



Let's Chat About Membership

June 2016

The Public Lands Alliance invited nonprofits to share their do's and don't's for membership programs in our latest online web chat.

Here's what they had to say...

Membership = Support

85% of Public Lands Alliance organizations have membership programs and provide more than \$150 million each year to national parks, lands, forests, refuges and other public land sites.

In the word cloud on the right, our web chat attendees defined what membership means to them.



According to our web chat poll, membership retention rates overall are 50% or higher for the majority of nonprofits. But that statistic is a little more complex.



Don't expect first year retention to be above 50%. That figure may be less than 20%.



If you're a smaller organization, it will take time to build loyalty.



For cooperating associations, 30 - 40% is more likely the industry standard.

"If you can keep them for 2 to 3 years, you can pretty much keep them for life."

- Laurel Rematore, Great Smoky Mountains Association

How do you prepare your organization to recruit and retain members?

TRAINING

80%

of nonprofits with retail stores offer training to staff to capture memberships at the register, according to our web chat poll.

"We as the nonprofit, as the people offering the membership, need to help the visitor understand the impact they're going to have."

- Beth Hickey, Grand Canyon Association

IMPACT

REWARD PROCESS

Many nonprofits offer incentives to staff selling memberships, while others consider it controversial. Whichever path nonprofits decide, it's important to recognize both staff AND members so they know they're appreciated.

5 Tips from public lands nonprofits:



Highlight your staff and your members through spotlights in your monthly newsletter. People love to know they're part of something bigger and they appreciate the recognition.



Communicate with your members at least once monthly and find a balance between messages that ask for support and messages that show how their support is helping public lands.



Consider non-premium benefits, i.e. anything from a lecture series for members, a member's weekend or a member picnic. Engagement activities enhance the membership experience.



Understand your target market and decide what membership levels work for your organization. Entry level membership allows you to capture their attention. Make sure it's affordable for them as well as sustainable for you.

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MOST IMPORTANT TIP

If you don't ask, no one will give.

People love public lands. By asking for their support, you are including them in one of the best ways to preserve and protect America's great places.



For more great resources for public lands nonprofits, visit publiclandsalliance.org/webinars