

MEMBERSHIP WORKSHOP

This is a report on the Membership Workshop held by Phyllis Wells, Membership Chairman of the South Central Section. The workshop was held at the fall section meeting in Tulsa, OK on October 10, 2003. Attending were Chapter Chairmen and other interested 99s. Linda Horn took notes and Penny White was the timer.

The group was divided into six groups of 5 each. They were given five minutes to brainstorm reasons a 99 would leave the organization. Each group was encouraged to come up with as many reasons as possible in 5 minutes. The most reasons recorded by any group were 12.

All the reasons were posted on the wall and each group selected two reasons (not their own) to work on. The groups were given 10 minutes to come up with sound methods to counteract members leaving. The following reasons and solutions resulted:

Reason: Not enough flying activities and not enough active pilots

Solutions:

1. Instead of long cross-country flights, schedule local flying activities, including spot landing contests, poker runs, treasure hunts.
2. Have more hangar flying at some meetings
3. Start meetings with a question. Each person must answer. The question can show some commonality among members, such as the most exciting thing that ever happened to you in an airplane, the longest flight, or most unusual.
4. When you go flying, take someone with you and let them fly a little bit.
5. When traveling to a meeting, take a 99 who is an instructor and work on Wings training.
6. Seek out members of the chapter who have had special flying experiences to share with group.
7. Challenge members to "fly outside the box" and go to new places.
8. Include spouses in flying activities.
9. Set up an airmarking program for your chapter. Commit to doing some airmarkings.

Reason: The chapter is not friendly, new members ignored

Solutions:

1. Make an effort to be friendlier to new members. Smile. Everyone is a hostess.
2. Chapter chair should know the names of new members and introduce them at meetings.
3. Take time to have every one introduce themselves.
4. Call new members before meetings and offer to pick them up.
5. Take members flying.
6. Invite spouses to activities.
7. See members between meetings. Have coffee, talk on phone.
8. Reduce business at meetings. Increase educational programs and fun activities.
9. Recognize accomplishments of members, new and old.
10. Don't discriminate against student pilots.
11. Keep members interested, plan some new activity or program.
12. Get younger people involved.

Reason: All the fun has gone

Solutions:

1. Ask people who complain what we should be doing.
2. Need consistent meeting places. Determine time & place most convenient for most members.
3. Have more social events.
4. See solutions listed under "Not enough flying activities..."

MEMBERSHIP WORKSHOP

Reason: Family priorities

Solutions:

1. Help the member set priorities. Reduce commitments to the chapter.
2. Have the chapter develop a support group.
3. Increase social aspect of flying activities to include families.
4. Offer to "baby sit". This could be with a child or an elderly spouse.
5. Stay in touch and be a good listener. Be patient. Wait for person's situation to change.

Reason: Costs

Solutions:

1. Have fund raising projects so there is not so much out of pocket expenses for members.
2. Contact merchants, FBOs, other aviation groups for support.
3. Encourage members to apply for scholarships.
4. Share expenses for travel, hotel, to meetings and flying events.
5. Sponsor students to attend section meetings or trips to 99s museum.
6. Sponsor students to participate in flying events.
7. Have chapter pay registration for chairman to go to section and other meetings.
8. Create a voluntary fund that could be used by a member for a financial emergency.

Reason: Average age of members is "old"

Solution:

1. Develop mentor relationship, pairing older members with younger members.
2. Plan youthful activities, flying and non-flying
3. Let younger members plan some of the activities and then be a good sport and participate.
4. Plan more flying activities.
5. Market to younger pilots.
6. Give a gift certificate for flight training after 3 months of membership for a FWP.
7. Follow up and stay in touch with younger members.
8. Have important activities for older members such as addressing newsletter, making phone calls.

Reason: Lack of communication

Solution:

1. Set up a phone tree.
2. Have a chapter directory and give one to each member.
3. Have a chapter newsletter.

General discussion focused on:

1. Mentoring Programs. This may soon be required for all FWP scholarship applicants. It is a good idea and should be started in all chapters. New members and students should be assigned a mentor. Mentors should be given specific duties and expected to follow through with results.
2. Active members should be assigned to contact non-active members and try to help them get to meetings.

Other reasons we did not have time to address

Seeking further education
Change of employment
Chapter not active
Health problems

MEMBERSHIP WORKSHOP

Lack of commitment
Leaving the area
Meeting and schedule conflicts
No longer flying
Poor attendance at meetings
Time constraints
Too many cliques
What is in it for me?
Lost my renewal form

The next exercise was to brainstorm for 5 minutes to come up with as many reasons as possible for why a woman would (should) join the 99s. The most reasons given by any one group were 11. Again each group selected two reasons to work on and came up with the following:

Reason: History and heritage

Solution:

1. Assign someone in the chapter to give a 5 minute talk at each chapter meeting about a 99 and their achievements. It is even better if the talk is about someone in your chapter.
2. Think of ways to show new members how interesting and impressive a group we are!
3. Arrange meetings with WASPs and other outstanding women pilots.
4. Have chapter events at local aviation museums.
5. Plan a chapter flying event to a 99s museum.
6. Ask a speaker to talk about and show pictures of old airplanes.
7. Emphasize the Chapter's history with stories in the newsletter and through the scrapbook.
8. Include a history of the chapter in the chapter's membership directory.
9. Put the Chapter's history on a CD to give to new members.

