**Engaging New Members**

So, you’ve been working hard to drive new members to join AFWA and based on your New Member Report, found on your Chapter Dashboard, you have new members! Now what?

It’s important to engage new members from the start. This not only makes them feel welcome, and comfortable when attending programs, but also ensures they recognize the benefits of AFWA so they renew their membership year after year.

**WHAT THEY’LL GET FROM AFWA NATIONAL**

For some of you, it may have been many years since you were a “new member.” So here’s a review of the materials and introductions new members will receive from AFWA National.

* **New Member Welcome Email** *(sent within one month of joining)*: This email welcomes the member, provides a list of membership benefits, introduces the Foundation, and provides quick links to AFWA contact information, the membership directory, events page, and more.
* **New Member Card** *(sent within one month of joining)*: The new member will receive a mailed welcome letter which includes a membership card. This card gives them something to hold on to and also provides contact information for Headquarters.
* **Get Connected Email** *(sent within 60 days of joining)*: This email provides links to all of AFWA’s social networking sites and invites the member to join the conversation.
* **New Member Virtual Coffee**: This webinar occurs each March, June, September, and December. During the webinar, new members will be introduced to members of the AFWA Headquarters staff, informed of features and benefits of membership, and given a tour of the AFWA website and Members Portal.

**CREATE A MEMBERSHIP PACKET**

Similar to the emails sent by National, your Chapter should make an effort to welcome new members. A new member welcome packet is a great way to acknowledge new members and make them feel welcome in the organization. Here are a few pieces you may want to include in the packet:

* A welcome letter from the Chapter President or Membership Chair, personalized and signed if possible. This personal touch will really make your new members feel welcome.
* Membership benefits, such as perks, discounts, and offers. Point out what the member will save on event registration. Talk about the National benefit you enjoy most. And mention any local discounts or offers you may have for your Chapter.
* A calendar of upcoming meetings and events. Be sure the new member doesn’t miss a beat and saves upcoming events to her calendar from the start. Include National events as well, such as webinars and conferences.
* AFWA swag. Your newest members may be most likely to “brag” about their membership. Give them the resources to do so. An AFWA pen, brochure or flyer, or a Chapter business card.
* A quick reference sheet with contact information and a “who’s who” for questions your new members might have. This could include your officers, your board members, and your current committee leaders. Also be sure to include any social media where they can find your Chapter, such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.

If your Chapter doesn’t have the budget to print and mail these materials – that okay. Choose what’s most practical for you and remember a personal email can be just as effective.

**OTHER TIPS**

* **Find out what your new member is interested in** – such as career opportunity, networking, or education, also find out the programming topics that interest her most – and be sure she is aware of anything on the calendar that fits her interests.
* **Invite her to volunteer.** Most new members aren’t ready to jump in right away as a committee lead, but they may be interested in serving on the hospitality committee, or other small task.
* **Break the ice without calling out.** Not all members enjoy being the center of attention, but if you know you have a new member in attendance at a meeting, go around the room asking everyone to give a quick introduction. Everyone will benefit from a refresher of who is in the room!
* **Practice the buddy system.** Assign a board or committee member to check-in with the new member regularly throughout the first year. This could be achieved through a phone call or face to face at an event. Find out how she is enjoying her membership. Ask if she has any questions. Or find out if there is any additional value we could deliver her.
* **Think Nationally.** Encourage new members to take advantage of benefits beyond those provided at the local level. Invite them to engage on AFWA’s social media networks, participate in webinars, and review national partner discounts.