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Meeting Attendance

Whenever we gather as a group or talk to other Moose members, we hear the same questions. How do we get members to show up to meetings? How do we get people to participate? Do you remember the commercial from the 70s where a young boy asks how many licks does it take to get to the center of a tootsie roll pop? Well, how many meetings does it take to get a co-worker to remember to attend a WOTM meeting? Just like the tootsie roll pop commercial, we may never know the answer, but, here are three ways to help boost attendance at your meetings and events, and to encourage members to continue to return.

First of all, are you having fun at your meetings? When was the last time you left a meeting thinking – “That was an awesome meeting!” Or better yet, when was the last time you watched other people leave the room feeling energized? Last month? Last year? Never? There is nothing worse in this world to me than attending a boring meeting. And I am sure that others feel the same way. If a meeting is boring, people will view attending as a negative experience– a waste of time – and will not want to attend again.

Yes, we have specific business to cover in our meetings but that shouldn’t stop you from having fun. Interject fun activities before, after, and even during the meeting. Use an icebreaker to get members warmed up to participating. WOTM Headquarters provides every year a Membership/Retention book that lists activities members have expressed interest in. Have you seen this? More importantly, have you read it? It has some great ideas for activities to help make your meetings enjoyable and interesting. Also, in this day and age, technology is a great thing. Now you can Google the internet for games. Print out a crossword puzzle or a word game and provide a small prize for the person who completes it first. Use an app on your phone to play games. There are some great game apps for groups, such as “Heads Up.”

Here’s a fun idea - play bingo during the meeting. Hand out a bingo card at the beginning of the meeting to each member in attendance. Then, periodically during the meeting, the Senior Regent can call out numbers. For instance, open the meeting with a number, then perform the opening prayer and pledge, call out a number, greet new members, call out a number, etc.

How about guest speakers? Are you inviting speakers to address your membership at the meetings? When I was senior regent, at about every other meeting I invited a speaker to talk. The speakers ranged from

representatives from the Ronald McDonald House to a deputy demonstrating self-defense. Ask the charities you donate money to in your community to come to your meeting and talk about what they do. This is the perfect opportunity to present a donation check. Moreover, it doesn't have to be solely the senior regent that invites a speaker. Committee chairmen, you can request a speaker. For instance, a chairman in my chapter once invited a probate attorney to talk about the importance of wills and medical directives. We have also had someone come in and talk about cruises and travel. Really, there is no limit to the number of speakers that are available and the topics they can talk about. Remember, the idea is to interest everyone.

Second, provide incentives for members to want to attend meetings or events.

Door prize drawings are a tried and true method. Many chapters already give away door prizes at meetings. Each member attending the meeting is given a ticket before the meeting starts. And tickets are drawn at the end of the meeting for a prize or multiple prizes. The prize can be a cash prize, such as \$10, or a small gift. You can get some very nice prizes for less than a dollar. In fact, check out the gift store at this convention for some nice prizes, especially in the clearance area. It doesn't really matter what the actual prize is; the winner will be thrilled just to have their ticket drawn. Everyone likes to feel like a winner.

Food is a powerful motivator as well. Have a dinner or snacks before or after the meeting, depending on the meeting time. This is a great way to socialize and get to know everyone. A great team-building activity. Again, it does not have to be the officers that always bring the food. Have members take turns providing refreshments. Call on the committee members for that month to bring the food as a potluck.

That is at every meeting, but how about having quarterly and annual incentives to keep members coming back. One chapter in Florida has a membership campaign where, if a member sponsors and enrolls a new member into the chapter, she is put in a drawing for an all-inclusive trip to the state conference. But the sponsor must attend all chapter meetings to qualify. Another chapter has a drawing every quarter for a \$25 gas card. Tickets for the quarterly drawing are earned by attending two meetings in a row, so for every two meetings attended, a member earns a ticket. Provide an extra ticket for bringing a new member to their first meeting or for simply providing transportation so another member could attend. Or you can have a graduated drawing. For example, the prize for the May meeting drawing could be \$5. At each meeting, those in attendance have a ticket placed in a container for a drawing to be held at the second meeting of the month. The winner must be present at the second meeting to win. If the member drawn is not present at the second meeting, the prize pot is increased by \$5. The pot increases each month if it is not won.

Have an annual drawing as well. For instance, write the name of a co-worker on a ticket for every 5 meetings she attends. Place those tickets in a separate container for a drawing at the end of the year for a life membership. Now, not every chapter can afford to pay for a life membership, but how about a year's dues or special mystery gift for the winner? Make it a nice prize – you want members to want to do this.

There is a whole lot of variety to door prize drawings. Use your imagination in creating different prizes and different ways to earn tickets.

Also – how about giving members a loyalty card. They get a punch on the card for every meeting they attend. Once the card is fully punched, give them either a prize or a coupon for money off of a meal.

Or, how about offering a membership points program? Members can earn 1 moosebuck for every approved volunteer hour; 5 moosebucks for every chapter meeting they attend, 2 moosebucks for every new member brought to a meeting and again if the new member attends the next meeting. Members earning 200 moose bucks get a free membership renewal.

Last but certainly not least, communicate. Contact your members, especially your new members. You cannot simply give the date of the next meeting at the end of a chapter meeting and expect everyone to make a note of it in their calendar. Members, especially new ones, may not know or remember when the meetings are. They may not even know they can attend meetings. Perhaps they are not getting the newsletter or calendar and have no idea when the chapter even meets. Send out reminders. Or better yet, call them on the phone. Sometimes, people just want to feel wanted and want to be invited. A personal phone call can make all the difference. Also, if you see members in the Social Quarters, remind them that meetings are not just for officers. It is where fun events are planned. Let them know they have a voice in what happens in the chapter and what the chapter does.

Just remember that people have different levels of participation and that all levels are needed for our chapters to succeed. Don't neglect members who don't attend meetings, some just don't like to. That's fine. But ask them to help in other ways. Ask them to bake a cake for that bake sale or to donate a door prize for an upcoming fundraiser you are having.

One last thing, are you communicating the idea of the Moose to your members. We call this Orientation. Are you having orientations? Use this opportunity to educate your new members and even some older members about meetings and what they as members can do. Have available for purchase the WOTM general laws or better yet, if your chapter is able, provide them free of charge to the new members when they attend orientation.

That way, they have available to them resources to guide them in what the Women of the Moose does. Give them a welcome packet – general laws, brochures, and above all else, some membership applications so they can invite their friends and family to join.

So, the bottom line is it will take some effort to get people involved and participating in the chapter. But the rewards are outstanding. Hopefully, you can take some of these suggestions back and implement them in your chapter.

Time really does fly when you are having fun. These last two years on the Grand Council have been a blast. Everyone on the Boards and Council, as well as Kim, Wendy, and Mary, have been loads of fun, and I will treasure the friendships I have made during my term. Thank you to everyone in the Women of the Moose headquarters; you all are always so helpful and caring. Finally, my heartfelt thanks to all the co-workers in my home chapter of Tallahassee #1103 and all the co-workers and brothers in the great State of Florida. I appreciate the love and support you have given me not only these last two years but during my entire Moose career. Thank you.