

Focus on Involvement

Smart Strategies

For Keeping Members Involved in Your Club



PRESIDENT'S
*Retention
Campaign*





Retention Clinics Created for You

The President's Retention Campaign was developed to keep our quality club members interested and engaged. The campaign focuses on the three primary threats to retention and offers proven solutions to address these challenges. The President's Retention Campaign will help make your year as club president more successful and rewarding.

Research has shown that 50% of our new members drop out within the first three years. Fortunately, we know the main reasons why:

- Lengthy/boring meetings
- Club cliques and politics
- Lack of meaningful involvement

The Retention Clinics spotlight each of these challenges individually, helping you uncover weaknesses in your club and develop a plan. Each Retention Clinic will follow the same simple formula for identifying and solving the challenges:

- **LOOK** closely at the current state of your club
- **LISTEN** to input from fellow club members
- **LEARN** where problem areas exist
- **RESPOND** by implementing appropriate changes

This evaluation and implementation process is simple and not time-consuming. The benefits to your club will be well worth your efforts.

FIX IT FAST! Throughout the Retention Clinics, **FIX IT FAST!** features quick tips that are easily implemented. These ideas can be used on their own or to supplement more dramatic changes.

Building a Support System

As you go through this process, it will be helpful for you to share ideas, comments or concerns with other club presidents. You can contact other presidents in your district, region, or zone and suggest a brainstorming session. There is also help available via the Internet at the Club President Connection on the association's Web site (www.lionsclubs.org). The Club President Connection allows you to network with club presidents from around the globe. It is an excellent opportunity to learn what challenges others have faced and what solutions worked for them.

Retention Challenge

Lack of meaningful involvement is one of the primary reasons members drop out of Lions clubs.

People join a Lions club for many reasons, but chief among them is to volunteer their time and help those in need. If these members are not given the experience they are looking for, and don't

feel that their contributions are needed or valued, they will look elsewhere for an outlet to volunteer.



LOOK at Your Club

Taking the time to examine your club and honestly assessing its current status is the key to successfully making changes. Without pinpointing the areas that need attention, you might be fixing a problem that doesn't exist and ignoring a potential trouble spot. It is helpful to write down your observations as you undertake this process.

Begin by observing your club closely:

- Does your club warmly welcome new members?
- Does your club involve new members in activities immediately?
- Are “important” activities and responsibilities “reserved” for certain members?
- Have club members held the same committee positions for a number of years?

- Do you encourage members to actively voice their opinions?
- Do you encourage members to become involved in activities that interest them?
- Do you know your members' interests and skills?
- Are all your members actively involved in your club?
- Are club members excited and enthusiastic when performing their duties?
- Do any of your members seem bored or restless?
- Has attendance at your meetings dropped?
- Has participation during your service activities dropped?

LISTEN to Input from Members

It is a good idea to enlist the help of several club members whose opinions you trust, or even your entire membership, to help with the evaluation process. To assist you in soliciting member input, a questionnaire is provided in the back of this publication.



FIX IT FAST! Share Your Enthusiasm – Attitude is infectious. How you feel about making positive changes to your club will affect how members respond. Be upbeat and enthusiastic -- your members will be motivated to support your efforts.

LEARN Where Problem Areas Exist

Study your answers and the surveys from other members. Note the following:

- What trends do you see?
- Which areas need attention?

- Were you surprised at the responses you received?
- Was there a big difference between your assessment of your club meetings and your fellow members' assessments?

After examining feedback, decide which areas need attention. Use your best judgment when evaluating results. Certainly, if you notice a recurrence of the same comment, you should look for strategies which will solve that particular problem. You might find that there are areas where you thought the club excelled that members think otherwise. Depending on answers received, perhaps all that is needed are a few small changes. However, there may be situations where some members of your club feel strongly one way, and others feel strongly another way. In these situations, you must consider what will be best for the club. If your club is trying to attract new, younger members, pay particular attention to the comments of those current members who are in the same demographic group you are trying to reach.

Your club members' involvement in this process doesn't have to stop with the evaluation. Report your findings and the changes you will make to improve your club. Enlist member enthusiasm and support. This is a great way to make club members feel valued and involved.

RESPOND by Making Appropriate Changes

It isn't hard to involve members (especially enthusiastic new recruits!) in your club's activities. After all, they joined your club to participate and give back to their community. However, the key is to offer meaningful involvement opportunities for all members, and keep their participation at a comfortable level for them.

Good, thorough communication will be very helpful as you keep members actively involved in your club. Ask them about their skills, interests and goals, follow up with them periodically to make sure they are getting the experiences they want and encourage them to seek new opportunities for service.



A great way to uncover your members' interests, skills and goals is to have them complete a Skills and Interest Form (included in this publication). You will find this survey extremely helpful for new members and also valuable for long-term members whose interests and skills may have changed over time. If the size of your club membership permits, consider meeting with members personally to discuss their input on the form. Certainly, plan on meeting with new members after they have completed the form. Taking the time to meet personally with members will show them that you are committed to making sure they are interested and involved in the club.

