SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN BASEBALL RESEARCH

BEST PRACTICES MANUAL FOR REGIONAL CHAPTERS

A quick reference guide of tips and best practices for attaining the highest standards of operational performance in local chapters

Updated January 2019
SABR Chapter Leaders,

As your chapter liaison on the Board of Directors, I want to thank you for all of your hard work and commitment to SABR. Your efforts and accomplishments do not go unrecognized. I hope you find this Best Practices Handbook helpful in your future endeavors. Please use this manual as a reference tool and feel free to ask questions that may not be covered in this guide with me at any time.

If your chapter has some best practices that you would like to share or include in this manual, please don’t hesitate in contacting me or a member of the SABR staff. Just like the game of baseball, examples in this manual will be constantly changing and updated.

I can be contacted via email at lheaphy@kent.edu. Please feel free to reach out with any questions, comments, or concerns regarding your chapter. I and the staff are eager to work with you and help your chapter reach its full potential!

Leslie Heaphy
SABR Vice-President
TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. EXECUTIVE CHAPTER LEADERSHIP ................................................................. 4

II. MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT ........................................................................ 5

III. CHAPTER MEETINGS ...................................................................................... 5
    ▶ CHAPTER/SPECIAL EVENTS IDEAS......................................................... 6
    ▶ CHAPTER PROJECTS.................................................................................. 7

IV. MOTIVATION AND MEMBER PARTICIPATION .............................................. 8

V. MEMBER RETENTION ...................................................................................... 9

VI. TOOLS FOR CHAPTER LEADERS ............................................................... 11
I. EXECUTIVE CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

- The chapter should elect chapter officers to regulate and delegate tasks regarding various operations of the chapter: President, Member Engagement, Events, Fundraising, etc.

  *Paul Parker of the Rocky Mountain Chapter notes that “For a chapter to grow and thrive, it is critical to have a point person, someone who is willing to lead, to take ownership of the chapter’s welfare. Just like any organizational endeavor in life you need to have that person who’s willing to steer the bus.”*

- All chapter leaders and executive officers **MUST** be active SABR members. It is the chapter’s responsibility to provide the names of chapter officers to the Manager of Chapter Relations. Any and all changes in leadership must also be submitted promptly.

- The chapter leaders should meet with the same frequency that chapter meetings are held. *Ideally this is monthly or quarterly.* The Executive Committee will discuss and finalize any special items for the chapter meeting agenda and ensure their reports (membership, finance, etc.) are as current as possible.

- Each officer should keep two lists of tasks done during their term of office: One for things done well that you would recommend your successor to continue with. The other, less than admirable items that you want to challenge your successor to improve upon in the future. The overall success of the chapter from year to year is the objective of these lists which will aid in effective transitions with officers that follow you.

- An extended executive leadership meeting will allow officers to establish and monitor chapter goals and keep chapter goals current and visible. This time together will also establish teamwork and relationship skills that are necessary for the leadership board to be an effective leadership body.

- At the end of the officer term the outgoing officers should ensure an effective transition meeting occurs with the newly elected officers.

- The length of term of office is determined by the current leadership board and and voted on by the local chapter. The most effective is usually annual elections December – December which reduces turnover within the New Year.

- Each chapter has a responsibility of submitting an end-of-year Chapter Report to Leslie Heaphy and the SABR staff to ensure quality programming.

- **INTERNATIONAL CHAPTERS:** Feel free to submit your Annual Report in your home language. If you would like to submit it in both your language and English, that is perfectly acceptable.
II. MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT

• Promote and publicize chapter events year-round
  - Team FanFests: Reference the “Guide to FanFest” manual on the “Admin Tools” page
  - Word of mouth
  - Social media: Utilizing platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and even chapter websites is critical in membership recruitment and retention. Many chapters are also looking to engage a younger demographic and social media is a key influencer to those potential new, tech-savvy members.
  - Press/Media Release: The Hank Gowdy (Columbus) Chapter brings awareness to upcoming SABR events by posting an announcement in local newspapers.
• Use slide shows or PowerPoints to highlight recent chapter events.
• Provide refreshments, name tags, printed SABR or chapter information, and introductions to new members.
• Challenge members to personally seek out new members and acknowledge those who do.
  - The Connecticut Smoky Joe Wood Chapter created a “mentorship system” to help new members get involved with their core members who are active in their local events.
• Have a sign-up sheet available at every chapter meeting or event to provide to potential new members to collect their name and contact information for future correspondence

