

What does membership retention have to do with me?

A chorus must continually recruit new members in order to simply “stand still”. Due to attrition, or loss of members, recruitment is essential to maintain necessary numbers. It is cheaper and easier to retain an existing member than it is to recruit a new one. So, membership retention is an important area for every chorus member.

“How does that interest me?” I hear you saying, “Why should I worry about member retention? Isn’t that our director’s problem?” Good questions, and questions that I would definitely be asking myself.

Ultimately, member retention is your director’s responsibility. She is the one who’s accountable, but we are the ones that make it happen. If the chorus dwindles and dies, will that not affect us all? There is a saying: it all starts with “The man in the mirror,” or the woman, in this case. The point is that we all need to take responsibility and start with ourselves.

New Member

Let’s start by looking at the new member. Can you remember how you felt when you first got involved with your chorus? Was everything overwhelming? Could you remember people’s names? Did you feel nervous or anxious?

If you can remember how you felt when you first joined, then you can help new members in your group to feel welcomed

- Extend a friendly hand

- Suggest everyone wears name badges so that new members can learn your names.

- Put yourself out, and TALK to your new Sweet Adelines, (she is going to feel more uncomfortable starting a conversation than you are).

- Offer her drinks and snacks.

- Make sure she knows where the bathrooms are.

- Take time, if you can spare it, to visit with her for a while. Ask her questions about herself, find out something about her. Everyone becomes much more interesting when we learn a little about them.

Communication, communication, communication

Yes... it’s ALL about communication. Life is about communication. And according to Elizabeth R Pomeroy, in *Attracting, Organizing & Keeping Members* (ASAE Publications), “The number of potential retention activities is unlimited, but **personal contact is the most effective.**”

Let’s talk to each other about positive things, such as how much fun our last rehearsal was; how good the chorus is sounding; what tremendous strides you are all making; how much we have learned and how much we enjoy being Sweet Adelines.

Gossip is infectious and can be extremely damaging. In fact, many members leave due to negative gossip and rumors.

However, positive talk is also infectious. Let’s try to initiate something positive in every interaction we have. My mom used to say, “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.” And you know moms are ALWAYS right. So, let’s try to do it. Let’s find something good or positive to say to everyone we talk to. There is almost always *something* positive in every situation, if we just look hard enough.

Getting Involved

All members need to get involved in the running of the chorus. When a person is asked to take on a special responsibility it makes them feel important, needed and wanted, it gives them a sense of belonging. We all like to feel needed and wanted. We all feel more self-confident when we take on responsibility.

Obviously, we shouldn’t take on more than we can handle, but if everyone took on just a small task (like making refreshments or greeting guests at the door), running of the chorus would go so much smoother. Plus, members are more likely to stay because they feel a commitment and responsibility toward their group. And let’s make sure *everyone* gets Sweet Adelines business cards. This would be *proof* that the member is a significant part of the group.

Bottom Line

It all comes down to treating others the way we would like to be treated ourselves; thinking of others; being empathetic to their experiences and feelings; and aiming for the good of the group. I know that's a tall order. It means we have to give of ourselves. It means we need to be selfless. It's hard. But, take heart, we are all on this journey together. This journey of improving ourselves as human beings.