



## The Fun Factor - Core to Recruitment & Retention

Our State Directors, Regional Directors, and National Staff have all been emphasizing the importance of our chapters having fun. Of course, they're spot on: our members join chapters, not just the GWTA. The more fun we have at the chapter level, the more new members we'll attract, and the more members we'll retain, too.

But how? How do chapters have fun? Is there any specific formula or program?

I have one, but first let me talk more about the importance of creating an atmosphere that fosters and encourages humor, light-heartedness, and, yes, plain old fun.

Humor is a wonderful socializing tool. Research has found that people are attracted to individuals who are perceived to have a sense of humor. It also reduces tension in group settings like our chapter meetings. Have you ever noticed how we look around at others when we are laughing? Laughter creates this connection. Laughter also has wonderful physical benefits. When we laugh, our heartbeat, temperature, blood pressure and breathing increase. And after all of this activity, there is an exaggerated sense of relaxation. Dr. William Fry, a psychiatrist in California, has shown that 20 seconds of hearty laughter is the aerobic equivalent of 3 minutes of hard rowing.

So I encourage chapter leaders to begin with themselves. Show your members that they don't have to be serious all the time. Be a role model for a balance of hard work and laughter. Telling members to have fun and participating and initiating fun have totally different results. Also, leaders should try to inspire fun in others. Talk about the importance of fun and laughter and its impact in the chapter. Remind people to lighten up when things are getting too serious. Oscar Wilde said, "Life is too important to be taken seriously". Indeed, work and life are no less serious when we are having fun but we can sure tolerate a lot more seriousness when there's a bit of fun involved.

Set boundaries defining appropriate humor, but encourage your members to relax. Our chapters do best when we create a fun environment. Look around your chapter meeting and see what can be spruced up. Where can you add color, balloons, games, humor, puzzles, contests, recognition programs, decorations, cartoons, creativity, etc.? Surprise them regularly!

We need to look for humor everywhere. Start with yourself and then be spontaneous. Give members "permission" to identify and create fun ways to get work done. Include everyone in the search for and implementation of fun and humor. Smile and laugh a lot. Laughter is a top-down philosophy. Come to chapter events with a smile on your face. Make it your goal to get the work done in an environment of fun. And start now; don't wait. The results will surprise you. And imagine having the reputation of being a fun chapter where anyone would want to be a member.

OK on to my formula. I call it my “SUPREME” formula, and it goes as follows:

S - Spontaneous, and/or silly. When we can create an environment where we can be silly, or where we can spontaneously have fun, we’re doing well. Need an example? Just watch a group of small kids playing, and you’ll see the strategy in action.

U - Unexpected fun. (OK, call it “surprise” if you want.) People enjoy anticipating a good time, and like it when they get some fun that they didn’t expect.

P - Personalize the fun. All our members have personalities; our fun and humor are enhanced when we cater to individual personalities.

R - Responsible / Reasonable humor. Folks enjoy laughing with each other, not being laughed at. Our humor/fun needs to be enjoyed by all, not at the expense of a few.

E - Energize the atmosphere. Our meetings are most fun when there is an up-beat tempo, when things are moving at a fun pace, and when leaders keep things lively.

M - Magnets. Some folks are natural “fun magnets”. When rubbed together, some characters just generate laughter. I encourage chapter to give such folks jobs which give them an opportunity to involve others in the fun they generate.

E - Easy Going. Having a good time shouldn't be 'hard'. If the leaders of a chapter have fun, members of the chapter are likely to have fun, too. So let folks see you having a good time, and they'll mimic your attitude.

The SUPREME formula is my own creation, but I give it to you and your chapter. I sincerely believe that if we’re not having fun, we’re probably not doing it right. Go out and have fun!

Jerry Weltner  
National R&R Director (Recruitment & Retention)