

Firm Visits Increase Membership at AIA Triangle

Contributed by AIA Triangle

January 2010

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SUMMARY

In 2004, AIA Triangle, the component that serves the Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill areas of North Carolina, developed a long-range plan. One of the priorities of this plan was to improve membership services. The board, with the help of the Executive Director, decided to launch a program to visit local AIA member firms. This program proved successful, local firms had a direct connection to AIA leadership, and membership increased 22 percent.

PUTTING A FACE TO THE AIA

The 2007 program was titled Reaching Out – Firm Visitations. For each visit, a few of the members of the AIA Triangle board along with the Executive Director visited firms and brought lunch.

The program typically begins with introductions and the review of AIA membership statistics in the country and state. However rudimentary these numbers may seem, it helps relay the proportion of AIA members within the architecture community.

During the visit, AIA Triangle distributes a survey that asks people to share their thoughts about current issues in architectural practice to better understand the local architectural community. In response to people asking what the AIA does for them, AIA Triangle developed a brochure describing all of the AIA Triangle committees and volunteer opportunities throughout the year. As important is the mission of AIA Triangle to serve its members, AIA is a volunteer organization and is only as relevant and strong as the volunteer base.

The firm visitations have provided AIA Triangle with valuable information about the local architectural community. The effort has formed the basis for many new, expanded and revised membership services to include a volunteer program at the local schools and Design Connection, a monthly informal breakfast program for members to meet and mingle. Each of these programs was informed from member feedback.

MEMBERSHIP GROWS, PROGRAMS PROSPER

Since the inception of the program, two and a half years ago, AIA Triangle has visited over 30 area firms and talked with more than 340 people. During that same period, AIA Triangle membership has grown by 22 percent, from 669 to 816 members, as of June 2009. Attendance at continuing education lectures and seminars has increased by an average of 25 percent. The response to the firm visits has been very positive from both firm principals and employees. The visits have reminded people that the AIA Triangle is here to serve the local architectural profession and that everyone has a responsibility to participate in creating a strong and vibrant community.

In addition to a direct increase in membership, AIA Triangle has also realized a significant increase in volunteer participation in committees and outreach groups. The Young Architects Forum (YAF), panel discussions, and sponsor events have all seen a marked increase in interest and participation, including the “Architini Winter Social,” with over 300 people in attendance. This has proven to be a successful project that has resulted in a renewed interest in AIA Triangle.

The program will continue, and, with it, more opportunities to talk about the value of AIA membership, and the value of an active membership in AIA Triangle.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 22.05.01 Membership Recruitment Strategies
- 22.05.05 Component's AIA150 Goals Bring Record Success
- 22.05.03 A Model for Building Associate Membership

Feedback

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Key Terms

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components