Reason: Good Food

Solution:

1. Capitalize on our strong points - good food.
2. Have social events that include food.
3. Sell lunches at safety meetings and other gatherings of pilots.
4. Take food to flight instructors, flight schools, and student pilots.
5. Have a food theme meeting, such as a Chocolate Membership meetings.
6. Have a chapter cookbook, sell at bazaars, yard sales, feature in local newspaper.

Reason: Improve safety in flight

Solution:

1. Have safety oriented education programs.
2. Ask another member to fly with you as co-pilot.
3. Sponsor safety seminars.
4. Take tours of tower center, etc.
5. As role models for others, be a safe pilot, encourage education and mentoring.
6. Encourage pursuit of advanced ratings. Have study groups for tests.

Reason: Common interests

Solution:

1. Provide an opportunity to fly with other women.
2. Offer support and encouragement.

MEMBERSHIP WORKSHOP

3. Network for job opportunities, scholarships, flight lessons, aircraft purchase, etc.
4. Share the love of flying with hangar stories and actual flying.

Reason: Flying

Solution:

1. Hold Poker Runs.
2. Have a regular lunch run to fly to places.
3. Get an instructor to hold open ground schools.
4. Fly to another airport to visit classic planes and have owner show off their aircraft.
5. Have aviation competitions (landing, proficiency, racing).
6. Utilize posters, brochures, magazines that we already have to get our name out.
7. Have a chapter liaison work with flight schools in area.

Reason: Support

Solution:

1. Mentoring
2. Bring out some real live stories of our members to make them seem more real.
3. Provide environment for people to share their problems.
4. Celebrate victories, especially aviation related, but others too.
5. Reach out to other chapters, especially small ones and even chapters overseas.
6. Provide financial support via scholarships, special dues structure for students.
7. Establish friends of the chapter by using the 99s directory, attending meetings outside your area, and visiting with other 99s whenever you are traveling. Encourage 99s to visit you.

Reason: Education

Solution:

1. Have a small part of each meeting be educational about the organization.
2. Educate outsiders, including spouses, the aviation community, and the public.
3. Do programs in schools about aviation such as the NASA programs.
4. Educate ourselves with guest speakers, special programs, tours of towers, etc.
- a. 5. Provide forums of opportunities above and/or beyond commercial flying such as Angel Flights, becoming a CFI, A&P, or even an NTSB investigator.
5. Sponsor wings programs and companion flyer courses.
6. Find ways to co-sponsor with other aviation organizations such as EAA, CAP, and AOPA.

Liz Lundin, Office Manager, 99s Headquarters was present at the workshop and offered information on membership renewal from her perspective:

- Membership has stayed static for the past few years. Although we are getting about 150 new members a month, we are also losing 150 members each month. That is why retention of members is so important. The renewal process goes like this: The member is sent their renewal form one month before their renewal date. If they don't respond they are sent a second notice two months later. If no response they are put on hold and then after one more month they will be dropped from the membership list.
- Headquarters started sending a postcard in the 4th month after renewal date. This has resulted in a 35% reduction of non-renewals.
- This is a wonderful success story and illustrates the importance of communicating with our members. Chapters need to contact members who are on standby and/or hold and find out why the members have not renewed. Many times it is just a matter of overlooking their notice (some people don't open their mail in a timely manner, others have good intention, but the renewal form goes to the bottom of the pile, etc.) Consider sending a clever postcard from the chapter or a phone call or visit.

MEMBERSHIP WORKSHOP

General Discussion that followed:

1. "I don't fly anymore", is a common reason for dropping out. We need to remind these members that they can still be of use to the organization.
2. We also need to remind members of how prestigious our organization is. Frequent, short presentations on our history are important. Recognition of member achievements and visits to our museums will also help.
3. We are the only organization in the world exclusively for women pilots.
4. Don't let members who are moving drop out. Get them connected with another chapter, even before they move. Cell phones and e-mails addresses go with people when they move. Keep in touch that way!
5. Distribute old copies of the 99s News to airports and FBOs. Consider leaving them in Doctor Offices, etc.

Other reasons a woman should join the 99s (we did not have time to address all of these):

Career advancement	Networking
Cool fly market stuff	Scholarships
Increase in number of female pilots	Share expenses
Involvement in aviation community	Share flying experience
Meet new people, other women pilots	Unique flying experiences
Mentoring	We are nice people
Moral support	World wide friends
Problem solving	

Conclusions: The atmosphere during the workshop was upbeat. There was a lot of energy and enthusiasm as members shared ideas. The goal now is to carry that energy and enthusiasm back to the chapters and translate it into more members!

1. Share this report with your chapter (you may want to have your own brain storming session)
2. Emphasize the importance of the role of Membership Chairman. Give that person your support.
3. Make member retention and recruitment a priority in your chapter.
4. Let me know whenever you have new members or have gotten a reluctant member to renew.

Thanks for making the 99s the great organization that it is.

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