

Compete for Better Member Service

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A competition to retain and gain new members taught staff at one organization the ins and outs of membership.



Americans for the Arts staff members added leaves to a “membership tree” after renewing, recruiting, or helping members during the organization’s Membership Harvest Celebration. Pictured, from left to right: Nora MacDonald, membership marketing coordinator; Theresa Cameron, director of membership; Robert Lynch, president and CEO; and Kate Cushman, membership services coordinator.

What’s the great idea? Host a staff contest to improve member relations.

Who’s doing it? Americans for the Arts

What’s involved? Does every person on your staff know how to recruit a member, explain benefits, and enter that member into a database? Like in many organizations, some staff members from Americans for the Arts did not.

“[W]e decided that we needed something to raise the staff’s level of awareness about membership, and the best way to do that was by designing a fun, interactive, and challenging activity around our fall organizational membership campaign,” says Theresa Cameron, director of membership. With Kate Cushman, membership services coordinator, the membership team held a Membership Harvest Celebration to encourage all departments to interact with and recruit members.

The campaign started with a presentation on benefits, levels of membership, and rules for the Membership Challenge, a contest between departments around membership. Staff accumulated points for each type of member interaction: renewing a member, getting a new member, or helping an existing member. When completing a task, staff put their names and members’ information on paper leaves, showed the membership department to track points, then added the leaves to a “membership tree” on an office wall.

“At the end of the renewal period we ended the contest, tallied the winners, selected suitable prizes, and created certificates for everyone who participated,” says Cushman. “We tried to keep the cost down by coming up with prizes that weren’t too expensive.” Over the three-month campaign, 47 of 70 staff members participated. They recruited 34 new members and provided customer service for more than 700

members in 41 states, all for the cost of \$300 in prizes and extra hours logged by the membership department.

What are people saying? “By informing the entire staff about the membership levels, benefits, and how to help answer easy questions, we were able to reduce the amount of call transfers and provide better direct and timely service,” says Cushman. “It seemed to break down some of the departmental silos, and everyone was working toward the same goal of providing good service to everyone who called [us].” Cushman says the real key to the campaign's long-term success is following up with staff. “Always keep the entire staff aware of what promotions are going on in membership ... so they feel confident about talking to members,” she says.