

President's Retention Campaign

Clinics

Focus on Meetings

*Smart Strategies
For Keeping Your Meetings on Track*

Code: **PRC-3**

Cover:

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Retention Clinics Created for You

The President's Retention Campaign was developed to keep our quality club members interested and engaged. The campaign focuses on the three primary threats to retention and offers proven solutions to address these challenges. The President's Retention Campaign will help make your year as club president more successful and rewarding.


Research has shown that 50% of our new members drop out within the first three years. Fortunately, we know the main reasons why:

- Lengthy/boring meetings
- Club cliques and politics
- Lack of meaningful involvement

The Retention Clinics spotlight each of these challenges individually, helping you uncover weaknesses in your club and develop a plan. Each Retention Clinic will follow the same simple formula for identifying and solving the challenges:

- **Look** closely at the current state of your club
- **Listen** to input from fellow club members
- **Learn** where problem areas exist
- **Respond** by implementing appropriate changes

This evaluation and implementation process is simple and not time-consuming. The benefits to your club will be well worth your efforts.

 **FIX IT FAST!** Throughout the Retention Clinics, **FIX IT FAST!** features quick tips that are easily implemented. These ideas can be used on their own or to supplement more dramatic changes.

Building a Support System

As you go through this process, it will be helpful for you to share ideas, comments or concerns with other club presidents. You can contact other presidents in your district, region, or zone and suggest a brainstorming session. There is also help available via the Internet at the Club President Connection on the association's Web site (www.lionsclubs.org). The Club President Connection allows you to network with club presidents from around the globe. It is an excellent opportunity to learn what challenges others have faced and what solutions worked for them.

Retention Challenge

Lengthy/boring meetings are the number one reason former members cite for dropping out of their Lions club.

Meetings are a significant part of the Lions club experience and have a big impact on how the association is perceived by members. Meetings are also important to the efficient functioning of your club. Holding effective meetings will help you accomplish two things: 1) keep members interested and 2) keep your club running successfully

LOOK at Your Club

Taking the time to examine your club and honestly assessing its current status is the key to successfully making changes. Without pinpointing the areas that need attention, you might be fixing a problem that doesn't exist and ignoring a potential trouble spot. It is helpful to write down your observations as you undertake this process.

Begin by observing members during meetings:

- Are your meetings well attended?
- Do you notice any attendance trends?
- How do your members act during the meeting? Do they seem interested? Enthusiastic? Bored? Impatient?
- After meetings, do members feel inspired and motivated?
- What is the atmosphere during meetings? Friendly? Tense? Lively? Boring?

Then take a good, honest look at your performance during meetings:

- Are you comfortable running meetings?
- Do you regularly prepare an agenda in advance?
- Do you follow your agenda?
- Do you have a good command of parliamentary procedure?
- Are you able to handle interruptions and difficult behavior?
- Do you convey excitement and enthusiasm for being a Lion?

- Do you allow members to actively participate in meetings?
- Do you willingly accept suggestions?

LISTEN to Input from Members

It is a good idea to enlist the help of several club members whose opinions you trust, or even your entire membership, to help with the evaluation process. To assist you in soliciting member input, a questionnaire is provided in the back of this publication.

LEARN Where Problem Areas Exist

Study your answers and the surveys from other members. Note the following:

- What trends do you see?
- What are your club meeting's strengths?
- What are your club meeting's weaknesses?
- Which areas need attention?
- Were you surprised at the responses you received?
- Was there a big difference between your assessment of your club meetings and your fellow members' assessment?

After examining feedback, decide which areas need attention. Use your best judgment when evaluating results. Certainly, if you notice a recurrence of the same comment, you should look for strategies for solving that particular problem. You might find that there are areas where you thought the club excelled that members think otherwise. Depending on answers received, perhaps all that is needed are a few small changes. However, there may be situations where some members of your club feel strongly one way, and others feel strongly another way. In these situations, you must consider what will be best for the club. If your club is trying to attract new, younger members, pay particular attention to the comments of those current members who are in the same demographic group you are trying to reach.

