

New Mexico Chapter - Membership Category

New Mexico broke our previous record of the most members in the Chapter's history in 2015-2016, with a total of 266 members. It was a combination of a great recruitment program for new members and a strong retention process with a 93% rate for 2016. Even though our state is one of the smallest in terms of population, with less than a million people in our immediate marketing area, we have consistently qualified as a medium chapter in the middle of the 52-pack of Chapters. Our members are involved and committed, in large part due to our membership process.

Our retention program has been remarkably successful, especially since 2013, when we began rebuilding from the recession. In 2008, we were at our highest number of members at 257, but dropped dramatically as the recession took hold. By 2012, we were at 215 members, an almost 20% loss.

In spite of the recession and in spite of continuing to have one of the weakest economic ratings in the U.S. (*Business Insider* recently rated New Mexico as the 48th worst state in employment growth), we've both retained existing members and added new ones. In 2015, we had 241 members in September, and in 2016, as mentioned above, we broke our earlier record of most members in the Chapter's history with 266.

Even when we were losing members, we generally held on to principal and associates members, but lost second and third affiliates of companies. Our retention program was the main reason for retaining our core companies during the downturn.

The success rate of our recruitment program is reflected in the 10% increase in the September 2015 to August 2016 time period, and the fact that we now have the most members in the Chapter's history.

Our recruitment program has three stages. When a prospective member expresses interest in joining (either through referral by an existing member or directly to the chapter), a staff member meets them at a location of their choosing. A member of the Board is invited as well. The new member receives a Membership Orientation Packet that includes pertinent information about Chapter activities and events, committees, and sponsor information. During the meeting, staff and board member discuss how the new member can become involved in the Chapter, thereby securing the most benefit for their investment.

At that time, the prospective member is invited to an upcoming Chapter event as the Chapter's guest. At the event, they are introduced to board members who introduce them to other members in attendance.

If they join, notice is sent to the full membership and they are announced at a monthly luncheon, and identified with a New Member ribbon. They are also listed on the Chapter PowerPoint at upcoming luncheons for one quarter. Chapter staff then schedules a follow-up member meeting to answer questions, and to get them involved in a committee or suggest other ways to get involved.

The goal of the orientation process is to "close the deal" with prospective members, and to solidify the Chapter involvement with new members. This is particularly important since new members become long-term members once they are truly part of the Chapter. They start to build relationships with other members, and become part of the Chapter's successes. They identify more strongly with the Chapter and its goals and issues. Then the Chapter becomes part of their automatic renewal decision at the end of the year.