Lions Clubs International

Membership Satisfaction Guide

How to keep members happy and coming back

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INTRODUCTION

To ensure your Lions club remains healthy and vital, you need to consider the experience and expectations of belonging to your club. If you went to a restaurant and it did not meet your expectations, would you go back? The same goes for a Lions club!

Along with welcoming your new members, it is important to make sure they begin participating in club activities right away. If your club members feel welcome, comfortable and are involved in community service, they will remain part of your club for a long time.

Research shows that people become Lions for many reasons. The most common are:

- To serve their community
- To be involved with a specific service or cause
- To be with friends
- To become a leader in the community
- To be with other family members who are Lions

How can your club provide the experiences your members are seeking?

Keeping your club efficient, productive and meaningful to your members results in many benefits:

- A club that is vital and a respected part of your community.
- The ability to provide service locally and globally.
- The ability to offer personal and professional growth opportunities to your members.
- A club that provides enjoyable fellowship.

Does your club feel unified, or is it just a collection of individual Lions?

Be sure your club has a club mission statement, objectives and defined goals. Communicate these to your members clearly and openly.

- LCI's Leadership Development webpage offers online club officer orientation, and the Lions Learning Center offers a goal setting course to help with this process.

If a club is not thriving, it cannot serve.

Lions Clubs International (LCI) has many resources available to support your club. Contact the Memberhip and New Club Operations Department at memberops@lionsclubs.org or go to the LCI website, www.lionsclubs.org. Other resources include the utilization of your district zone and region chairpersons, and GMT/GLT coordinators and specialists to assist the club.

Search Terms:

Throughout this guide, you will find this icon and a list of terms. To find more information and downloadable materials, type these terms into the search box on the LCI website.

☐ Club Officers Orientation
☐ Lions Learning Center

If your club has not gone through the Club Excellence Process (CEP), consider doing it now. Every club can benefit from this workshop. CEP can help you determine how the experience of membership in your club matches with the expectations of your members.

A CEP workshop can be conducted in one of two formats: CEP Lite or CEP Pro. CEP Pro is a facilitator-guided workshop, and CEP Lite is a self-guided workshop in which a club member acts as the coordinator.

There are the three major activities in the CEP:

1. Conduct a ***Community Needs Assessment.*** This assessment will help clubs better identify unmet needs in the community, and determine which club projects and programs are important to the people you serve.
2. Give club members the ***How are your Ratings?*** survey. This will help identify your club's strengths and weaknesses, and align club activities with the interests of members.
3. Develop action plans to support the goals your club will create in the CEP workshop.

- ☐ Club Excellence Process
- ☐ Community Needs Assessment
- ☐ How Are Your Ratings?

STEP 1: DEFINE MEMBER SATISFACTION FOR YOUR CLUB

The first step to ensuring your members have a positive experience is to know what they want from membership in your Lions club. Understanding what your members think about being a Lion will help you direct your efforts. Making changes based on your club members' needs and desires is the key to a good experience for them.

You should also decide how your club will measure member satisfaction. Is it more new members who stay for longer than one year? Is it fewer members leaving the club? Is it more members participating in club events and service?

- Members feel involved when you ask for their opinions. Ask your members: Why is the club here? Do our activities demonstrate this? If a non-Lion looked at one year of our club activities, what would they think was important to our club? Remember to check regularly to see if your members' responses change.
  - This guide has a sample *Member Questionnaire* form you can customize and use to collect responses from your club.
- Assess why your members have left in the past. Consider contacting former members of your club to find out why they left. A sample *Former Member Questionnaire* form is also included in this guide.
- Carefully consider whether your club's stated objectives, goals and mission statement reflect what your current members want your club to be.

STEP 2:
CREATE YOUR CLUB'S MEMBERSHIP SATISFACTION PLAN

Losing members is an issue for many clubs, but the reasons why members leave are often the same. This guide addresses the five general issues former Lions cited most often as reasons for leaving:

I. Unproductive meetings
II. Personal reasons
III. Membership issues
IV. Club culture
V. Service

This guide offers suggestions for easily made adjustments that will encourage your members to remain with your club.

