

**MEMBERSHIP GROWTH,  
RETENTION AND SUCCESSION PLAN  
OF THE CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR CIVIL ENGINEERING,  
CALGARY SECTION**

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# **MEMBERSHIP GROWTH, RETENTION AND SUCCESSION PLAN**

## **OF THE CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR CIVIL ENGINEERING, CALGARY SECTION**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The name of this plan shall be the Membership Growth, Retention and Succession Plan (or Member GRaSP) of the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering, Calgary Section.
- 1.2 Membership growth and retention shall be ordered and strategic. The personal element must be integral to the program.
- 1.3 Large organizations have more members, not because they know a “recruiting secret” but because they simply ask more people to become members.
- 1.4 The irony of CSCE membership is that numerous benefits come included with the annual fee. This is clearly a bargain when compared with commercially available leadership, presentation and communication skills training programs.
- 1.5 The following hierarchy ladder suggests membership recruitment “techniques” ordered from most to least effective (top = highly effective).
  - .1 One-on-One
  - .2 Small Group Meetings
  - .3 Large Group Meetings
  - .4 Organization Activities & Events
  - .5 Phone Canvassing
  - .6 Personnel Letters
  - .7 Direct Mail Campaigns
  - .8 Organization Newsletters
  - .9 Brochures and Flyers
  - .10 News Items
  - .11 Advertisement

### **2. OBJECTIVES**

- 2.1 If people are among friends and peers, laughing and enjoying one another’s company, even hard work and long hours will not seem onerous.

- 2.2 Attract and retain active members in a manner that will result in overall section membership that will mirror the membership community as a whole.
- 2.3 As a Section, be inclusive toward all members. Encourage mentorship between Section leaders and members.
- 2.4 Embrace new members over their first two years. Recognize both new and established members.
- 2.5 The first two years of membership are critical to retention. Always strive to establish a personal tie between Section leaders and new members.
- 2.6 Research and acknowledge realistic targets from similar organizations, for example retention in the range of 70% to 80%. Set realistic growth targets for example in the range of 5% to 8%. Set realistic increased retention targets for example in the range of 2% to 4%. However, to meet the aggressive CSCE National membership growth plan target for Year 2010, an average growth of 15% annually will be required.
- 2.7 Build on successes. Keep clear and concise record documents for all activities. Keep track of and prepare statistical records for membership growth and decline. All formal record keeping will assist future Section leaders in their efforts to build on past successes.
- 2.8 Explore various methods for motivating membership.

### **3. MEMBER GROWTH**

- 3.1 Build membership growth into every Section activity. Every event is an opportunity to recruit quality people and involve members. A successful membership program is all about personal contact. Set achievable membership recruitment goals, than systematically “ask” people to become members.
- 3.2 Above all, keep contact lists. Ideally, at each event station a person at the door to record participant’s names and contact information (e.g. business card). A distant second option, to a person at the door, is to circulate a sheet formatted to canvas contact information from participants. This option always results in less information or worst, illegible information.

- 3.3 Membership recruitment is the life blood of all volunteer organizations. Members that recruit new members and that involve existing members should be praised and rewarded.
- 3.4 Be methodical about membership recruitment. Define your constituency. Identify growth markets that attract civil engineers. Target established industries with a concentration of civil engineers. Target women civil engineers. Go so far as to attach probabilities of success and target the constituents with the highest probability first.
- 3.5 Active members are to be regularly encouraged to canvas potential members from among their respective professional peers. Candidate names and contact information must be immediately forwarded to the membership committee for prompt action.
- 3.6 Grass roots growth has been shown to be the most cost effective mechanism for membership growth. Most often, people join organizations when someone asks them.

#### **4. MEMBER RETENTION**

- 4.1 Build an organization where existing and new members will have fun planning and executing activities and programs. In this way all members will be positioned to learn and exercise necessary leadership, presentation and communication skills that can be readily transferred to their personal and professional lives.
- 4.2 Annually in April, the Section executive will review a current list of paid-up members, members in-arrears and student members. This process is intended to flag obvious changes to member contact information and to detect if members have “dropped off” the member data base. The membership committee will be tasked with following up changes in member status identified by Section executive review.
- 4.3 The membership committee will be tasked with, at a minimum, contacting each paid-up, in-arrears and student member annually either through personal contact at a Section activity or event or through a direct phone call. Member contact information must be regularly canvassed by this means in order to

maintain a valid member data base. Member contact must be a continuous process from the initial pre-registration and throughout the term of membership.

