

## **Member Rewards**

As a leader, your job is only half over once you recruit new members to your organization. The next and often more important task is to *keep* them involved. Recognizing volunteers in your organization will let them know they are an important, vital part of your organization. It will keep them involved, committed and active at the highest energy level.

Obviously, the president should be involved in recognition, but so should the committee chairpersons. Everyone in your organization should be involved with recognizing their fellow group members. It is important for all members of your organization to understand the importance that recognition plays at any level of the organization. For instance, five of the most important words to use in everyday language are: "you did a good job!" We can never smile and say thank you enough to our fellow volunteers. Also, individual members can give a pat on the back to the organization president, other officers or members. Recognition is for everyone!

A well-deserved pat on the back goes a long way to secure the success of a program. Committee members know they are appreciated and are willing to do more when someone recognizes their contribution. Recognizing your group members contributions can be done in a variety of ways. However, it may be necessary at times to decide how member's contributions will be recognized in the beginning stages of program development because some forms of rewards or recognition are expensive. One should also act wisely and plan carefully when considering tangible rewards. Criticism may be leveled if overindulgence is the result. When the rewards are given out, it is very important to recognize only those who have carried out the responsibilities to the required expectations. Otherwise, the rewards appear to be less important to those deserving the honor.

### **There are many things that members can be recognized for, including:**

- working on a successful program
- volunteering for the jobs that no one else wants to do
- demonstrating a positive, supportive attitude during a heated discussion
- being open to new ideas
- suggesting ideas for improvement in the organization
- taking on a tough challenge
- attending every meeting
- arriving on time to all meetings and events
- being a positive, enthusiastic member

Remember that rewards can take many forms. They don't need to cost money or consume hours of time. Rewards let people know that you care about them and recognize and appreciate the things they're doing for you. Some rewards are obvious, others more subtle. First of all, SMILE! Smile, be pleasant and treat people with respect and courtesy.

**Meaningful**, have a clear vision which allows members purposeful and worthwhile participation. **Image**, model what you want members to do and project a positive image.

**Listen**, interrupt yourself in order to focus and actively listen; displaying your interest and concern.

Empathy, relate to each person with warmth and sensitivity, acknowledging discomfort as well as joy and success.

Here is a list of some other ideas. Try some and add your own! Remember to give rewards when they are appropriate. Always be sensitive to people and sincere in your reactions.

**Here are some ideas for recognizing your volunteers:**

- Provide constructive feedback and explicitly say you appreciate them, and be specific about what they have done that you appreciate
- Accept their individuality
- Allow freedom of expression
- Give verbal praise - both public and private
- Be courteous and respectful
- Smile and say thank you whenever possible
- Be willing to learn from others
- Give members free event passes not only to your organization's events, but to other campus events as well
- Arrange for discounts to events
- Use team-building exercises to re-energize members
- Write thank-you notes
- Send holiday cards
- Treat to a beverage
- Give credit when credit is due
- Plan social get-togethers
- Be available and approachable
- Explain organization history and traditions
- Communicate standards and be consistent
- Take time to talk
- Encourage idea sharing
- Give out carnations, lollipops, candy bars, balloons, etc., with notes of appreciation
- Write a letter of recommendation and give the member a copy
- Ask for a report
- Enlist to train other volunteers
- Send impromptu fun cards
- Create pleasant surroundings
- Help members evaluate, understand and learn from failures
- Provide constructive feedback and explicitly say you appreciate their work, involvement, etc., and be specific for what they have done that you appreciate. This will also reinforce that positive behavior
- Demonstrate confidence in members
- Celebrate outstanding projects and achievements
- Be fair, honest, and consistent
- Recognize a member's accomplishments at a meeting and have the other members give that member a standing ovation
- Have clear goals and objectives