Communicate clearly and often with your members, and encourage them to let you know what they think. The Lions Learning Center offers a course about ***Effective Listening*** that can help you become a more effective listener who is better able to respond to the needs of your members.

I. Addressing Unproductive Meetings

Your members need to feel club meetings are a good use of their time. No one likes to feel their time has been wasted.

The most commonly cited responses regarding unproductive meetings were:

- Meetings were unproductive
- Meetings were not enjoyable
- Lions clubs are too hierarchical and formal
- I did not enjoy the Lions customs

How do you improve your meetings? By planning your meetings so members know what to expect.

First, consider if your club even needs to have a meeting.

- What does your club need to do? Just distribute information or discuss what you are sending out? Is the instant feedback from a meeting necessary or desirable for this topic, or would it be better if your members had time to think about it? Do your members need the information right now or can it wait?
    - Consider using cyber meetings, email or other tools to communicate with your members quickly and without the formality of a meeting.

Before the meeting:
There are 5 questions you need to know the answers to when planning a meeting:

1. Why are we meeting?
   - o Is the purpose of the meeting to conduct club business or for social or public relations reasons?
     - Only include business that is necessary – do not have reports from inactive committees or report information that is not relevant to the meeting topic.
     - Adjust the style of the meeting to your members. Do they prefer formal presentations or active discussions?

2. How long will the meeting last?
   - o Do your members enjoy the Lions customs and traditions? Are there some they might prefer to eliminate? Could the time be more productively used to address club business?
     - Set a realistic time schedule for the meeting, but remember to leave a little time in the agenda to address unanticipated issues.

3. When are we meeting?
   - o A different time or day might increase attendance.

4. Where are we meeting?
   - o Consider a new place for your meetings. A different space could bring a new perspective. Even arranging the room differently can have an effect.

5. What do we want to accomplish by the end of the meeting?
   - o Distribute an agenda and supporting materials (such as financial reports or last meeting minutes) to let your members know what will be covered prior to the meeting. Include an item for members to bring up any ideas or concerns that have arisen since the last meeting. Be flexible in order to allow your members' thoughts and opinions to be heard.

With the answers to these questions, you can organize a productive meeting, develop your agenda and prepare any materials you need. The Lions Learning Center offers a course titled *Managing Meetings* to teach you meeting management strategies, effective meeting preparation and meeting facilitation.

The next step is to inform your members about the meeting:

- Send invitations/reminders through email and/or your usual club communications. Be sure to include the agenda and any supporting materials so your members can review them before the actual meeting.
- If your club has ground rules for conducting meetings, be sure these are available on the club website and distributed to your members. You might even reference them by stating "discussion as permitted by club rules" by specific agenda items.

Other thoughts for planning a meeting:

- Is a meal necessary? Will light refreshments or beverages be sufficient? Can your members bring their own meal if they prefer?
- Does your club want to have a program at every meeting?

Once the meeting begins:

- Keep to the schedule and end on time! Your members' time is valuable to them so respect it.
- Follow the agenda. That is what your members have planned for and are expecting.
- Follow the club's rules for meetings.
- Present top-level information. You have already given your members the details with the agenda and supporting materials so those who want details have them.
- Note the time, place and purpose of upcoming meeting(s).

After the meeting and between meetings:

- Use technology to communicate – your club's website, blog, email and social media all quickly and efficiently deliver information to your members. Communicate with your members consistently and always follow-up as promised. Use the Lions Online publication for ideas.

There are 5 questions you need to know the answers to when planning a meeting.

☐ Lions Learning Center
☐ LION Magazine
☐ Lions Online

Meeting Programs:

Would your club prefer to have programs as events separate from business meetings?

- Consider presenting appropriate programs to the community for public relations purposes and/or to showcase the club to new potential members.
- Programs related to your club's service goals could be presented as a community educational event. Your club could invite people who receive the service or who provide related services.
- Sponsor a networking event. Your club organizes a space, promotes the event and invites local business owners and professionals to meet and exchange information.
- Think about having a social meeting in a public place. This can be fun for your members and good public relations for your club at the same time. Maybe a park, zoo or bowling alley? If your club sponsors, or is connected with, a particular venue that would be a logical choice.
- Once in a while, replace a scheduled meeting with a public relations event in the community. Design your event to appeal to your target members.
- Look at the LCI website, LION Magazine and other Lions publications for ideas that have been successful for other Lions clubs.