- 4.4 Relevance of membership is an ongoing challenge. Research is needed within the membership constituency. If women and foreign trained civil engineers are considered target member candidates. Do the Section activities and events mirror the personnel and professional needs of these active and prospective members? Is there a need to provide for the “soft” skills in addition to “hard” technical based skills? Is there a need, for example, to provide occasional Section activities and events offering skills training for stress related to balancing work, family and personal health?
- 4.5 Research membership based on geographic locations that would not ordinarily benefit from Section activities and events. Distances to satellite communities often make travel to regular Section functions prohibitive. If the numbers of constituent members can be shown to warrant the expense, remote Section activities and events must be considered integral to retention planning.
- 4.6 Engage Society and work with them to provide national lecture tours targeting needs of local constituent members.
- 4.7 Reinvent the Section gradually over time to provide value and remain relevant. Introduce requested initiatives, programs and activities.
- 4.8 Publicize Section activities and events. Reward successful member driven initiatives.

## **5. SUCCESSION PLANNING**

- 5.1 The Member GRaSP should include the opportunity to involve new members, former leaders and volunteers. Prior to each Section activity and event, make a list of jobs to be done and leadership rolls to be filled. If applicable, rotate leadership rolls but always express thanks for volunteer efforts.
- 5.2 Develop kits to aid with leadership succession planning. Kits could include:
  - .1 How to plan & execute a Lunch and Learn.
  - .2 How to plan & execute a Dinner Meeting.
  - .3 How to plan & execute a Recruitment Initiative.

- .4 How to plan & execute Section Finances.
- 5.3 Engage Society to provide marketing kits and incentives.

## **6. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**

- 6.1 Shall have as its objective the recruitment of new members and retention of existing members.
- 6.2 Shall prepare a membership GRaSP. Review and update plan annually.
- 6.3 Shall contact prospective members and send them literature promoting the Society.
- 6.4 Shall maintain an up-to-date Section contact list.
- 6.5 Shall provide the Society with updates of member contact information.
- 6.6 Shall provide the Publicity Committee with the names and addresses of prospective members who are to receive regular mailings or who are to be notified of a particular meeting.
- 6.7 Shall contact members in arrears based on a list provided by the Society annually each spring.
- 6.8 As a Section, undergo a bi-annual membership growth self-assessment. Determine major obstacles to attracting new members. Assess needs of all constituent members. This can be built into a “Visioning” initiative. Review and update growth targets. Define and assign responsibility for targets. Use all available resources to get the message out, for example, community and political leaders, publishers and the media.
- 6.9 Establish target groups and tailor the membership campaign accordingly. Make records of campaign initiatives and track the relative success on membership growth.
- 6.10 Provide value for Section activities and events as in the following:
  - .1 Always have a “House Speaker” at Section activities and events.
  - .2 Employ familiar dates, times and locations.
  - .3 Leaders shall socialize with members.
  - .4 Announce job openings.

## **7. MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

### **7.1 Membership Meetings**

- .1 Shall be held bi-monthly or 6 times annually.

### **7.2 Special Membership Meetings**

- .1 May be called by the Section Executive.
- .2 A minimum quorum will not apply to membership meetings.

## **8. ANNUAL REPORT**

8.1 At the end of the fiscal year, the Membership Committee shall submit an Annual Report to Section executive two weeks prior to the AGM.

8.2 The Annual Report shall include a summary of, recruitment activities and member statistics for the year indicating, at a minimum, growth or decline of members in the following categories:

- .1 Paid-up Members
- .2 In-arrears Members
- .3 Graduate Student Members
- .4 Undergrad Student Members

8.3 The annual Report shall be approved by the Section Executive.

## **9. ACTION PLAN**

### **9.1 Growth:**

G1	Recruitment	Increase in numbers by membership category	End Sep, annually
G2	Non-members attendance at Events	Increase in numbers attending	End Sep, annually
G3	Student membership	Increase in numbers	End Oct annually

### **9.2 Retention:**

R1	Graduate Students to Associate Members	Increase in numbers.	End Sep, annually
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R2	Membership and interest of Fellows	Reduction in numbers only due to natural attrition	End Sep, annually
R3	Student members	Numbers for which contact maintained after graduation	End Nov annually
R4	Reduce arrears members	Numbers contacted	End Sep, annually
R5	Review Membership statistics	Track gains and losses with reasons for analysis by Section Executive Committee	End Sep annually

### 9.3 Succession:

S1	Functional Section Executive Committee	Review events and activities arranged, identifying those with best attendance	End Sep, annually
S2	Full complement for Section Executive Committee	Continually seek out candidates for succession - number of filled positions	End Sep, annually