

4 Members

4.1 Membership statistics

Updated statistics on well-chosen criteria are basic for leading membership development, as successful leaders must face the facts. Not all countries have decreasing membership figures. What is their secret? Why do quite large countries stay for years with the minimum of 100 members which are necessary to be registered as a Federation? As Membership development is a basic issue for any organization we have to discuss how to increase membership and how to empower the Membership Committee. Committee members who cannot stay for more than two terms cannot take the responsibility for a vital long term membership development. **A freelancer expert who establish statistics and the data for a systematic long term membership development** strategy should support the Committee Chair and guaranty sustainability.

4.2 Why is BPW not the place for every women?

This issue has to be understood. It is not a question of discrimination but a smart strategical fact which finally supports all women. If a group of motivated pioneers goes ahead the others can follow much easier. It's an important question especially for women who like to involve everybody. Involving everybody can block the whole. To reach its goal BPW needs finances. But if fees are so low that every woman can afford them, the organization will not be able to reach its potential. BPW leaders have to be aware of this context when low fees prevent the true potential of BPW. Today all women profit from the efforts of a small group of pioneers who conquered the right to vote for all women.

4.3 Profile of members

The profile of the members of an organization has an impact on the quality of the organization. An interesting development happened in a country which accepted women who just had to earn money but were not required to take any responsibility in their professional activities. Some of the women who had no leadership experience had their own priorities. Looking at one's own small world and bothering about one's own profit is different from looking at the whole and being motivated to truly invest in gender equality. Annual meetings and the development of an organization can be hampered by groups which are too narrow minded, feel themselves as victims and fight against authorities instead of taking the lead and offer better propositions. Women with some leadership experience know that finding a common path means being able to find compromises. An open minded person does not depend on the professional status of a person. The Executive Board Members of a Club that accepts a member have an important responsibility and need good knowledge of human nature.

4.4 Profile of Members who act out the penny pincher mentality

If members takes an half of an hour to discuss a fee increase from 8 to 10 US\$ something is wrong and such a group will not survive, what later on truly happened with this group. Members have to be aware of the sense and purpose of the organization they belong too. BPW is not a low price leisure club, even though leisure is a part of our being together. The goal of BPW is to reach gender equality and many members are motivated to invest a lot in voluntary work. The idea that voluntary work doesn't cost anything is wrong. The many pieces of voluntary work have to be integrated into the whole which requires a very reliable administrative back office with paid staff. Women not only block themselves but even abuse each other because they do not understand that an organization with voluntary working members depend on a reliable paid staff back-office.

If it takes me several e-mails to get the actual passwords for my bpw-e-mail addresses which my technical support needs to install my new computer, if I do not get the data requested on a registration form, if carefully prepared letters are not forwarded etc. one can understand that women with self-respect will not contribute.

Men act differently, for them investments are self-evident, men in general respect their performances much more than women.

Penny pincher mentality can be acted out in super markets but in BPW it destroys our work and the respect for our performances.”

4.5 Attracting new members

The profile of the members of a club attracts members who have a similar profile. Therefore it is important to have attractors who attract smart and strong women who are able to see and understand the whole mission of BPW. Joining our network for business contacts is a good thing, but if that is the only motivation to belong to BPW a member will be disappointed sooner or later.

A culture of show and activism attracts members who feel well with shine or superficiality. But the BPW goal requires members who are motivated to offer a commitment in a field where true values are basic.

To keep new committed women as members smart presidents very quickly offer them attractive minor tasks. Committed member are motivated to contribute and want to get to know the organization. Since last Congress a new concept, the “Member initiated Taskforces & Projects” gives members the opportunity to perform on international level if the President of a Club and Federation agree. The new tool offers members the opportunity to follow their motivation and to get involved in BPW.

4.6 Young BPW and the generation gap

BPW is well aware of the importance of Young BPW and offers young members a chair in the Executive Boards on the different organizational levels. In our digital age much more could be done for young members who have to care for children, to commit in their job and to organize a household. Young women have specific challenges, a very limited time budget and yet are predestined to use smart digital tools.

Experience shows that if a club has a gap of a “half of a generation”, young members do not feel comfortable in the group. Therefore Clubs need to have members from all ages.

Feeling comfortable in the circle of the founder generation is okay, but continuous efforts are needed to invite and keep young women as members.

4.7 Generation 50+

Most women who have reached the peak of their career and are heading to retirement or are already retired have important experiences, competences and time to invest. They are real treasures for our organization if BPW is able to offer them adequate tasks. But to harvest and integrate all the commitments possible, an absolutely reliable paid administration is vital.

4.8 Attending activities on all levels

BPW practices a very open culture which means new members or members with no leadership position are welcome to attend the international Congresses and the Leaders' Summits. As women have to learn to act not only in their small nests but should feel okay on national and international level BPW is an ideal training field. Normally women have to be encouraged to attend a National Conference or an International Congress, therefore leaders should very consciously encourage women again and again to attend such meetings.

4.9 Membership campaigns which work

Unfortunately the "1 + 1 member campaign" gets proposed again and again and doesn't work. It would be worthwhile to look closer at why it doesn't work and find campaigns which bring success.

4.10 Founding and supporting new Affiliated Clubs of BPW International

The guidelines for founding an Affiliate Club and the latest version of the model constitution have to be online. Women who are willing and able to found Clubs in new countries have to be encouraged by BPW. A professional and caring support is important.

4.11 Twinning between Clubs

Twinning is a very important and valuable tool for women who do not dare to leave their little nest. Visiting or receiving a twinning partner is a step which is feasible and encourages a club to take a next future step. Twinning also improves the intercultural understanding of all participants.

4.12 Virtual "Clubs" and meetings

Even though virtual Clubs are not in our constitution, in our digital age we have think about that opportunity.

The most valuable meetings are without doubts the face to face meetings, but virtual meetings can support our activities too. A lot of experience is required. The Taskforce “International Mobility”, chaired by Géraldine Crevat, organizes a monthly meeting on international mobility. For young women in various countries such an opportunity is of the highest value.

A Young BPW proposed a “meeting group for young BPW mothers” who have to stay at home and have to face comparable challenges for a certain time. Digital groups on specific topics is an area that BPW has to explore and members are invited to test.

4.13 Services for Members

At International Congress in Luzern the participants got a leaflet presenting the services BPW International offers to each member. Such information should be available online and the Club Presidents should give the information to each new member when they join BPW.

4.14 Languages

As only a quarter of our members have English as their first language, the language issue is an important one. Not being able to understand, to speak or to write English properly feels like handicapped, and reading or writing requests a lot of energy and time. Despite of the fact that BPW has 4 official languages and the most important texts are translated, the usual communication in English is very time consuming for all those who do not speak or write English fluently.

English speaking members should be very aware of these facts. Being patient, not speaking too quickly but clearly, using simple vocabulary and writing short texts is of major importance.

The 4 official languages are a considerable financial investment for BPW especially for the International Congress Budget. Beside the salaries for the written translations, the costs for the interpreters at an International Congress and their technical equipment exceeds 100'000 US\$.

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