If a comprehensive meeting makeover is in order, create a plan using the suggestions below. When making changes, it might take some time before you notice positive results. That's to be expected -- if changes are dramatic, it might take everyone a while to get used to the new routine.

Your club members' involvement in this process doesn't have to stop with the evaluation. Report your findings and the changes you will make to improve your club. Enlist member enthusiasm and support. Together, you can make your meetings more productive and interesting for all involved.

RESPOND by Making Appropriate Changes

Most people would agree that good meetings:

- Accomplish their goals
- Are relevant and interesting for attendees
- Start and end on time

However, there is wide latitude in what elements actually constitute a productive, efficient and interesting meeting. What worked for your predecessor might not work for you. People have varying management styles and will approach things differently. That is how it should be. Trying to adhere to something simply because it worked for someone else or because “it has always been done that way” can create an uncomfortable atmosphere for you. As the club president, you have the opportunity to set the tone for the year in a manner that works well for your management style and your club’s unique personality.



FIX IT FAST! Think Positively – When considering any changes to your club, keep a positive attitude. Your club might be steeped in tradition and used to doing things a certain way, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try something new. Today’s “experiment” could be tomorrow’s new tradition.

When discovering the best club meeting strategies for you, there are some basic principles that will help you run an efficient, productive meeting:

- Being prepared
- Knowledge of parliamentary procedure (such as *Robert's Rules of Order*)
- Ability to deal with difficult behavior
- Ability to assert yourself when necessary


Agendas that Work: Most club presidents would agree that having a detailed agenda is crucial to running a successful meeting. What you choose to include in the agenda is an important consideration. There are really only a few items that are necessary to include. After those basic items are covered, you can embellish your agenda with elements that will help make the meeting more lively and interesting. In all cases, be sure to write down the time allotment for each agenda item (see Meeting Planner worksheet at back of this publication).

A Typical Agenda Includes:

- Call to order by president
- Introduction of guests
- Program (guest speaker, entertainment, etc.), may either precede or follow the business portion
- Reading and approval of minutes of previous meeting
- Old or unfinished business
- New business
- Adjournment

Ask yourself:

- What are the items currently on your typical agenda?
- Did the club members surveyed identify agenda items that they feel are extraneous or make the meeting boring or too long?
- Do the items on your agenda reflect your club's personality?

 **FIX IT FAST! Newsworthy Newsletters and Web Sites** – Make your club's newsletter and Web site a valuable source of information for all members. Use these devices to reinforce items mentioned during meetings, or more importantly, to communicate details of agenda items that would slow your meetings down. Let members know that your newsletter and Web site are important sources of club news and encourage use.

Keeping it Brief: When developing an agenda, keep brevity in mind regarding the number of items on the agenda and the content of those items.

Reports and explanations of business items should be kept as short as possible. Prepare for the “unexpected” and be sure to include time for discussion and questions.

Overloading an agenda and not leaving time for questions, discussion, or unplanned interruptions will lengthen your meetings unnecessarily.

The key to keeping it brief? Make sure meeting content is relevant for your audience.

FIX IT FAST! Try Trimming Time – Do you feel that your agenda is as lean as it can be, but your meetings are still running long? Examine the *content* of your agenda items and try trimming just a little time from a few items. Those small time adjustments will add up. Communicate your shortening of agenda items to all affected, so they can plan accordingly.