III. CHAPTER MEETINGS

• Regular chapter meetings should remain consistent (monthly, quarterly, etc.), with the exception of a special event, e.g. Fan Fests, Game Outings, Annual Luncheon, etc.
  - The Rocky Mountain and Roger Hornsby (Austin) Chapters are holding their 112th consecutive monthly luncheons this March.
• Chapter meetings can be held in more ways than one. Meetings can be formal or informal, held for an hour or on a weekend afternoon, can consist of research presentations or just simple baseball chatter. There is no wrong way to hold a SABR meeting, simply meet and talk baseball!
• Recognize new members and member achievements
  - Rick Swift, President of the Maddux Bros.-Las Vegas Chapter, makes it a point to read the New Member section in “This Week in SABR” and sends out an email or note if a new member in his chapter area is listed.
  - Utilize newsletters and social media to welcome new members and honor achievements.
  - Welcome new members during chapter meetings.
  - Create a unique chapter award to honor special achievements.
• Give a glimpse into the future: aim to always be a meeting or two ahead and keep your members informed of upcoming chapter events and happenings
CHAPTER/SPECIAL EVENTS IDEAS

• Chapter breakfasts
• Happy hour
• Day at the ballpark
• Annual luncheon/awards ceremony
• Monthly brunch
• Stadium tours
• Speaker panels
  - Players, team personnel, local authors, sport writers, researchers, umps, etc.
  - The Maddux Bros.-Las Vegas Chapter presents their speakers with a “Thank You” gift. This can include extra SABR memorabilia, a publication, a thank you note, etc.
• Research presentations
• Chapter birthday celebration
• SABR Day
• End of year/season dinner
• Book readings/signings
• Special film screenings
• Local team FanFests
• Trivia contests
• Museum visits/historical exhibits
  - The Hank Gowdy (Columbus) Chapter utilizes an assortment of venues; libraries, restaurants, ballparks, museums, college games.
  - The Boston Chapter, as part of the SABR Day festivities, conducted a “Baseball History Tour of Infamy” near Fenway Park and Kenmore Square.
  - The Allan Roth (Los Angeles) Chapter organized a bus tour that took members through Los Angeles’ baseball history starting in 1911.
CHAPTER PROJECTS

- Grave Marker Projects
  - See: Negro Leagues and Nineteenth Century Research Committees projects

- History of the local team
  - See: Larry Dierker/Houston Chapter website at SABRHouston.org

- Website with monthly blog
  - See: Halsey Hall (Minnesota) Chapter newsletter, "The Holy Cow"

- Auctions and raffles

- Minor League Baseball club partnerships

- MLB club partnerships
  - The Forbes Field (Pittsburgh) Chapter raises funds through donations, auctions, and 50/50 raffles to support Pirates Charities and the Clint Hurdle "Wins for Kids" program.
  
  - Paul Parker, President of the Rocky Mountain Chapter, serves as the Club Historian for the Colorado Rockies. He has generously offered to serve as a connector between any local SABR chapter and any MLB club personnel he has a relationship with.

- Local youth baseball

- Special unique initiatives
  - The Rogers Hornsby (Austin) Chapter paired up with the Capital of Texas Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association to create a baseball-themed program, BasebALZ, for Central Texas residents with early-stage Alzheimer's.
IV. MOTIVATION AND MEMBER PARTICIPATION

• People find a way to do what they want to do. Chapters should have events that encourage members to want to be there and be involved.

  - The Kekionga Chapter of Fort Wayne (Indiana) has started to incorporate a book swap into their meetings. Everyone who wishes to participate should bring one or two books that they wish to trade for someone else’s.

  *The Hank Gowdy (Columbus) Chapter hosts a Baseball Book Club that meets 4x a year a local library. The meeting includes discussion of the books read and often phone conferences with an author.*

• Survey members once per year to determine what their interests or desires are for programming. Planning events they suggest or request helps improve their support of the chapter.

  - SABR maintains an organizational account at SurveyMonkey.com that is available for all chapter and committee leaders to use at their discretion. Please contact Jacob Pomrenke for details at jpomrenke@sabr.org.

• Survey the basic schedules of all members each term. After combining all schedules, the most common open slots are the best available times to plan meetings and events.

• Expecting 100% attendance all the time is impractical. Accept the reality of it and move on with a goal to achieve, at minimum, 50+% participation.

• Have an established communications procedure so all members are clear on exactly whom to contact for any particular reason and are aware of chapter happenings.

• Focus on getting communication to all members on a consistent basis, both via e-newsletter or phone/letter to all offline members.

  - The Kekionga Chapter of Fort Wayne (Indiana) mails a summary of each meeting in hopes of encouraging those who have not attended to attend the next meeting.

