

# Keep members coming back

## Retention tips at your fingertips

BY CATHY CASSATA  
AAMA STAFF WRITER

**N**ow that you've worked hard to recruit members to the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA), your next challenge is retaining them. Don't worry; help is here. The chair of the AAMA Membership Strategy Team (MST) and presidents of AAMA affiliates share their success stories and offer valuable advice.

### Speak out and listen up

Communication is the engine of every organization; without it, the organization can't function. Talk to your members and find out what they expect, otherwise you may lose them and never know why. The MST suggests that affiliates call nonrenewing members and invite them back, or ask why they did not rejoin. If the nonrenewers offer reasons that can be changed, make a change. Rita Nixon, CMA, president of the Flathead County Chapter in Montana, agrees, "The best way to keep members is to be open to change. I'm constantly asking members why they haven't been coming to meetings and what they would like done differently."

Barbara Lato, CMA, RN, MS, past president of the Wisconsin Society of Medical Assistants, uses a similar tactic. "To keep members, we continually ask for feedback. We

provide a survey to our membership annually."

Keeping members in the loop and listening to their suggestions helps the association run smoothly. MST Chair Mary Dyer, CMA-A, summarizes it best, "Without communication, all is lost! Use postcards, telephone, e-mail, et cetera. Just keep your members informed."

### Spice up those CEUs

Continuing education units (CEUs) stand as a solid reason to remain a member of the AAMA. Therefore, stressing their importance and offering attractive CEUs is crucial. Nixon advises, "Push how important it is to keep up with CEUs. I always ask members, 'Do you have enough CEUs to recertify? Well, we've got some great sessions coming up.'"

Once you promise quality sessions, make sure to follow up. Dyer suggests holding monthly education programs so members can depend on getting their CEUs. Several affiliates network with local health care workers to make monthly workshops possible. Nixon explains, "We get local physicians to speak at our sessions for free. We've also networked enough so that we can hold our meetings at local health care facilities for free."

Joan Magness, CMA, past president of the Kentucky Society of

Medical Assistants adds, "We offer free credits at our monthly meetings and we get interesting speakers in various areas of the medical field for variety."

Having local physicians speak at sessions also acts as a marketing tool. The more physicians who are aware of Certified Medical Assistants (CMAs,) the better. Lori Schalk, CMA, past president of the Montana Society of Medical Assistant, notes, "Getting noticed by physicians in your state is critical so that the demand for CMAs increases. Then members will want to stay certified." ▀

### Ideas that work!

- Encourage members to become involved in the chapter or state.

—Mary Dyer, CMA-A

- Reach out to members at large to get them involved.

—Joan Magness, CMA

- Target younger members and explain the importance of membership and CEUs.

—Lori Schalk, CMA, EMT

- Establish a scholarship fund.

—Barbara Lato, CMA, RN, MS

- Active members adopt an inactive member and offer to carpool to meetings.

—Membership Strategy Team