



The Leadership Letter

Membership: The Power of Voice

Increasing membership is the key to future success for SECA.

Membership in our association is as diverse as the field of early childhood education itself. Within the Southern Early Childhood Association, professionals, practitioners, consultants, educators, students and parents all come together in a consortium of voices committed to advancing and advocating early care and education efforts.

As pressure builds for qualified and educated early childhood professional leadership, the value of the Southern Early Childhood Association increases. We will grow as we continue to act on behalf of our members, and communicate the positive values derived from being a member.

One of the goals of the SECA Board is to identify and define issues affecting children and early childhood professionals in the South, so that prospective members will find value in joining our Association. The State Affiliate Presidents are currently examining the challenges, and recommendations for membership recruitment will be suggested by the Presidents to the SECA Board.

As a state affiliate leader, you may also want to consider a state *Membership Needs Assessment*, which may hold the key to your state's future success. In an assessment, members can report:

- What they perceive as the most valued services provided;
- Services they might want to be provided; and
- Services that are provided but they do not use.

They can also prioritize public awareness, educational opportunities, research, resources, training, conferences, best practice, public policy, leadership, etc. After you receive this information, the task at hand is determining how to use it effectively.

Write a plan of action to better address those needs of your members. In order to develop the plan, you will need to analyze current research and recommend methods to better deliver research information to your association members. SECA has an array of resources available to you in the form of DVDs, training modules, SECA Day at your conference, educational materials, and networking and mentoring opportunities. We encourage you to visit the website at www.southernearlychildhood.org for more information.

It is our collective responsibility to promote SECA because the power of our voice increases proportionately with membership.

*Susan Carrigan, Chair
SECA Leadership Commission*

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Maintaining Membership

The strength of an organization is often measured by its ability to attract new members and retain previous dues-paying members. Membership retention, the ability of the organization to maintain its existing members, should be part of the association's strategic and tactical plans just as each Association should have a plan on how to recruit new members. In an organization like SECA, each state affiliate plays a significant role in membership retention by providing that local and personal touch.

However, as you develop your membership retention strategies, be aware that expert views are divided on whether an Association should focus on retention or new members.

Several sources cite the belief that the cost of acquiring a new member in the not-for-profit sector is significantly more than the cost of retaining one. Arlene Farber Skinner and Miriam T. Meister, CAE, propose that most established

membership organizations do not have a hard number of people to recruit for membership. They note that finding out about organizations is not hard, so non-members have either actively decided not to join or don't care enough to look into it. The result they say is that the cost to recruit new members is much steeper than retaining them.

Research published in *Policies and Procedures in Association Management* Volume 1 (2006), suggests the opposite: associations should spend more time acquiring new members than retaining old members.

To promote retention, your Association's renewal plans should include the following:

- Sending out at least three personal renewal notices
- Incentives for early renewals
- Pre-renewal communications outlining the value of being a member of the organization

- Personal contact with members whose memberships are about to expire
- Making renewing easy
- Evaluating member services, as member retention is also linked to member services.

Sources for further reading:

Levin, Mark. Membership Recruitment and Retention. In *Professional Practices in Association Management* (chapter 30). 2nd edition. Cox, John B., CAE, editor (ASAE & the Center, 2007).

Shepard, David. (Feb 1, 2007) Updating the New DM: It Costs More to Get Them Than to Keep them. *Sez Who? Direct*. Retrieved from http://directmag.com/mag/marketing Updating_new_dm_6/

How to Become a SECA Leader

There are many leadership opportunities throughout the local, state, and regional levels of SECA and its affiliate states. These positions can range from being a committee member in your local chapter all the way up to becoming SECA President!

The SECA Board of Directors is made up of 17 members: the President, President-Elect or Past-President (depending on the year), 13 State Affiliate Representatives

who are elected by their state associations, and 2 Members-at-Large elected by the SECA Board.

