

Promptly Acknowledge New Members

Don't allow too much time to pass before officially acknowledging and welcoming new members to your ranks. Make a point to get a personal letter out to any new member within 48 hours of receipt of membership. This demonstrates your professionalism and underscores the value of the person's membership.

Additionally, list all new members in your official newsletter or magazine.

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Consider Graduated Membership Dues

In an era where association membership consultants are encouraging associations to redefine success in a way that doesn't necessarily include growth in membership numbers, one professional association — the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (Ellensburg, WA) — announced in early May 2013 it had reached record high membership numbers. In fact, it has grown for eight years in a row.

How is the academy doing it? According to President Ethan A. Bergman, a number of factors are at play. "First, nutrition and dietetics is a really popular major in college. There's an increase in positions opening up, and I think our graduates, students and young professionals are very excited about the opportunities they have." So, naturally, a professional association catering to a growing profession will see more success. However, the academy is going above and beyond to make sure the success of the profession translates to the success of its professional association.

In addition to actively seeking input from members about the benefits they need and encouraging state affiliates to pursue targeted marketing, the academy has also instituted graduated membership dues. "About two years ago, we decided to graduate the membership fee up over a five-year period so our graduates don't get swamped with the full \$226 per year fee right out of school," Bergman explains. "We let them become members at a nominal fee so they can see the benefits available to them. ... Over that five-year period, we're hoping they'll be established and making a pretty good salary." Students and new graduates also don't have to wait to experience those benefits — full benefits are made available from the moment they join at the beginning rate of \$50.

Bergman says the academy also works hard to make sure it's helping members negotiate the wide variety of professional opportunities available to today's nutritionists and dietitians. The academy does that through the formation of interest groups that provide "very specific, state-of-the-art training for individuals practicing in that area," says Bergman. "This gives people just entering the profession a chance to talk about what they're doing, and it also works as leadership development — we use the interest groups as entry into other committees on the local, state and national levels."

Source: Ethan A. Bergman, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, President, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Central Washington University, College of Education and Professional Studies, Ellensburg, WA. Phone (509) 963-1975. Website: www.eatright.org

WRITING TIPS

Four Keys to Extraordinary Member Bios

Writing up a new member's bio for your organization's newsletter may seem like a dry, dull task. Here are some quick tricks — courtesy of Catherine Chapman, founder of the philanthropic consulting firm Fullanthropy (Louisville, KY) — to energize the process and produce a fantastic, attention-grabbing write-up that goes beyond a rote résumé rewrite.

1. Always highlight the reasons why the member has become involved with your organization. This will make the bio resonate more personally with your readers, Chapman says.
2. Never include industry awards unless they also relate to your organization's mission in some way. Says Chapman, "People do not care that [your members] have won numerous architectural awards if your charity is focused on children."
3. Likewise, try to refrain from using industry jargon that may apply to a member's career but not to your nonprofit's mission.
4. Include a professional photo, if space permits. Chapman says it's "a great way to connect with the audience."

Source: Catherine Chapman, CFRE, Founder, Fullanthropy, Louisville, KY. Phone (502) 454-2270. E-mail: kate@fullanthropy.com. Website: www.fullanthropy.com