II. Addressing Personal Reasons

When a Lion leaves for personal reasons, something in their lives has changed and their Lions membership became a lower priority in their lives.

Your members' lives change. Does your club adapt to the needs of its members? Not every change can be accommodated, but some may only require small adjustments to keep your members a part of your club.

The two most common responses in this category are:

- Being a member required too much of a time commitment.
- The dues were too expensive.

Time commitment:
If members don't enjoy being a Lion, they will see it as just another obligation. Here are some issues to consider:

- Is the time your club asks for used well? After a 1.5 hour meeting, do your members feel they could have done the same things in 45 minutes?

- Is the perfect attendance requirement necessary, especially if your club has an active, updated website and other social networking sites? Or can it be eliminated to add flexibility to your members' schedules?
- Are your meeting times convenient for most of your members? Consider holding meetings at alternating times – one meeting in the evening and the next at lunch.
- Is your meeting location central and easily accessible, or does it add a significant amount of time for your members to travel to and from the meeting site?
- Think about creating a club branch that meets at a different time but otherwise participates with your parent club on projects and fundraisers, or maybe a cyber club branch or committee that meets online but actively participates in your events.
- Start or promote family programs like a Cub club if child care is an issue for your members? Maybe an Alpha Leo club if teen issues are distracting parents?
- Does your club allow members to participate in selected activities, or is participation in every club activity required?
- Does your club respect the time your member has to volunteer?

- ☐ Club Branch
- ☐ Cub Club Program
- ☐ Cyber Clubs
- ☐ Family Membership Program
- ☐ Leo Club Program
- ☐ Leo to Lion Program
- ☐ Student Membership Program

Addressing Expense:

Money is an issue for most people. Do the dues seem too expensive because your members feel they do not get value for the money they spend, or is the amount simply more money than they can budget in their circumstances? Consider the following:

- Look carefully at your club's dues. Might more members stay with the club if it was less expensive? Could that offset a reduction in club dues?
- Would costs decline if you eliminated a full meal at every meeting? Maybe have meals only at designated meetings or have refreshments instead of a meal, or consider an optional meal after the meeting concludes.
- Could a different meeting place cut costs?
- Think about shifting the cost of some club activities from fully sponsored by the club to a fee for participation or to partially sponsored by the club.
- Inform your members about appropriate LCI programs that can decrease the cost of being a Lion. Student, Leo to Lion or Family Membership programs can all reduce international dues for qualified Lions. Consider a reduced dues program at the club level as well.
- Could a Cub club program eliminate child care costs for members while they attend meetings or events?

- ☐ Campus Club Program
- ☐ Champions Lions Club
- ☐ Club Branch
- ☐ Cub Club Program
- ☐ Family Membership Program
- ☐ Leo Club Program
- ☐ Lioness Lions Club Program
- ☐ Lions Learning Center
- ☐ Lions Quest Clubs
- ☐ New Member Orientation
- ☐ Special Interest Clubs
- ☐ Young Adult Recruiting Guide

III. Addressing Membership Issues

The most common responses related to membership issues are:

- Not enough younger members
- Club did not encourage the participation of my family
- Club did not treat women fairly
- I was unable to network for my own professional development

A key to a healthy club is willingly and actively trying to encourage diversity of membership. The Lions Learning Center offers a course about *Valuing Member Diversity*.

