

**League of American Orchestras**

**Volunteer Council**

**Minutes of Strategic Conversations – Presidents & President-Elects**

**Conversation #2 - Membership**

**Tuesday, October 13, 2015**

**3:00 EST**

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**Facilitators:**

Linda Weisbruch (president, Volunteer Council)  
Debbie McKinney (president-elect, Volunteer Council)  
Terry White (secretary, Volunteer Council)  
Samara Ungar (manager of the annual fund, League of American Orchestras)  
Caitlin Whealon (meetings and logistics coordinator, League of American Orchestras)

**Participants serving orchestras in the:**

Midwest – 4, Group 1, 1, 2, 3  
Southeast/Middle Atlantic – 3, Group 2, 3, 6  
South/Southwest – 3, Group 3, 3, 3  
West – 2, Group 1, 5

**Conversation #2: Membership infrastructure**

Members are the heart of our organizations; they must be engaged and know their work is appreciated. Shar McBee's book "To Lead is to Serve: How to Attract and Keep Volunteers" is the perfect primer for engaging and retaining our members.

- Readers found the book to be common sense but presented in a practical and clear manner.
- One participant utilized a lesson learned; she contacted two vice-presidents who had particularly difficult jobs and asked how she could serve them. They were very pleased she had reached out to them.

**Structure:** Do you have a membership vice-president or chair and, if so, what committees are under the new member chair?

- Midwest:
  - One group has two directors of membership overseeing recruitment and retention; 10 membership events annually. By-laws require three events which are a fall, spring, and holiday event; seven additional learning events featuring musician programs.
  - One group has a membership chair whose committees do recruiting, mentoring, and external communication.

- Southeast/Middle Atlantic:
  - One organization has a vice-president of membership with committees for directory, member renewals, recruitment (five or six coffees where the conductor speaks and musicians provide entertainment). Current focus on younger individuals and people who work led to three evening events. Also approaching Junior League and other groups to see if their members are interested in joining. There is a chair for member services (hospitality) with three sub-committees that provide food for the musicians and refreshments at meetings.
- South/Southwest:
  - Two organizations have mentoring programs and new member committee chairs.
- West:
  - One organization has a membership director who oversees mentoring programs and new member receptions.
  - In an umbrella group, several subgroups have membership chairs, but all do not have mentoring programs. The umbrella group puts on an annual workshop with knowledgeable speakers for panel discussions, including a specific membership workshop on retaining members and recruiting new members. Most recruitment is done by reaching out to friends and co-workers.

**Oversite and Management of Volunteers:** Do you maintain a database of volunteer hours?

- Midwest:
  - Each chair tracks the hours which are entered into a master spread sheet that is reviewed quarterly.
  - One group has not done any reporting to date but they are considering the creation of a hybrid method utilizing both self-reporting and chair reporting.
- South/Southwest:
  - Each volunteer job is calculated at 5 hours per event and the chair's hours are estimated as 10 hours.
- West:
  - Group coordinates with orchestra to determine volunteer needs and creates a spreadsheet with these volunteer opportunities. Board members keep up with their own hours, and committee chairs keep up with the volunteer hours. Hours are reported monthly; hours calculated and reported to orchestra board to inform them of both funds and volunteer hours being donated.

**What are your membership requirements and what is done if the requirements are not met?**

- Several groups reporting either had no membership requirements or did not enforce sanctions for any individuals not fulfilling membership requirements.
- One group is invitation-only membership, requiring the purchase of one season ticket, one ticket to their annual major fundraiser, and attendance at 5 out of 10 general membership meetings.

## **Does your organization use job descriptions? Do you include a month-to-month timeline of accomplishments?**

- Midwest:
  - One group does not have good job descriptions, but there is oversight of procedures.
- South/Southwest:
  - In one group, most members don't know what the jobs entail. A strategic plan was created in 2009, but has not been updated. The president contacted all chairs and officers; gave them descriptions if available and created one if not. Everyone was asked to keep up with what they did, so the job descriptions can be updated in the spring.

## **How does everyone know what they are supposed to do? Do you have annual reports?**

- Midwest:
  - One group has position descriptions for board members. These descriptions are updated every five years and are used in board recruitment.
  - Another group has annual reports. They have job descriptions but they are underutilized. Members of long standing know how to do the job, and new members are asking for the descriptions.
- Southeast/Middle Atlantic:
  - One group's historian collects the annual reports and puts them in the president's notebook, as well as the committee notebooks. The committees are asked to have transition meetings.
  - Another group updates descriptions constantly; these are used in recruiting committee chairs and board members. Annual reports are required but the challenge is to collect them. They have virtual notebooks for their committee chairs online.
  - In a third group, everyone has a notebook that is passed on, containing all the necessary information. There are five project notebooks.
- West:
  - One group revised their by-laws during the summer and asked everyone what they do and what they should be doing. They then revised their job descriptions; they require annual reports.

## **Can you renew your membership online?**

- Midwest:
  - In one group, every member has an anniversary renewal date. Three to four weeks prior, they receive a handwritten letter thanking them and asking them to renew (they include an envelope). Closer to the date, members receive a renewal email. If a membership lapses, the member will be contacted by mail and email. Renewal information is included in the newsletter.
  - Another group's annual renewal is done by mail. Dues are \$50 but if a member pays \$100, they can be a sponsor by giving a gift of membership to another person, and then mentor that individual. Thank you notes are sent.

- Southeast/Middle Atlantic:
  - One group's renewals are due by July 1<sup>st</sup>. A form is mailed and also available online (although you must print the form and mail it in). The membership directory is mailed around September 1<sup>st</sup>.

**One group asked if anyone has 1/2-year memberships for any new member joining during the latter part of the fiscal year.**

- Southeast/Middle Atlantic:
  - One group does not pro-rate dues for any reason.
  - For one group, if an individual joins in January or after, membership is complimentary for the balance of that fiscal year, although a renewal notice is sent out almost immediately following in March/April.
- South/Southwest:
  - One group's new members must pay dues in full regardless; they receive a directory and newsletter in return.
- West:
  - A professional affiliate group's dues support their orchestra's music library; dues are pro-rated as the year progresses.

The Conversation adjourned at approximately 4:00 pm EST. The next Conversation (#3) will take place **Tuesday, October 27<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 EST**. Social media, recruitment/retention, and generational differences in today's volunteer pool will be topics for discussion.