Program Pointers: Including an interesting program in your meeting will go a long way toward keeping members interested. Club programs can inform or entertain. They can enrich your members personally and professionally. There are many places to find good programs. They include:

- ***Recipients of Club Service*** – Hearing from those who have benefited from club efforts is a great way to motivate members to continue their dedication to serving those in need.
- ***Local Community Leaders***, such as a mayor, member of congress, chief of police, school superintendent, etc. – not only will your club benefit from their program, but you will have the opportunity to introduce these influential people to your club.
- ***Local Business People***, such as representatives from your members' companies, the chamber of commerce, or convention and visitor's bureau – programs from these diverse groups can offer variety.
- ***Cultural Organizations***, such as museums, theaters and orchestras – interesting and informative programs from these organizations are a good way to add variety.
- ***Club Partners***, such as LensCrafters, Special Olympics and Habitat for Humanity – programs from these groups help reinforce the importance and success of partnerships.
- ***District Committee Chairmen*** – Learn about the status of your district's important projects to encourage club support.
- ***Speaker's Bureau Service*** – Clubs in the United States can request speakers from the association's Speaker's Bureau. Please contact the Advertising and Production Department at International Headquarters or download a request form (SB-100) from the Publications & Logo Library on the Web site.

When you schedule programs, intersperse topics for variety and consider timeliness. For example, a program about the district's involvement in the Lions International Peace Poster Contest should be scheduled in advance of the deadline to purchase contest kits. Be sure to communicate to the speaker how much time he or she has for the program. It is also a good idea to let the speaker know about his or her audience so the presentation can be tailored appropriately.

FIX IT FAST! Programs in a Pinch – Have a few programs ready that can be put on quickly and easily in the event of a last minute cancellation. Some ideas for quick programs include: presenting the International Program video and discussing how your club is contributing to the association’s goals for the year, holding a membership recruitment “summit” and brainstorming creative ways your club can recruit new members, or having your public relations chairman report on the status of publicity efforts and your club’s perception in the community. You can also ask members if they have any “non-Lion” programs one of them would be willing to present at the last minute if requested. Keep a list of these “emergency” programs on hand and you’ll be prepared to act quickly.

Staying on Track: As president, it is your job to adhere to the agenda and get the meeting back on track whenever necessary. This is the place where your knowledge of parliamentary procedure and ability to assert yourself will be very useful. You need to remain in control of the proceedings. Your members will look to you to lead, and running meetings is one of the primary ways you demonstrate your leadership skills.


A form of parliamentary procedure will help your meetings run smoothly and efficiently and guarantee that the proceedings are fair for all participants. Without established ground rules, meetings can easily become disorganized and unmanageable, regardless of the president’s skills.

Asserting yourself when appropriate is often a skill you become more comfortable with after time and experience. Utilizing your skills, you can keep the meeting on track while still letting club members know you value their participation. You may have your authority tested every once in a while. It may be because the member is impatient, doesn’t understand parliamentary procedure, or is excited or angered about something. No matter what the situation, you must stay calm and focused. If the situation is a misunderstanding about meeting ground rules, explain to the member how he or she should address his or her question, comment or concern. If it is not the time or place for discussion on this topic, explain this also and let the member know when it will be handled.

FIX IT FAST! Use Your Gavel – Do you use your gavel, or are you intimidated to call order with it? Using your gavel is one of the quickest, easiest ways to get the attention of your members and allow you to get your meeting back on track.

Attitude is Infectious: How you conduct yourself during meetings will have a big effect on attendees. Do you enjoy running meetings? Are you excited about being a Lion? Do you feel confident and in control of the proceedings? If you exude positive feelings, your membership will mirror your enthusiasm. Conversely, if you are unduly uncomfortable or bored, your membership will be influenced by those negative feelings.

If you aren't comfortable speaking in public or running a meeting, there are helpful resources available with many tips and suggestions for improving your performance. Consult your local library for guides or contact the Extension and Membership Division for assistance. A thorough knowledge of your club's ground rules (parliamentary procedure and its Constitution and By-Laws) will help with your comfort level. It's also advisable to practice your delivery when possible. Keep in mind that nobody expects you to be perfect in your abilities. Projecting confidence and enthusiasm, even if you don't always feel completely confident in your abilities, will go a long way toward inspiring and motivating your club members.

