

Why do people leave Serra?

Introduction

There are a number of factors, which contribute to our losses of Serra members all over the world, varying from one region to another.

Report Results

According to the membership report, based on detailed investigation, the overall picture emerges that the main factors, which contribute to the losses of our members are:

- The common reason in clubs with older members is death
- Unable to attend due to illness in old age
- We do lose members of two years or less
- Career change, home relocation
- Inconvenient work times work interference, cost or lack of transportation
- Some members when asked to take on responsibility, rather refuse – leave
- Occasionally, conflict of personality
- Sometimes we simply select the wrong person, they don't like our type of work
- Our program is not stimulating enough
- Small numbers prevent the use of good speakers in our programs

Some of the above reasons are obviously out of our control. However there are reasons listed above that at the club, district, council, or international level need addressing.

MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

- A. In a sense, retention of members starts as early as the membership recruitment process. When you are searching out prospective members for your club try to recruit those who are active Catholics and who will be likely to commit to Serra membership over the long term, rather than someone who might join just to do the sponsor a favor.
- B. It is a good idea to have a brief initiation ceremony of the club's own choosing for new members shortly after they have joined. It will give the new member a feeling of belonging and being part of the important work of Serra. Ideally such an initial initiation ceremony should take place during Mass. It also may be followed by a more formal induction ceremony at a club Annual Meeting. (6A-15, page 6-22)
- C. Once a person joins Serra the person's sponsor or another Serran should serve as the new member's mentor until the new member becomes familiar with the club and its members, and is comfortable in the club environment. It may be a good idea to introduce the new member at one of his or her first meetings, asking the new member to give sufficient information about them to assist the other members in getting to know the new member. Also, multiple personal introductions might be necessary to build familiarity.
- D. Begin processing the initial paperwork through the USAC Chicago office as soon after a member joins as possible. Do not wait until other regular reports are due in

- order to process a new member's application. USAC needs to be aware of a new member's existence so that it can update mailing lists in order to get welcoming materials and copies of USAC's and Serra International's magazines to the new member as soon as possible. All of these again give the new member a sense of belonging.
- E. Orient new members to your club and the purposes of Serra. (Membership Manual pp 7-8 and the District Governor Manual Sec 6 pp 3-4) It is important for new members to have a full understanding of Serra soon after they join.
 - F. Do creative vocation work in your club and emphasize the positive results of those efforts to your club members. People join Serra for a purpose and your club should emphasize the fulfillment of that purpose to all members.
 - G. Review your club's programs and activities and keep them relevant and fresh. It has been said that having effective programs is one of the best ways of keeping up membership interest in a club. This review needs to be done on an ongoing basis in order to keep interest high.
 - H. Assign new members to a meaningful, but appropriate, activity in the club quickly. Active members are the best members. Do not immediately overload new members, but assign them to committees with specific tasks to be completed. It is an excellent way for them to become knowledgeable and active in the work of Serra.
 - I. Consider electing relatively new members to your Board of Trustees. New members usually have a wealth of experience that can be valuable to your club-along with new perspectives. A new Board member or two with new ideas can bring a wave of energy to your club.
 - J. Add a "Retention Specialist" to your membership committee whose assignment is to implement the suggestions in this Article with the assistance of other committee members. In addition, the Retention Specialist could keep informal track of the attendance of all members, especially new members. Sometimes the failure to attend meetings on a regular basis can be symptomatic of another problem such as a transportation problem, a health problem, or some other concern that would not normally surface unless the member is approached in a caring fashion. Even if that contact only presents the opportunity to assist the member in a caring fashion it will be a blessing for both.
 - K. District Governors should discuss retention issues with their clubs when they visit. Serra Clubs should introduce effective retention efforts in their clubs at the earliest opportunity, lest both time and members slip away.
 - L. Encourage members, old and new, to attend a Serra International Convention. There is nothing compared to attending a Serra International Convention to create interest in the mission of Serra or to re-ignite a member's interest in all that Serra stands for and hopes to accomplish.

Resources

- *The Spirit of Serra* a video and small group discussion and reflection program for new and existing members. The program is available from the USA Council of Serra International Merchandise Catalog call the Chicago Office for more information 1-888-777-6681.

- *In His Steps* an annual recommitment program for Serrans includes a internal club program and a one page brochure with step-by-step explanation, prayers and recommitment pledge. The program is available from the USA Council of Serra International Merchandise Catalog call the Chicago Office for more information 1-888-777-6681.
- Retention: The other side of the membership coin (*serraUSA*, October 2002, http://www.serraus.org/news_&_events/serra_usa/usa_v2_num2_oct02/v2_num2_p7.htm)
- Mentoring: The Serra club buddy system (*The Serra Leader*, Vol. 1 No. 2, Fall/Winter 2003, http://www.serraus.org/news_&_events/serra_leader/serra_leader.htm)
- Retention of Membership (*the Serran*- Richard Stolly)
- Members can just ‘fade away’ ... don’t let it happen to your club: A simple answer to the perplexing retention problem (*serraUSA*: February 2003, http://www.serraus.org/news_&_events/serra_usa/usa_v3_num1_feb03/v3_num1_pg14.htm#Members%20can%20just%20‘fade%20away’.%20.%20)