- Enable to grow out of job
- Say “We missed you.”
- Say “Good morning.”
- Enable to grow in job
- Give members more challenging responsibilities to show that you trust them
- Award outstanding performances with special citations or awards
- Attend a programmer's event with your members or ask the officers to do so recognize them in front of a board or committee meeting
- Send a description of the member's accomplishments to the campus newspaper or their hometown newspaper
- Be tactful
- Say “Thank You!”
- Say “Good night.”
- Send letters of introduction to faculty/staff once officers/members are selected
- Ask the President, Advisor, or another officer to attend a committee meeting and personally thank the committee member(s)
- Focus an organization newsletter article on the members
- Respect their wishes
- Help them develop skills
- Hold discussion and feedback sessions
- Provide useful tools in good working conditions
- Involve members in goal setting
- Recognize members by their names at meetings
- Award plaques, coupons, certificates or cash prizes to deserving committee members
- Send birthday cards or get well cards to committee or group members
- Provide opportunities for conferences and training
- Give the members a reduced regional conference fee
- Keep challenging them
- Bring a snack to your next meeting
- Respect sensitivities
- Provide a T-shirt or sweatshirt to group members. This can serve as advertising as well as recognition
- Be familiar with details of member’s work
- Permit the group to solve its own problems
- Get together on a one-to-one basis - treat someone to a coke or cup of coffee, etc
- Be a real person
- Give out buttons, stickers, backstage passes, posters, or other promotional materials
- Host a dinner with a visiting entertainer
- Let them know where they stand
- Plan occasional extravaganzas
- Help them gain self-confidence
- Create a committee member of the month award
- Keep members informed

- Give the committee member time off for a job well done so that they may concentrate on their studies
- Plan annual ceremonial occasions
- Have an end-of-the-year reception for all members
- Nominate deserving members for university leadership awards or other campus honors

### **Planning a member recognition banquet:**

Another more formal method for member recognition is to host a member recognition/appreciation banquet. To further enhance the recognition, you might want to give out awards to members. These awards might be established awards, such as the Committee member of the Year Award, or they could be funny awards tailor-made to each member. An example of a humorous award could be the Ansel Adams "Picture Perfect Award" to the most organized committee leader.

When sponsoring an award ceremony or recognition banquet, try to have people give the awards who know the recipients and the work they have done. This will usually mean more to the person receiving the award. This person could be a supervisor, organization officer, organization advisor or peer. If you are planning to have a speaker at the ceremony, give more time to recognition of the members than to the speaker. You might consider giving several members an opportunity to say a few words about their experiences in the organization and share their words of wisdom, rather than bringing in an outside speaker.

Set the tone of the ceremony or banquet to the desires or needs of the organization and its members. For a laid-back organization, a dinner at a casual restaurant may be better than a high-class expensive one. But if the organization wants to have the ceremony at an elegant establishment and can afford it, then do it.

Member recognition is extremely important to maintain member involvement and promote members' feeling of self-worth. Give recognition all year long to show members that the organization cares about them and that the entire organization appreciates their accomplishments.

### **Recognition Opportunities:**

- **Heart and Soul Award:**  
Given once each semester to an outstanding member of a student organization who has devoted a great deal of time and energy to the organization.
- **Student Organization of the Month:**  
Awarded every month to a student organization that holds an activity which is new, unique, or provides cultural enhancement and/or community service.
- **Treasurer of the Year:**  
Awarded annually to an outstanding treasurer in a student organization.
- **President of the Year:**  
An award to be presented annually to an exceptional president of a student organization.
- **Rookie of the Year:**  
An award given to an advisor in his or her first year of advising a student organization.

An organization's ability to motivate and retain its members depends on its ability to do three things:

1. praise and recognize their member's talents and hard work,
2. award their member's contributions to the organization, and
3. show their members that they are truly wanted and appreciated.

Members make your organization work; their value and contributions are vital to your very existence. It is important to create an atmosphere where members feel good about their involvement with your organization so they are willing to continue giving of themselves.