• Ask members to serve. Some people are natural volunteers; whereas others need to be asked, encouraged, and advised on where the needs and opportunities are. Establish the understanding that every chapter member will serve in one way or another. Ask them to volunteer where their interest or talent is greatest.

• Plan enough opportunities for the building of trusting friendships. This begins during recruiting and carries forth into membership with speaker events, social events, birthday recognition, effective committee teamwork, research groups, etc.

  - Sam Zygner, chair of the South Florida Chapter, says “I touch base with every member at least once a year by sending a birthday greeting, inquiring if they would be interested in doing a presentation, or simply sharing baseball talk.”
V. MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

Please refer to the attached article for helpful hints:
http://www.nonprofitpro.com/article/5-successful-strategies-member-retention-70809/all/

1. AWARENESS. Membership development starts with one very important question: Do prospective members know who you are? Awareness is the measure of how successful your branding efforts have been to gain share of mind in your target audience. Until people know your organization, they’re not likely to become members or customers. (see page 6)

2. RECRUITMENT is the process of getting a potential member to “try” your association. Membership in professional associations typically is what marketers call a “push” product rather than a “pull’ product, in that membership tends to be something that needs to be sold or pushed in order to get returns. A proactive plan needs to be put in place in order to attract large numbers of new members to an association.

A recruitment program requires a learning mindset that uses testing strategies to optimize:

- The marketing message, to determine what value proposition is most attractive to prospective members.
- The membership offer, to determine what SABR benefits and incentives will attract members.
- The target market, to determine what market segments or lists of prospective members are most responsive to the message and offer.

3. ENGAGEMENT. An organization that has good awareness and a successful recruitment program next will want to focus on engaging new members. Member engagement is as simple as initializing a second transaction or interaction with your member.

If a member is part of an optional local chapter, he/she was more likely to renew. If they join a special-interest group (e.g., SABR research committee), he/she is more likely to renew. If they attend an annual event (e.g., SABR Convention, Analytics Conference), he/she is more likely to renew. In fact, the more events attended, the higher the renewal rate.

The bottom line is that research shows that an important predictor of membership retention is behavior. An association, and local chapter, that actively seeks to engage members — at almost any level — is one that is more likely to enjoy higher membership retention.
4. INTERDEPENDENCE is a relationship where a member has his/her identity, interests or talents tied to your organization. Think of the association, charitable group or faith organization that you feel the most closely aligned with. Why do you feel that alignment? Chances are it’s because you are held by one of the following three “glues” of interdependence:

! **Common vision.** Have you established a common vision that you and your members are striving to accomplish together and that they can believe in and help you achieve? Members who are sold on the vision are interdependent with your association.

! **Reward** is something that we all want — getting something back for our time and efforts. The most common rewards that members look for are valuable information resources and effective advocacy. Be sure to measure how your members think you are doing in these areas in order to establish their interdependence with you.

! **Recognition** tells members you know them, and the fact that they are known deepens their commitment and interdependence to the association.

5. **RENEWAL** is the quantitative evaluation of how successful you have been with the earlier components of your membership system. An aware, engaged and interdependent member is much more likely to renew than one who is not.

Renewal programs need to take into account that people are busy and overwhelmed with communications. Our analysis of lapsed members shows that the No. 1 reason that people leave an organization is not because they’re unhappy with the services or angry about customer service, but because they forget.

In some cases, the member moved and didn’t provide the association with a forwarding address. In other cases, the brand of the association didn’t stand out enough in the renewal notice, and it was overlooked. Whatever the reason, more members leave an organization by omission than commission.

In order to break through this omission challenge, your renewal programs need to break through the clutter of competing communications. This means renewals need to have adequate frequency and take advantage of multiple mediums (e.g., email, phone) to be effective.

Inevitably some members will leave an association. Membership recruitment is a lever to continue growth and keep associations thriving.
VI. WEBSITE TOOLS FOR CHAPTER LEADERS

As a chapter leader, you have a number of administrative tools at your disposal that can help make it easier for you to communicate with your members.

All chapter leaders have access to our Admin Tools page at http://admin.sabr.org. This page includes instructions on how to:

- Send a group e-mail announcement
- Upload a newsletter
- Add an event to the SABR calendar
- Download a list of current group members
- How to add a member to your group
- Find a list of your group's NEW, EXPIRING, LAPSED or OFFLINE members
- Download promotional materials like SABR postcards or membership forms
- Learn about creating a new chapter website or social media presence

If you have any questions about the Admin Tools available to SABR chapter leaders, or if you have trouble accessing the page, please contact Jacob Pomrenke at jpmrenke@sabr.org.