Committee Newsletter."

- Eyeball to Eyeball - This newsletter, distributed via email or fax, is produced on an

as-needed basis, which means that the newsletter may be distributed as often as 3 times per month. The newsletter includes announcements about upcoming programs, updates on key coding issues, updates on Medicare issues, and information on member benefits. The newsletter is concise, and always contains useful information for the member.

- PAC Newsletter - the objective of this newsletter is to generate more interest/excitement among members about the IAO PAC and state advocacy. All IAO members along with non-members receive the newsletter, which has generated very positive feedback by way of many compliments from members and best of all, each newsletter generates new contributions to the society's PAC, and **was an important factor towards increasing PAC contributions by more than 45% in 2006**. Most importantly, the newsletter has been able to demonstrate to members and non-members that the society is not a one-issue organization, rather that the IAO has its finger on the pulse of a number of legislative and regulatory issues that are important to Indiana ophthalmologists.