FIX IT FAST! *Retention is a Team Activity* – Explain the importance of your retention campaign plans to club officers and committee chairpersons. Make sure they understand they share the responsibility for involving members in all aspects of the club.

Harness New Recruit Enthusiasm: Getting new members involved immediately is important. It will keep them interested and motivated. Don't squander their enthusiasm by making them feel they need to wait before actually participating in club activities. Create an atmosphere that will make them feel comfortable "diving in" and participating fully in club activities. However, don't overwhelm new members by giving them too much responsibility right away. This could lead to frustration. Identify responsibilities for new members that are important to the club, but don't require a vast knowledge of club functioning to successfully perform them. Try matching a new member's skills and interests to an appropriate club task to help him or her feel involved, but not overwhelmed. Periodically ask new members about their level of involvement – is it too much or not enough? It is also a good idea to enlist their sponsors to help gauge their feelings about the club.

FIX IT FAST! *Have an Informal Gathering* – Invite new members to meet with club officers in a casual, non-club setting. This will help them become acquainted informally with the leadership team where they can ask questions.

Encourage new members to give their input on club activities, functioning, etc. Their fresh perspective may help an activity run better, offer a solution to a problem, or open up new service areas for your club. Request that your committee chairpersons be open and receptive to comments from all participants. Both club and committee meetings will benefit from an atmosphere that is conducive to participation by all members.

FIX IT FAST! *Share Praise Freely* – Important to all members, and especially new members, is positive reinforcement for a job done well. Often, simple acknowledgements are best – a special thank you during a club or committee meeting, a personal note of thanks, a word of encouragement. Consider creating a “Kudos” column in your newsletter or Web site to list those members who have done their jobs well, made great suggestions, or gone above and beyond the call of duty.

Build a Team: You will find that club members will respond positively if they feel they play a significant role in the club and are an important part of the



team. Team building fosters cooperation, enthusiasm, and gives your club direction. Successful and productive Lions clubs are valued in the community and are attractive to prospective members.

Team building requires shared goals, cooperation, and communication. A good place to start is to revisit your club’s service goals and make sure that your activities actively reflect those goals. The next step is to develop a plan to reach those goals. The team then works together to implement the plan, address challenges, evaluate the process, and celebrate successes.

FIX IT FAST! *Emphasize Social Involvement* – You want to involve members in your club socially as well as through activities. Socialize with members during and outside of meetings. Share happy occasions – birthdays, anniversaries, a special achievement or the achievement of a spouse or child. The club newsletter and Web site are great places to list these special occasions.

Keep the Interest Level

High: Members who have belonged to the club for a while may get bored if allowed to remain in the same position for many years. Letting them get complacent is a sure way to lose interest and participation. It will also make new members feel that there aren't any opportunities for advancement or change in the club. There are several tactics you can employ to keep club members actively involved:



- Periodically ask members for their input regarding their interests, skills, experience and personal membership goals. These will change over time and should be monitored regularly by club leadership.
- Rotate committee assignments annually to give all members a chance to try something new.
- Encourage members to try new challenges – a totally different responsibility, an increase in the level of responsibility, a new service activity. Both the member and your club will benefit from the experience. When recommending new assignments, broaden your thinking about the member. Use your observation skills, coupled with member input, to decide on some unexpected and interesting choices for him or her.
- If a small group of members is interested in taking on a new challenge, and is very open to what assignment they receive, make a game of it. Write down the names of the responsibilities and let members draw their new assignments. Be sure the tasks are of an equal level and time commitment.
- As members gain experience and confidence, encourage them to seek leadership roles. The leadership experience builds self-esteem and keeps members actively engaged in club activities. Leadership roles could be anything from heading up a service activity to seeking a committee chairmanship, or running for a club office.

FIX IT FAST! Communicate Constantly – Open communication is vitally important to the success of your club. It creates a comfortable, productive environment that will motivate members to do their best. Encouraging input from members (see below) and using your club meetings, newsletter and Web site to communicate club happenings will help you with this task.

Encourage Input: Making all club members feel that they have a voice in the club is vital for sustaining involvement. Members should feel that they can offer suggestions during club and committee meetings, comment on activities or express a complaint. They should also feel that their comments, suggestions or complaints are valued and will be appropriately addressed. Encouraging input, but not following up will create frustration for your members. Some ideas for actively encouraging input:

- Create a suggestion box or location for soliciting member ideas. During club meetings or in your club's newsletter or Web site, acknowledge the ideas that are implemented.
- Hold brainstorming sessions to discuss new service activity ideas or a new way of handling an activity or club function. During a brainstorming session, no idea is considered "bad." The goal is to create a free flow of ideas and get participants thinking in a different way. Write down all ideas that are presented. At the end of the session, cull workable ideas from the list. Brainstorming not only produces fresh ideas, but also promotes healthy team building.
- Evaluate activities at their conclusion. Have club members comment on service activities – did the activity run smoothly? Did the club meet its goals? What could be improved for next time? Write the suggestions down for future reference. This should be done as soon as possible after the activity so the experience is fresh in everyone's minds.
- Periodically have a few members visit other area Lions clubs to share ideas. Encourage those clubs to send members to visit your club. This is a great way to learn something new and build fellowship.

