

Membership Retention

Like the rest of society, your members are busy, mobile people. Young people are likely to have a variety of life changes that can happen during their JCI career. Even in the best Local Organization, members will leave due to moving, job change, family situation or age. By accepting and planning for these realities, organizations can avoid instability that could result from the loss of experienced members.

Today, young people have more opportunities than ever to serve their community and be active in groups. Local Organizations must be aware of this competition for your members' time and keep this in mind through all your organization's plans.

BUILDING A BASE FOR MOTIVATED MEMBERS

Use this checklist to create a strong environment in which your members can get involved and your organization can thrive. These building blocks are essential for sustained membership.

1. Fulfill the JCI Mission

JCI Mission: To provide development opportunities that empower young people to create positive change.

Because everything we do in JCI is rooted in the JCI Mission, every member must know and embrace it. We must clearly convey this message to every young person who is a part of JCI.

2. Accurately represent JCI in the recruitment message

When inviting new members, ensure the recruitment message focuses on the JCI Mission and the true purpose of the organization. Emphasize the solutions that your Local Chapter has created to showcase your accomplishments. Then, make sure you are fulfilling this promise with activities that advance the Mission and create positive change in the community. When the words, expectations and experience match, the members will be satisfied.

3. Run projects relevant to the needs of the community

The JCI Active Citizen Framework provides a methodology for running sustainable, needs-based projects that create measurable results in communities. Through this framework, JCI members ensure their projects deliver effective positive change and a meaningful experience for members. By looking outward, members grow their talents by giving back to the community and seizing their own power to create positive change. Encourage members to think creatively about finding new and innovative solutions to community challenges. This will build their personal investment in the cause. Read more about the JCI Active Citizen Framework at www.jci.cc.

4. Follow the one-year-to-lead principle

The JCI Constitution states that every JCI organization on the local, national and international levels elects a new board of directors every year. This ensures that there are always new ideas and new life brought forth in the organization. It gives many young people the opportunity to lead, which is one of the avenues of positive change that JCI offers. Sometimes for smaller organizations it can be tempting to keep a Board of Directors for more than one year for fear that no other members are willing or ready to lead. However, it will have a very negative affect on the progress of your organization. Keeping the same board can entrench the problems that led to the shortage of leaders. The existing leaders must invite and encourage new members to take on a leadership position, even if it appears they don't have enough experience. Learning by doing is central to the JCI membership experience. It is your responsibility to prepare and support a new board. Once they know you trust them and believe in their abilities, they will rise to the challenge.

5. Cultivate a clear and positive reputation

A positive reputation in the community will make your members feel proud to be involved and will set a high expectation for member behavior. Don't try to make your chapter one that is all things to all people. Be the leading organization of young active citizens in your community, and make sure all the actions and activities of members uphold this standard.

6. Empower members to learn and participate

The Local Chapter should cultivate an environment where all members feel comfortable bringing new ideas and collaborating. The leaders set the tone for the organization. Always demonstrate openness and value diversity of thought so that members feel their input will be accepted. Local leaders should project the attitude that they are on the same level as the members. Show the members that their role is just as valuable to the organization as the leader role. Value and recognize those who put the team first.

MOTIVATIONAL TACTICS

Once the fundamentals of your Local Chapter are strong, use these motivational strategies to foster a greater sense of engagement, cooperation and enthusiasm.

- **Set a positive example**

The leaders' actions set the expectation and standard of behavior for members to follow. The leaders' attitude and confidence in JCI set the precedent. Negative comments rub off on others and breed an atmosphere of negativity. Whereas positive comments lead to motivation and optimism. New members will automatically follow the existing organizational culture.

- **Listen**

As a board member, your members elected you to represent them. You must listen to their wants and needs to accurately portray them through your decisions.

- **Recognize and show appreciation**

Simple words of praise and a public thank-you go a long way in making your members feel noticed and valued. Demonstrate politeness when communicating with members to develop an environment of mutual respect. For more high-profile recognition, help your members submit their projects for national and international awards. Winning an international award brings great joy and pride to all the local members, which can lead to the confidence to take on even more ambitious endeavors in the future.

- **Give constructive criticism in private**

Everyone makes mistakes and we all have room to grow throughout our JCI careers. During the evaluation of your projects, you will find ways to improve upon them. Criticism can be helpful when it is given as suggestions to the members, helping them better their project approach or implementation in the future. Avoid negative reprimands and be sure to help members improve upon the existing aspects of their project. This constructive criticism should be given in private to avoid embarrassment or the chance of making someone feel uncomfortable.

However, praise should be given in public. Recognition in front of their peers will make the members feel appreciated, valued and proud. Positive reinforcement should be given at the meetings to encourage members to stay involved in the current initiatives and be confident with their future ideas.