

Guidelines for Communicating with Lapsing Members

When members are about to lapse, IABC headquarters makes sure they are aware that their membership expiration date is approaching. We send two mailed invoices, emails before and after lapsing, and a note on their *CW* magazine indicating that it's the last issue if they don't renew. Throughout the year, we try to increase awareness and usage of member benefits at both the international and chapter level.

What we can't really provide is the personal touch that the chapter can, perhaps from somebody the member has actually met. To that end, we encourage chapters to reach out either by email or phone to their lapsing members. Below are some guidelines for content and suggested approaches. In general, the focus of these emails and calls should be on chapter benefits and personal connections, as well as alerting the member to the fact that the membership is lapsing.

-Emphasize the unique value that your chapter offers. For example:

- Highlight specific professional development events that drew crowds
- Discuss popular member benefits your chapter offers (e.g., special interest groups, job listings, accreditation support programs, mentoring)
- Share any demographic qualities of your chapter membership that can make the member feel a part of the team (e.g., students, senior communicators, particular industries, independents).

-Share anecdotes of IABC successes that happened in your chapter. For example:

- A job found through chapter connections
- Gold Quill Award winners
- Student projects for the chapter

-Note any chapter successes, such as:

- Fundraising for a local charity
- Winning a chapter management award
- High membership growth or retention

-Engage in frank conversation about what works in the chapter and what doesn't. This is an opportunity to learn how well the chapter is meeting member needs, as well as a retention effort. It also provides an opportunity for the member to connect with a sympathetic chapter leader, perhaps providing the first step in bringing an inactive member closer to the fold.

-Feel free to discuss benefits offered by the international organization as well. For example, in the last few years, IABC has introduced:

- Discovery, our searchable, online reservoir of IABC content
- Premium access to job listings: members can access listings for a full seven days before the public can
- Complimentary webinars, with absolutely no added cost for members to participate

-Discuss the value of volunteering in the context of how active the member has been. Emphasize how engagement in IABC is crucial to maximizing the value of membership, and volunteering is the best way to maximize engagement. Perhaps this is the missing link for someone not planning to renew?