

KEEPING MEMBERS HAPPY

Each year, a percentage of NAWIC members choose not to renew their membership. Obviously, job transfers are inevitable and can often make it impossible for a member to continue to participate in her Chapter. However, the majority of members who fail to pay their annual dues do so because they are dissatisfied with NAWIC chapter programs and member benefits. Past experience has proven that the majority of these members would continue their membership if they received the same type of personal attention devoted to prospective members.

The obligation to the new member begins when she is accepted for membership. At that time, she has been promised that the time, money and effort devoted to NAWIC would be worthwhile. It is now up to the Chapter to produce results. The new member should feel welcome. She should be introduced to the operation of the Chapter so that she understands all its functions and services. She should be encouraged to make new friends, and she should be made aware of the opportunity to work for self-improvement through participation in Chapter activities. These obligations on the part of the Chapter require thorough planning and careful execution.

An orientation should be held for new members immediately after being accepted for membership. Induct the new members at the next scheduled meeting. **DO NOT delay this!** Many members feel they are not members until they have been inducted.

A special greeting or hospitality committee should be ready to welcome her, arrange introductions and see that she is put at ease. Have a membership badge for her. Many Chapters use a ribbon or badge insert or a special color to denote new members (this distinction should remain on the new member's badge for a minimum of four months). At an appropriate time during the meeting, invite the new member to stand while being introduced. Her business and educational background can be briefly described. In some Chapters, each new member's sponsor is asked to do this. This is also an excellent time to furnish the new member with a Chapter roster, and some Chapters give new members a red rose at this meeting.

The greatest rewards of NAWIC membership go to those who give to the Chapter and Association as well as receive from it. This pattern of give and take is established during the member's first months of membership. The president and membership chair has the responsibility to lead new members into active participation. The best way of involving a new member in Chapter activities is to assign her to a working committee at the earliest opportunity.

One of the best places to acquire early awareness of member problems is the hospitality hour. If all members of the membership committee move around during this period, it's often possible to spot problems which, if left unattended, can lead to a membership loss. Also, keep in touch with the committee that telephones members before each meeting. Sometimes a member who is thinking of dropping her membership may make some comment when telephoned. Experience shows that about 20 percent of the members who actually resign or terminate will rejoin simply by being told that somebody cares. But, when all efforts to retain the member fail, it is important to learn the real reason.

To retain a member or determine her real motives for leaving requires two-way communication. This means face-to-face conversation where ideas can be freely exchanged and where you can catch shadings of voice and expression. If, for some reason, a personal interview is out of the question, a telephone call may reluctantly be accepted. In this case, every effort should be made to use a member who knows the non-renewing member. Many Chapters have found that past Chapter Presidents are particularly helpful in this function for several reasons: 1) Past Presidents know the importance of member relation, 2) they probably know the member on whom they are calling, 3) they are helped by the prestige of their past office, 4) they understand the benefits of NAWIC membership, 5) they can guide the member to become active in the appropriate areas, and 6) they provide continuity to the membership effort.

It is vitally important for the Board to learn about member problems and to take prompt action, if

possible. Driving distance, parking, location problems, poor food, meeting time, meetings that take too long, etc., are matters for the Board. If the monthly meeting falls on the same night as another meeting a member must attend, a survey may reveal others with the same problem. Meeting on another night may increase attendance and rekindle interest.

If members feel meetings are impersonal, check the effectiveness of the hospitality committee. A disinterested member may not be the only one dissatisfied with some aspect of the monthly meeting, or who would like an occasional meeting devoted to a particular phase of the industry. If her career has moved in a direction where the meeting subjects are of less value to her, try to show her that other activities are available. Above all, try to find a job in the Chapter for each member.