 **FIX IT FAST! Mix it Up** – Keep your club meetings fresh by trying something new every once in awhile. Consider having people change where they sit every few meetings to encourage camaraderie with new people, add a new quick agenda item to boost morale (such as suggestion of the month or recognizing a member who went beyond the call of duty) or change the order of your agenda items (make sure everyone involved knows if you do this so they will be prepared!).


Implementing Changes: Involving your club in changes will help make the transition smoother. Even if all you do is trim some time from the agenda, let your club members know that the action is being taken and why. Your club members will respond positively if you demonstrate your concern for their time and interest.

A dramatic or potentially controversial change, such as the complete reorganization of your meeting or the elimination of a long-standing tradition, will require more care in implementing. Stress that the changes you are making are good for the club as a whole and explain your reasoning behind it. The changes you make might meet with some resistance, but if you are confident in your decision, simply forge ahead. Your positive attitude, comfort and control of the situation will help the transition go smoothly.

Whether the change is big or small, be sure to explain how it affects the functioning of the club. For example, if you feel that committee report times need to be reduced and report contents evaluated for relevancy, your committee chairmen will need to know and understand your thinking.

Your club's newsletter and Web site will be very helpful in communicating the details and reasoning of your meeting's makeover.

Be sure to let those members who are "slipping" and not regularly attending club functions know what changes you are making. Call these members personally, or enlist the help of a few members to phone these Lions and let them know that their attendance is missed, and what new changes are taking place. Chances are, if they aren't attending meetings, they won't actively read the Web site or newsletter to learn about the changes. Phoning them will let them know you care about the status of their membership.

 **FIX IT FAST! Plan a Program on Member Retention** – What better way to demonstrate how important membership retention is than by planning a program about the subject? Tell members what improvements you are making in the club to keep them interested and involved.

A Final Note...

Retaining members is a critical, ongoing process. While advice suggested in the Retention Clinics should have a positive impact on the functioning of your club and therefore, the successful retention of members, you should always keep your eyes open for potential stumbling blocks. Each year, the dynamics of a club change. Sometimes these changes are subtle, with the effects not easily recognizable. Other changes will be obvious. Keep your observation skills honed and handle challenges as they occur. Be flexible and willing to make adjustments when needed. Offer to help the next leadership team make their meetings the best they can be. Share your success stories with other club presidents worldwide via the Club President Connection.

With a little extra attention, you will have shown your club members that their time is valuable and that club meetings are an essential part of the Lions club experience. Keep up the good work!

For More Information

Please contact the Extension and Membership Division at:
telephone (630) 571-5466, ext. 355
fax (630) 571-1691
e-mail retention@lionsclubs.org

To network with fellow club presidents, log on to the Club President Connection at www.lionsclubs.org.

Club Meeting Questionnaire

Please help us evaluate the quality of our club meetings by taking a few minutes to complete this survey. Your input is important to our club. Use the 1-5 rating values below. Please return survey to:

_____ by _____.

Always: 5 Often: 4 Sometimes: 3 Seldom: 2 Never: 1

Please use the space underneath each question to add comments. If necessary, use the back of this sheet for additional comments.

- 1) Our meetings start on time. _____
- 2) Our meetings follow a regular agenda. _____
- 3) Our club president keeps the meeting running efficiently. _____
- 4) Our meetings have agenda items that are unnecessary. _____

Please describe:

- 5) I like attending club meetings. _____
- 6) Our meeting format allows everyone the opportunity to participate and communicate. _____
- 7) Our meeting atmosphere is friendly. _____
- 8) New members and guests are greeted warmly and made to feel welcome. _____
- 9) Guests are properly introduced. _____
- 10) Our meeting programs are varied. _____
- 11) I would like to see a presentation/program on _____
- 12) Our meeting programs are interesting. _____
- 13) Guests are given enough time to complete their presentation. _____
- 14) The tail twister is a fun addition to our meetings. _____
- 15) Various committees give progress reports. _____
- 16) Our club president has the ability to deal with difficult behavior and interruptions. _____

I believe these are our club meeting's strengths:

These are the primary areas I think need improvement:

I would like to make the following suggestions:

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