

Membership Solicitation Warning

By: Hardy Smith

If your organization depends on membership for manpower and revenue, do not take a business as usual approach to your annual renewal and new member solicitation drives.

Our current economic climate is putting a real strain on personal and business spending and any optional expense is likely to be cut. So this is not a time for the normal passive approach that most organizations take when soliciting memberships.

Too many organizations believe that they can simply send out a generic annual letter and they will attain the results they want and need without any additional follow-up.

Implement these 7 tips to help your nonprofit achieve success with membership efforts.

- Communicate specific value and benefit to the individual or business receiving your solicitation request. Just having a great cause will not attract the membership you need. Likewise, treating membership as an assumed annual donation will not get needed results. People need to know exactly why they should contribute to your cause.
- Identify the definite number goals you must reach to meet budget and meet manpower needs. Specific action steps must be developed for achieving your goals. These steps must include specific timelines and people who will be accountable for results.
- Organize the persistent people who are your get-it-done folks for specific targeted follow ups. Identify who has personal connections with prospects and renewals lists. Monitor that group to make sure their contacts are being made. Remember – the “everybody try to call somebody on the list” routine rarely works!
- Have an organized action plan for those you are not hearing back from. Chart your results and have a strategy for staying on track for meeting your goals.
- Stay in consistent touch with those who support you. The “thank you for your past membership and please send us another check” will not

get the results you want. Contacts need to be personal...not “Dear Member”...or “Dear Supporter.” Don’t depend on a single mailing as your only contact. Make telephone calls and personal visits.

- Make sure you regularly let your members know what results are being achieved with the help of their contributions or membership fees. They don’t want to feel that they hear from you only at the time of the annual request for money.
- Follow up a renewal or new sign- up with a personalized thank you. Every supporter needs to feel the glow of your individual appreciation at regular intervals.

You must be prepared to compete for every renewal and every new member! You get what you follow up on.

(As a speaker and consultant, Hardy Smith uses his 30 years of experience working in the world of NASCAR racing to help nonprofit organizations achieve high performance success. Visit his website at: www.hardysmith.com)