

Association TRENDS



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I DO! Keeping new members engaged

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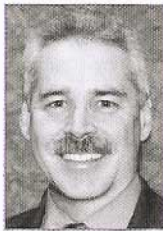
It's an event that happens nearly every day at your assn: A new member joins.

They've said "I do" to a "marriage" with your organization. Now what?

They probably won't get a honeymoon in Europe, but it is important to treat them well if you want to make this marriage last. Too many times assn memberships end in divorce after the first year!

Here's what you can do to ensure your members have a happy "honeymoon":

■ **Welcome your new member immediately!** When the check arrives, what happens besides the cashing? Do the new applications go in a stack to be processed next week with letters going out after that? That's not good enough. Give the new member a warm welcome the same day! A quick e-mail with a short welcome message is good; a quick phone call is better, even if you have to leave a voice mail message. If the CEO can make the call, that's an added bonus!



■ **Send them gifts.** A new member welcome kit is expected, but do something special members will remember. Start with a \$100 certificate to use on an upcoming meeting, publication or advertisement. Also include something personal, like a candy bar with a wrapper featuring the assn name and logo on one side and a short "marriage contract" on the other that highlights what your assn will do to keep a happy member. You get the idea.

■ **Recognize them.** Publish their names in the next newsletter, magazine or e-newsletter. The sooner the better. At the first event they attend as new members, make sure the assn CEO acknowledges them from the stage and thanks them for joining.

■ **Explain what's going on.** New members can be overwhelmed by all that an assn has to offer, and they don't know the acronyms and jargon. Take time to call and explain the lay of the land and how they fit in. They will appreciate this and it will remind you which programs might need more promotion.

■ **Invite them to participate.** The #1 reason people say they join a committee is, "I was asked." Make sure you ask! Better yet, have the committee chairman call new members to

invite them to participate. The message is much stronger coming from a fellow member, not to mention harder to turn down!

■ **Have a party.** At the first annual convention the new member attends, make sure to extend a personal invitation to a special new member party. Make it memorable! Don't just have the standard bar and hors d'oeuvres and a quick speech by the CEO. Invite other members to come and be "buddies" for new members at the party and present them with a small gift, such as a pen engraved with the assn's name.

■ **Remember each member's birthday and anniversary.** What would your spouse do if you forgot these things? (Don't answer that question!) In a professional society with individual memberships, these dates are important. Include a line for the member's birthday on the membership application and send cards every year. On the membership anniversary, send a thank-you note (even if it also includes a renewal invoice!).

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