- Evaluate your club's current projects and opportunities. Are there new projects your club would like to develop that could attract new members? For example, developing a networking event could promote your club to prospective target members and provide opportunities to your current members as well.
- Utilize the *Young Adult Recruiting Guide* to learn how to invite younger members into your club.
- Creating family programs like a Cub club or a Leo club allows your club to involve members' children and grandchildren, and may encourage younger target members who have children to join.
- Some younger members may be caring for parents or older relatives, as well. Make these family members feel welcome in your club, and emphasize family involvement to encourage these members to join or remain with your club.
- Think about committee and project leadership roles as a training ground for new leaders. Younger members and women can use these opportunities to develop leadership skills.
- Examine your club's requirements for filling leadership roles. Are the prerequisites rigid or flexible enough to allow a variety of members to fill these roles?
- Can your members select a level of involvement that suits their lives at that particular time, and adjust as necessary? Flexibility is key to attracting and keeping younger members.
- Use LCI's Member Orientation resources so your new members fully understand what Lions has to offer throughout their membership.
- Make families welcome at service projects. Are there roles children can fill while their parents serve?

Encourage your new members to invite others as soon as they are comfortable doing so. Also consider trying to welcome your new members in small groups of 2-4 people. New members generally find common ground and fellowship with other new members.

Take advantage of LCI's Club Branch Program to gather small groups of new Lions:

- Sponsor a campus club branch at a local school, college or university.
- If your club has or knows of former Lionesses, create a Lioness Lions club branch.
- For family members who prefer not to serve together, create a family branch. This allows separation while allowing members to take advantage of the family dues reduction.
- A special interest club branch is based on a shared special interest. Champion clubs support Special Olympics and Lions Quest clubs are based on the desire to see children succeed.
- Or, simply start a branch composed of members who all ride bicycles, own dogs or cook.

Branches may eventually convert to new independent Lions clubs or merge into the parent club as desired.

- ☐ Club Officers Orientation
- ☐ Emerging Lions Leadership Institutes
- ☐ Leadership Development
- ☐ Lions Learning Center
- ☐ Member Orientation
- ☐ Mentoring Program
- ☐ Webinars

IV. Addressing Club Culture

A Lions club is the sum of its members. As membership changes, clubs must adjust. The goal is to get your new members involved and keep your current members excited about your club.

The most commonly cited issues with club culture relate to feeling out of touch, or not part of the group.

- Club felt too political.
- Club felt too old-fashioned and stodgy.
- The leadership in my club changed and I did not like the change.
- Clubs are too hierarchal and formal.
- I did not enjoy the Lions customs.
- There were not enough opportunities for us to socialize.
- I had been with the club for a while and started to feel unappreciated.
- I did not feel like I belonged.

Think about whether your club is comfortable for your members.

- Tailor your club's practices to your members – do your current practices help or stifle your club?
- What traditions, customs and club rules support your club's vision of itself? Are the others helpful, or do they get in the way?
- Do your club's activities reflect the club goals/objectives/mission? If a non-member looked at your club activities, what would your club's purpose appear to be? Is that in line with your club's vision of itself and your members' expectations?

Make every member feel that they contribute to your club, and that their contribution is important.

- Respond when members make suggestions or offer input. Always follow up.
- Create opportunities for all members to get as involved as they want to be.
- Encourage new members to explore multiple opportunities within the club. Let them start where they are most excited to be, but be clear that committee participation rotates as part of leadership development.
- Use LCI resources such as Member Orientation to help your club make new members feel welcome and Club Officer Orientation get new officers oriented.
- Encourage use of the Mentoring Program and assign Lion mentors within the club in addition to the new member's sponsor. This provides two points of contact in the club for the new Lion.

Be open to suggestions and adjustments suggested by all of your members.

- Use your club's existing service projects as a source of ideas and guidance on what has worked or not worked well for your club BUT not as a list of "what we must do".
- Make a practice of retaining a review of your club activities as well as the plans. Be open to your members' evaluations of existing ideas and any new ideas for improvement.

Hold joint meetings and joint service projects with nearby Lions clubs. This can generate new ideas and new perspectives.

Encourage each club member to invite community members to join your club whenever they meet someone who might enjoy being a Lion.

LCI has many resources for leadership training: Emerging Lions Leadership Institutes, webinars and online courses through the Lions Learning Center are available for ongoing leadership development for individual Lions.

Make every member feel that their contribution is important.

V. Addressing Service

- ☐ Adopted Service Programs
- ☐ Community Needs Assessment
- ☐ Global Service Action Campaigns
- ☐ Planning Projects
- ☐ Service Activity Reports

Remember that every Lion joined your club because they were interested in providing service. This is the common bond for your members.

