

## Increasing Membership by Focusing on the Firm

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### SUMMARY

AIA Columbus and AIA Philadelphia have each taken a firm-focused approach to membership recruitment that other components of any size can easily adapt to help attract and retain members.

### LISTEN AND LEARN

AIA Columbus, Ohio, developed a listening survey as a tool to increase membership, gauge member expectations and needs, and increase member involvement in component activities. The component membership committee conducts the survey during its monthly firm visits. The meetings are open to all staff, whether they are AIA members or not. The committee gives the participants breakfast or lunch.

The survey results enable the component to identify recurring themes concerning members' and potential members' expectations of the component. The listening survey also generates significant feedback about the component's activities and operations. It comprises five core questions:

1. What (in your opinion) are the top three priority jobs for a professional organization like AIA Columbus?
2. What are your impressions of AIA Columbus's activities and services? What does AIA Columbus do? How effective? How beneficial?
3. What do you think that AIA Columbus should be doing for the profession?
4. What things do you need to further your career? Could AIA Columbus help with any of these?
5. If you are not a member, what would motivate you to become a member?

### FIRM BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

AIA Philadelphia also targeted firms in its membership drive. In November 1999, the component sent a letter, signed by the AIA Philadelphia president, to all member firms. The letter encouraged firms to offer AIA membership, or a portion thereof, as a benefit to staff architects, interns, and associates. The letter emphasized the

importance of membership as well as the potential to reduce firm dues because the national and local components levy a significantly higher firm charge for each architect who is not an AIA member. The letter coincided with issuance of the 2000 dues invoice.

As a follow-up to this letter, representatives of the component's executive and convention committees visited the largest member firms to discuss the benefits of membership. These brown-bag lunches were held at each firm's office, and all employees were invited to attend.

These efforts, combined with the ongoing recruitment at the national and state levels, resulted in a net increase in the component membership of 60 AIA members and 58 Associate AIA members.

### ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Amy Kobe, Assoc. AIA, formerly executive director of AIA Columbus, now serves as executive director of the State of Ohio Board of Examiners of Architects. Carol Williams is former membership director of AIA Philadelphia.

### RESOURCES

#### More Best Practices

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

- 22.05.01 Membership Recruitment Strategies
- 21.04.02 Tapping a Different Type of Member
- 21.04.03 AIA Florida Membership Program

#### Feedback

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#### Key Terms

Leadership, associations, Architecture associations, The American Institute of Architects, AIA Components, Membership