

Guiding New Members to Your Professional Affiliations | Brenda Jean Patrick

Nancy: "I cannot figure out why everyone does not join their local, state, and/or national association!"

Sarah: "Yes, I know what you mean. It just makes sense to care enough about you to join!"

Nancy: "Teachers and administrators have degrees, certificates and their membership in professional organizations to show their professionalism."

Sarah: "Well, as support staff and office professionals, we are just that, professionals. Really, could you see any district running effectively without support staff?"

Nancy: "That is why it is so important to join! So that others see us as the professionals we are."

Sarah: "I could not have said it better myself. Besides the fees to join are minimal and the benefits are numerous."

Nancy: "I like the prestige that comes from belonging to a professional association. It makes me feel proud...proud of me and what I do for student achievement."

Sarah: "We are lucky to have a professional organization."

Nancy: "I joined my local, state, and National Association of Educational Office Professionals twenty years ago."

Sarah: "I joined five years ago. The inspiring meetings and network of colleagues I have cultivated has been such a blessing."

So here it is 2010, and we are revisiting the same question we asked in 2000, "Why aren't our colleagues leaping into local, state, and national affiliations?"

Daniel Pink, in his latest book *Drive*, www.danpink.com talks about what truly motivates people. It comes down to three elements:

- 1) autonomy, the desire and urge to direct our own lives,
- 2) mastery, the desire to continually improve at something that matters, and
- 3) purpose, the desire to do things in service of something larger than ourselves.

www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation.html

Keeping these three items in mind, what is motivating you? What are you doing to get your colleagues to join your professional association? Have you taken action? Why or why not?

As The Customer Care Teacher, I have discovered it all boils down to communication. Your decision to communicate with colleagues until they tell you to go away...they have to say, "Go Away!" We too often react to non answers or the ignoring of our emails by dropping the conversation. Dropped communication equals dropped membership.

If you want someone to join an organization, plan on taking brochures, the membership form already started for them and spending half an hour sharing your story. Inform them why you joined and what benefits you have received, and most importantly, what role you play within the organization. It is your story that the newcomer relates to, is moved by, and reacts to by joining the organization.

One must address, in these tough economic times, the need to move from joining the professional association as a luxury to one of necessity.

If we do not value ourselves as professionals, how can we expect others to value us professionally? Just imagine what that will imply for compensation and job security as well as work load.

As an educator for over 25 years, my experience has been that people who do not join, were joiners in the past, but somewhere became disillusioned with the "tattoo" of belonging. The meetings were boring and little to nothing was gained from the experience. There was just too much politics or "diquish" mentality in the organization...and who needs that when you are trying to survive.

It is time to try again. There is nothing second rate about being the best professional possible. It is time to stop discussing why they are not joining and to start discussing what lessons should we be learning from the decline in membership and the lack of new membership.

It will be vital for you as a member of the organization to work with district administrators, hold conversations with leaders and implore administrators to say to their new staff member or returning non-members,

"I encourage you to join your local, state, and national association. I expect to see you attending the meetings and I will expect you to share with me ways I can support the professional development of support staff." The support staff is waiting for approval and encouragement from their administrator to commit to an organization whether the meetings are on school district time or after work.

Valerie Peake, M.Ed. of Empowerment Today, LLC says, "Verbal commitment is not enough. Be supportive when the office staff goes to their monthly meetings. Take an interest in what they are learning."

Seth Godin, author of *Linchpin* says that marketing is everything, but it comes down to, "How do I get my ideas out there to the people who care?"

He focuses on resistance. The "lizard brain" is the part of the brain that takes over if we fear or anger. His policy is to do whatever his "lizard brain" says he should not. The "lizard brain" becomes our resistance. In naming the problem, we find that we are closer to the solution. Please allow me to repeat... In naming the problem, we find that we are closer to the solution.

Are you resisting when it is your action needed to get members? Are you willing to take a risk? Why is sharing your story of membership a risk for you?

Linchpins are people who are willing to go against the status quo and take a risk. They are creative thinkers and doers.

Isn't that how you think of the membership in your organization... as Linchpins?

Seth Godin's strategy starts with two questions, "Is it good for the work? Does it augment the work?" If the answer is yes, go for it. If you fail, not that many people will notice anyhow. Do something nutty; just do it; take the risk! www.sethgodin.com www.youtube.com/watch?v=Et8dxr-ec

Nancy: "Sarah, please come with me. I am going to speak with

continued on page 10

Denise about joining the association. I know she will benefit from hearing our stories.”

Sarah: “Sure. I can add that the meetings are motivating and the networking opportunities can provide faster results without reinventing the wheel.”

Nancy: “I cannot imagine not being a part of this organization. It has positively changed my perspective of myself as a professional. I was so shy and fearful and look at me now.”

Sarah: “True. I hold my head high, knowing that I have completed the standards to be a certified office professional.

I have my certificate framed and hanging on my office wall.”

As The Customer Care Teacher, allow me to stress the importance of professionalism. It is your attitude, appearance, work ethics, body language, customer care, competence, communication skills and

knowledge base. It is what commands respect and garners resources from the public to support student achievement. Our students’ futures are tied directly with what the public thinks of us today. You joined your professional organization now start the conversation and begin guiding new members to their professional organization.

Brenda Jean Patrick,
The Customer Care Teacher
www.brendajeanshiprick.com
Follow her on Twitter
<http://twitter.com/bjptcct>



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS

NES ↔ CONNECTOR

WEEKLY EDITION

Volume 1, Issue 1

May 2011



Change