

MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IDEAS

The effectiveness of a Chapter of the Lodge is directly dependent on its ability to retain members once they have joined the Order of the Arrow. As each member gains in experience and service, the Chapter and the Lodge develop traditions and a history which involves the member and reinforces his commitments to the Obligation and the Scout Oath and Law.

Membership retention, therefore, is of primary importance in the development of a superior chapter and Lodge.

Generally, membership retention starts when the candidate is elected by his unit members. He is expected by the boys in his unit and by the members of his Chapter to become active and seek the Brotherhood membership. It is furthered by the member being placed in a position of responsibility within the Chapter to develop a feeling that he is needed. Every Chapter or Lodge program should be geared to increase the member's involvement.

Boys respond to all kinds of "hooks" to keep them involved in Chapter activities. Ultimately, he must have FUN. The activity has to be more exciting than the any other activity in which he might want to participate. These activities must be planned and prepared to be exciting and retain our youth membership. Here are some ideas that might act as "hooks" to keep your chapter membership active.

1. Rotate assignments to help put on chapter meeting. Any assignment, no matter how small, requires the member to be involved in the chapter.
2. Call all the chapter members for an event by using an established calling committee.
3. Recognize chapter members who have achieved something. Write an article for the Lodge newsletter and make a special announcement during the chapter meeting.
4. Build a chapter tradition with T-shirts, bead programs, or other tokens.
5. Hold an annual chapter dinner or reunion.
6. Produce a movie or slide show illustrating the chapter activities during the last year.
7. Build a member resource file and use this information to get the membership involved in the chapter activities.
8. Have a special chapter fellowship area at all scout events. Invite the chapter members to meet here for special activities.
9. Challenge other chapters to contests.
10. Send out news items to the chapter membership through a monthly newsletter or through the Lodge newsletter. You could also set up a chapter website.
11. Have every Ordeal candidate make a commitment to complete his Brotherhood membership as soon as he can complete the requirements.

12. Keep the chapter actively involved in service projects.
13. Adopt a trail, Scout project, or other activity that uses chapter members several times during the year.
14. Assign a vice chief to promote Brotherhood membership. Give him his own adult advisor.
15. Call each new Ordeal member and personally congratulate him.
16. Establish a “buddy system” and assign every new Ordeal candidate to an experienced chapter member. The experienced member should invite the new member to come to the chapter meeting the first time he attends.
17. Assign all chapter members to a Clan. A Clan is a geographic region within the District where members are close together). Use the Clan leadership to call and keep in touch with the members of the clan. In this way a committee of 10 can easily manage a chapter of 100.
18. Review the song, the Obligation, and the legend frequently during a chapter meeting. This allows the member to develop a better understanding of the Order of the Arrow.
19. Assign the member to build or draw charts, posters, banners, etc.
20. Keep track of changes of address and telephone numbers. Don't let a member get lost. Keep the chapter or Lodge advised of the member's location. Try to keep in touch with him personally. Use mailing labels and the Lodge membership forms to keep the Lodge Secretary aware of membership changes.
21. Put “Member Retention” on every agenda for the chapter leadership preparation and chapter meetings.
22. Emphasize that a member is expected to be involved in the unit election process for his own unit.
23. Keep all Scout members re-registered. This keeps them on the mailing lists for the Lodge, the District, and the Council. Use the OA flap as an indication of active membership in the Lodge.
24. Focus activities on the chapter and the Lodge.
25. Enlist the help of the District Committee to promote activity in the Order of the Arrow.
26. Keep chapter meetings interesting. Make assignments that need follow through each month. Make a reason to stay in touch with the chapter members.
27. Give everyone an assignment. Allow them to choose a committee to work on. Make sure he is aware of the time commitment and the expectations of the committee.
28. Organize groups for attendance at special events, such as the summer fellowship, section conference, the Lodge banquet, or NOAC. Travel to and from the activity together. This is a great time for fellowship and brotherhood development.
29. Call up members who have dropped away from the chapter activities. Use this as an opportunity to evaluate the chapter program. Make changes if it is indicated.

- 30. Show up at Courts of Honor and help with ceremonies. Be sure that each member participates in a limited number of these activities each year. Don't burn out a few really active youth.**
- 31. Keep the Lodge newsletter editor current with your chapter plans and activities.**
- 32. Get candidates into the next available Ordeal after their elections. Don't let election forms sit around for months.**
- 33. Assign a chapter member to be an Elangomat for the Ordeal. This helps new candidates identify with an experienced chapter member. It also provides an opportunity to serve our brothers.**
- 34. Use Native American themes for chapter activities. This is the greatest attraction of the Order.**
- 35. Use chapter members with special skills as teachers in chapter activities. They can be part of a chapter program and help other members learn something new.**
- 36. Ask every arrowman in your area if he is registered. Help him by giving him the opportunity to keep his membership current.**
- 37. Assign an adult advisor to work with the chapter secretary to review old membership lists. Use this as a mechanism to reactivate old members.**
- 38. Schedule an open house for newly elected candidates and their parents. Explain what the Order of the Arrow can do for the boy. Show them that you are interested and have an exciting program scheduled for the next year.**
- 39. Schedule a training session for new Ordeal candidates. Introduce them to the traditions of the Order of the Arrow, the chapter, and the Lodge. Answer any questions they may have. Make sure the parents are kept clearly informed about the Order and its purposes.**
- 40. Have an Order of the Arrow table at every monthly district meeting. Use chapter members to staff this table. Keep the district leaders aware of Lodge and Chapter activities.**
- 41. Have registration materials available at all scout activities. Be prepared to make a contact.**
- 42. Register any former members in a troop or team when you do a unit election. Reactivate these "lost" members.**
- 43. Plan yearly calendar. Keep your planning moving with monthly leadership meeting. Get everyone involved in the chapter. Keep them informed.**
- 44. Establish a chapter trading post. Use the trading post to keep members supplied with patches, books, ceremony equipment, and fun.**
- 45. Encourage the adults in the District to maintain active registration in the Lodge. Ask them to wear their Lodge flag.**

- 46. Keep current membership records. Encourage those whose membership is about to lapse to re-register. Keep in touch with the Lodge Secretary and the Membership Vice Chief for annual re-registration campaigns.**
- 47. Encourage members to pay dues for several years in advance, if they are able to do this.**
- 48. Keep records of the members who attend chapter, District, and Lodge activities. Use these records as a gauge of chapter performance. Make adjustments and plan differently if you see a problem developing.**
- 49. Larger units always seem to have an easier time retaining members. This is the direct result of elections held in the Chapter boundaries. Make sure every member has a responsible assignment and feels like he is contributing to the success of the chapter.**
- 50. Encourage chapter members to apply for summer camp staff positions, to volunteer for Junior Leader Training staff, and participate at other Scouting events.**
- 51. Encourage attendance at the Section Conference, Lodge Training Events, National Conferences, Philmont, and other events.**
- 52. Develop chapter plans that keep committees active over several months before the activity occurs.**
- 53. Remember that our youth are active in other things. Give them recognition for with the chapter. Also, give them credit for service and participation with other groups. Youth members may not be able to attend every chapter activity because of commitments to family, school, church, and sports.**
- 54. Every youth member has a reason to attend the chapter activities. Find out what his “hook” is and create opportunities to use the “hook” to keep him active in the chapter. Many of the youth continue membership in the Order of the Arrow because of the Native American themes. Use this unique aspect of the Order to maintain interest in the chapter.**