The most typically cited responses related to service were:

- Not enough focus on helping the local community
- Club did not provide the types of services that interested me
- Not enough opportunities to serve the community
- Too much focus on fundraising

Make sure your club's goals/objectives are clearly defined and communicated. Your members need to know what kind of service your club does.

- Regularly check with your club to see what sort of service they want to provide. Are your projects tailored to the interests and abilities of today's club members? Is your current service what your members want to do?
- Why does your club do the same projects every year? Is it "what we do" or is the club excited to do them?
- Can you make minor changes to existing service projects to meet your club's needs?
- Could your club's projects keep the same focus but be better tailored to your community's needs?
- Consider the scale of your service projects. Do you have one large annual service event or several smaller events? Which is better for your club? Which is better for your community?
- Think about new projects. Consider a joint project with other groups who share the same objectives.

Your club can create a new service project oriented to a particular interest or community event.

- Consider an Adopted Service Program or Global Service Action Campaign. These programs have already been successful somewhere in the world.

Look at some new options for service projects. If your club has not completed a *Community Needs Assessment*, this is a good place to start. This will help you identify the areas of need in your community. LCI has many resources and ideas for service projects that could re-energize your club! Go to the LCI website and review the resources available for planning projects.

Complete Service Activity Reports for all your club's activities and service projects as a record of what was done and a way for your club to track all of the services you provide to the community.

- ☐ Lions on the Web
- ☐ Lions Clubs PR Tools
- ☐ e-Clubhouse

Resistance

When addressing issues by making changes to your club, you are likely to encounter resistance. To minimize it, use the Why-What-When-How process to implement changes:

- Why - Clearly explain the reasons for the proposed changes.
- What - Explain what your members can expect to see happen.
- When - Have a definite starting point for the changes.
- How - Outline what you expect the result of the changes to be.

Once the process has begun:

- Encourage your members to give feedback on the changes – and respond to it.
- Consider tweaking new programs if they do not provide the expected results, based on a realistic timeline.

Make sure your club leaders set a good example by accepting and embracing the changes. Make sure everyone is on the same page and build team spirit – you are all heading to the same place!

Technology

The underlying theme for many of these suggestions is communication. When Lions know what is going on with their club, they feel like they are an important part of the club – not left out. Use available technology to inform your members, promote your activities, and educate your community about Lions and what they do. For example, an online newsletter is faster and cheaper than traditional paper, and can be easily distributed.

Some ideas your club may want to explore if they are not already using these:

- LION Magazine online
- Email
- Website (e-Clubhouse)
- Social networking
- Newsletters/blogs
- Social invitation sites – send invitations and receive RSVP's and post-event information
- Financial sites for dues, donations and event fees

Choose the tools that work best for your club and are easily kept up-to-date. Be sure to train your members so they are comfortable using the technology.

STEP 3:
IMPLEMENT AND REVIEW YOUR PLAN

Regularly review your plan to see if the results are what your club wants to see. Remember – as your membership changes, so will your plan. New members bring new perspectives and a variety of interests and skills to your club, so utilize their talents.

MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:_____ Date: _____

Why did you join the Lions club?_____

_____

_____

What current club service project is most important to you? Why? _____

_____

_____

What current club service project is least important to you? Why? _____

_____

_____

What types of new service projects would you like the club to be involved in? _____

_____

_____

_____

What other activities would you like our Lions club to be involved in?_____

_____

_____

_____

What ideas do you have to improve our Lions club experience? _____

_____

_____

_____

What questions do you have about the club? _____

_____

_____

FORMER MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:_____ Date: _____

Why did you leave our Lions club? _____

_____

_____

How long were you a member of our Lions club? _____

Did you leave our club or Lions as an organization? _____

_____

What club service project was most important to you? Why? _____

_____

What club service project was least important to you? Why? _____

_____

What changes in our club would have encouraged you to remain a member? _____

_____

_____

_____

What activities would you have liked our Lions club to be involved in? _____

_____

_____

_____

What ideas do you have to improve our Lions club experience? _____

_____

_____

_____

Lions Clubs International

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