

## Creating a Brochure that Attracts New Members

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### SUMMARY

In 2004, AIA Illinois created a membership recruitment brochure for both state and local components' use. The brochure increased statewide membership by 624—close to 16 percent of AIA Illinois's total membership. The brochure was funded through the component's strategic plan budget and was overseen by two AIA Illinois committees.

### CHALLENGE: ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

AIA Illinois developed a membership brochure that is attractive, concise, and informative as well as adaptable for use by other components for recruiting and retaining members. Titled "AIA Membership—What It Means to You," the brochure presents a positive, professional image of the AIA.

The brochure provides a uniform identity and clearly explains AIA programs at the national, state, and local levels, touting the Institute's multitiered approach as "Three Organizations in One." It also contains letter templates that any component can easily adapt and print on a laser printer.

Early in 2004, AIA Illinois sent the brochure to each licensed architect in the state who was not an AIA member. By August 2004, AIA Illinois had 450 new members and 174 reinstated members; these 624 architects represent 16.4 percent of the component's total membership.

The brochure proved a cost-effective means to increase membership and promote understanding of the AIA.

### DEFINING THE NEED

Strategic planning revealed that AIA Illinois, a state component in a region with six diverse chapters, had no structured program or communications tools to recruit and retain members. Although membership connections happen primarily at the local level, AIA Illinois saw a need to help chapters recruit new members. Another strategic objective was to increase understanding of AIA Illinois's role in government advocacy at the state level.

Local chapters also lacked programs and tools for recruiting new members. For example, AIA Chicago (a large, staffed chapter) had programs for welcoming new members and retaining members at risk but not for attracting new members. All of the Illinois chapters recognized the need to focus on recruiting and retaining members but lacked the resources to do so.

The members of AIA Illinois included about 50 percent of licensed architects in the state. It also has a direct competitor, the Association of Licensed Architects. In addition, groups such as the Construction Specifications Institute compete for some of the same membership. A tool was needed to showcase the value of AIA membership and explain its role in government advocacy with a high degree of professionalism.

To address these concerns, AIA Illinois's membership and communications task forces recommended that the state component develop a brochure that would attract and keep members; explain the role of the AIA at the national, state, and local levels; and easily adapt for use by a component at any level.

### MAKING IT HAPPEN

AIA Illinois charged its communications and membership task forces to work together on recommendations for member recruitment and retention. The task forces recommended that events and one-on-one contact should stay local but that the state component could make a meaningful contribution by developing a brochure that others could adapt.

They also recommended that the brochure be funded from AIA Illinois's strategic plan fund and be provided to the chapters without charge.

AIA Illinois used an existing program, the Presidents' Roundtable, to get input and ideas from local chapters. All component leaders recognized that the AIA National Convention in Chicago in June 2004 would present a wonderful opportunity to attract new members. The year 2004 was important for another

reason: Architect's licenses in Illinois were due for biennial renewal, and the state had added a continuing education requirement.

AIA Illinois then engaged a communications consultant to develop the brochure. The design was improved by revision after the AIA Illinois Board participated in a brand consultation workshop led by Jamie Rice of Carton Donofrio Partners Inc.

#### **For More Information**

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#### **RESOURCES**

##### **More Best Practices**

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

- 21.04.02 Tapping a Different Type of Member
- 21.05.01 Meeting Architects' Needs
- 22.05.01 Membership Recruitment Strategies

#### **Feedback**

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#### **Key Terms**

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