If you are interested in representing your state association on the SECA Board or in leading your local or state affiliate in some other capacity, contact your state affiliate organization to find out how. Each SECA state has its own leadership structure and process by which its leaders are chosen. Contact information for each state af-

filiate can be found at www.southernearlychildhood.org/seca_states.php.

Every organization needs good leaders to achieve success, and the Southern Early Childhood Association is no exception. If you believe you have the talents and abilities to help lead the Association, we encourage you to get involved and we look forward to having you on our team!

Why Don't Board Members Do What is Expected of Them?

In 2009, a survey was conducted that asked the question: *Why Don't Board Members Do What They Are Supposed to Do?* Respondents and participants were a diverse group of teachers, community activists, business owners, college presidents, CEO's, political leaders, doctors, attorneys, engineers, management and non-management level employees, and dedicated volunteers.

Despite the diversity and differences in demographics, survey participants all shared one characteristic according to Hardy Smith, the survey creator: that of taking their personal involvement with non profit organizations very seriously.

Six recurring themes were identified as the **most important issues and solutions**:

- Connectivity
- No surprises
- Importance of time
- Improved communication
- Accountability

- Organizational focus.

A large majority of respondents said they want to feel a personal connection to the organization's cause or issue before getting involved. Be sure you have the right people for your organization by taking the time to understand their interests and abilities.

Use effective communication with prospective members. Make sure they understand the time commitment of serving on the Board. Be clear with your expectations as to what you need them to do. **No surprises.** If they are expected to travel to meetings they should know that before they are nominated.

Many issues volunteer boards face could be solved through more effective communication. Choose the most effective way to relay information -whether by e-mail, conference call, meeting, or reporting.

Listening is also an effective communication tool. Board members will be less committed, and will question their involvement if they

don't feel like their voice is being heard.

Organizations must recognize the importance of time to its Board members. Time is something we all feel strongly about. All meetings and functions should run efficiently with little wasted time.

Accountability should be a priority, most survey participants believed. Non-performance of other Board members is frustrating.

The other reasons cited for leaving a board position or declining a board position are the organization lacking a focus, reputation issues, financial questions, and staff who do not project a professional image. Organizations who are experiencing Board recruiting and retention challenges need to honestly evaluate themselves and their board relationships.

Source: Why Don't Board Members Do What They're Supposed to Do?, Hardy Smith, September 2009, www2.guidestar.org/rxa/news/articles/2009

Board Café

These articles of interest are currently posted on the non-profit organization site www.blueavocado.org:

What is an Advisory Board and Should We Have One?

Proof of Life: Is Your Small Nonprofit Alive?

Raise Money in 30 Days

Nonprofit Conflict of Interest: A 3-Dimensional View

Golden Rule of Board Resignations





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*Promoting Quality Care and Education for
Young Children and Their Families*

www.southernearlychildhood.org

The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is a regional organization committed to promoting quality care and education for young children and their families. SECA is committed to providing leadership and support to individuals and groups by:

- *Enhancing the quality of young children's lives through early childhood care and education.*
- *Supporting families in their roles of caring for their children.*

Fostering the professional growth and status of individuals working with young children and their families

Tips for Being a Successful Leader

Whether you are an emerging leader or a seasoned veteran, it is always a good idea to take a little time every now and then to review some basic 'rules' of being a successful leader. Here are a few tips to guide you along your leadership path:

- 1) Build consensus and buy-ins
- 2) Always appear proactive
- 3) Know and respect your "followers"
- 4) Remember that you are a statesman
- 5) Be a "team player"
- 6) Be patient
- 7) Don't ride the fence
- 8) Always tell the truth –even if it is painful
- 9) Know when to give, but never be timid
- 10) Surround yourself with people more talented than you
- 11) Listen to your critics –be willing to accept constructive criticism
- 12) Take risks
- 13) Be positive
- 14) Have fun
- 15) Think BIG

Source: SECA Leadership Seminar

I never learn anything talking. I only learn things when I ask questions

-Lou Holtz