FIX IT FAST! Plan a Summit - Including members in your retention campaign plans is an excellent way to involve them in your club. Consider holding a membership and retention summit. During the summit, review your club's recruitment and retention strategies, look at your club's strengths and weaknesses, brainstorm new ideas and develop an implementation plan. You could also hold summits on the individual retention challenges: boring/long meetings, cliques/politics, and lack of meaningful involvement.

Implementing Changes: Continue involving members by thoroughly explaining WHAT changes you are making, WHY you are making them, WHEN they will be implemented and HOW they will affect them. Members will appreciate being included, and it will help motivate them to support your changes.

Be sure to let those members who are “slipping”, and not regularly attending club functions, know what changes you are making. Call these members personally, or enlist the help of a few members to phone these Lions and let them know that their attendance is missed, and what new changes are taking place. Chances are, if they aren’t attending meetings, they won’t actively read the Web site or newsletter to learn about the changes. Phoning them will let them know you care about the status of their membership.

A Final Note...

Retaining members is a critical, ongoing process. While advice suggested in the Retention Clinics should have a positive impact on the functioning of your club and therefore, the successful retention of members, you should always keep your eyes open for potential stumbling blocks. Each year, the dynamics of a club change.

Sometimes these changes are subtle, with the effects not easily recognizable. Other changes will be obvious. Keep your observation skills honed and handle challenges as they occur. Be flexible and willing to make adjustments when needed. Offer to help the next leadership team make their meetings the best they can be. Share your success stories with other club presidents worldwide via the Club President Connection.



Share your success stories with other club presidents worldwide via the Club President Connection.

Good luck as you work together with your members to plan and implement a successful retention campaign in your club!

For More Information

Please contact the Extension and Membership Division at:
telephone (630) 571-5466, ext. 355
fax (630) 571-1691
e-mail retention@lionsclubs.org

To network with fellow club presidents, log on to the *Club President Connection* at www.lionsclubs.org.

Club Involvement Questionnaire

Please help us evaluate the quality of club involvement by taking a few minutes to complete this survey. Your input is important to our club. Use the 1-5 rating values below. Please return survey to

_____ by _____.

Always: 5 Often: 4 Sometimes: 3 Seldom: 2 Never: 1

Please use the space underneath each question to add comments. If necessary, use the back of this sheet for additional comments.

- 1) I feel involved in my club's activities. _____
- 2) I enjoy my Lions club. _____
- 3) The committees on which I serve are well suited to me. _____
- 4) New members are warmly welcomed into my club. _____
- 5) New members become involved in activities immediately. _____
- 6) Members are encouraged to become involved in activities that interest them. _____
- 7) Members are encouraged to try new activities/responsibilities. _____
- 8) My input during committee meetings is valued. _____
- 9) My input during club meetings is valued. _____
- 10) Club leadership knows my skills and interests. _____
- 11) The activities I am involved with are meaningful to me. _____
- 12) My club responsibilities take too much of my time. _____

13) I feel I have too many club responsibilities. _____

14) I became a Lion because: _____

15) My personal goals for becoming a Lion are being met. _____

I believe these are our club's strengths: _____

These are the primary areas I think need improvement: _____

I would like to make the following suggestions: _____

Skills and Interest Form

Please fill out this form as completely and specifically as possible. You will be asked to update it periodically.

Date: _____ This is an ORIGINAL or UPDATED form
(please circle one).

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Please list most Recent Employment-Please state and give a general description of duties:

Please list Skills and Talents:

Please list specific Interests/Hobbies:

Why did you become a Lion?

What do you hope to accomplish by being a Lion?

What interests you most about the club?

Please indicate what club activities you have participated in:

Please indicate what positions you have held on the club, zone, region and district levels:

Please list the committee assignments that interest you:

First: _____

Second: _____

Third: _____

How you would like to be involved?

Please list the club activities and special events that interest you:

First: _____

Second: _____

Third: _____

How would you like to be involved?

Please list any contacts who might help the club (media professionals, government officials, educators, builders, suppliers of goods and services, printers, leaders from other non-profit organizations, etc.):

Please list any resources you may have available for club use (computers, staff assistance, copier, fax machine, truck, phone banks, postage machine, etc.):

Please list days/times you are unavailable to volunteer: _____

Please list activities that you do not enjoy: _____

Please indicate any service activity ideas for our club:

Please list any suggestions for the club:

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