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TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Membership Task Force
DATE: November 1, 2012
RE: Creation of a Membership Committee

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board of Directors authorize the creation of a *Membership Committee* for the purpose of focusing on membership development (recruitment), retention, and other membership issues as described in the below charge.

Membership Committee

Four members appointed for overlapping terms of two years each. Membership should have representation from as diverse a group of members as possible. Member ending his/her second year may be considered by the SLA President-Elect for position of Chair.

The Committee shall:

- (1) recommend to the Board of Directors policies and programs related to membership development (recruitment) and retention of members;
- (2) liaise with staff (Membership) to update existing materials and to develop and roll-out new and additional turnkey materials for the units (tools, templates, materials, ideas, etc.) to facilitate their recruitment and retention efforts;
- (3) liaise with staff (Membership) to conduct more frequent, "mini" surveys of the membership to assess member needs and to gather other member demographic information.
- (4) liaise with staff (Communications and Marketing) as required to highlight and publicize benefits of membership and member profiles;
- (5) liaise with, and provide direction/support to, the unit membership chairs to assist with their grassroots recruiting efforts.
- (6) research existing and new target markets (including the diversification into allied fields and industries) for membership development and growth.

(The Membership Director is a member of the Committee and the association Office contact.)

Chair

1. Name
Email address

Committee Members

1. Name
Email address

2. Name
Email address

3. Name
Email address

Board Liaison

1. Name
Email address

Staff Committee Member

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RETURN ON INVESTMENT: Last year the Board adopted a strategic agenda that included “growth through diversification of the membership – diversification into allied fields and industries where what we might call ‘information professionals’ are ‘doing what we do,’ so to speak.” The creation of this committee will not only serve to support the Association by addressing this portion of the strategic agenda to grow the membership, but will also provide support to SLA staff, as well as the individual units, through the development and creation of tools and templates that can be used to further assist in the recruitment, growth, diversification, and retention of the membership. This ties in directly with the vision of SLA (global organization for innovative information professionals . . .), the mission of SLA (promotes and strengthens its members . . .), and the collaboration and partnering core value of SLA (providing opportunities to meet, communicate, collaborate, and partner with the information industry . . .).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: In August of this year, President Mai sought assistance from the Fellows and assembled a task force to look into the creation of a Membership Committee/Advisory Council for the Association. The charge for this task force was to:

1. Recommend whether this group should be a Committee or an Advisory Council.
2. Draft a charge for this group.
3. Recommend the size of the group and the length of terms for its members.
4. Recommend whether there need to be parameters for the specific membership of the group.

This was to be a short-term assignment with a recommendation to the Board by the October board call. Unfortunately, the committee took a little longer to assemble than was originally anticipated, so the timeframe for reporting the task force’s recommendation was revised to the November board call. After sharing information and ideas via email, the task force met via conference call to further discuss our charge.

Point 1: We opted for a “committee” over an “advisory council,” or even the occasional “ad hoc” task force solution, due to the importance of, as well as the need for, on-going/continual assessment of membership issues (recruitment, retention, demographics, diversification, etc.). From a perceptual standpoint, the term “committee” seems to carry more clout and permanence.

Point 2: In drafting the above charge, we tried to keep the points focused, but sufficiently broad so as to allow the committee room for creativity as well. The whole point will be to create value for the Association as well as the membership. Some of the specific ideas that were discussed:

- Help with recruitment (including recruiting campaigns, member testimonials, recruiting teams, development and creation of turnkey materials/tools, etc.).
- Help with retention (including testimonials, member profiles, diversification into the allied fields and industries, etc.).
- Surveying the membership more frequently. Even though the Association conducts a major membership survey periodically (every five years or so), this group could help come up with ideas for more frequent mini-surveys. Are we asking the right questions? Is it time to come up with new questions to ask? Closely tied in with the surveying of the membership is the

whole idea of our member demographics. And, while there is currently a task force looking into demographics, this committee to carry this forward on a more regular and on-going basis.

- Liaise with the PR/Marketing staff. Marketing and PR is a big piece of recruiting (and retention).
- Do more with member profiles. Many units already do this at the unit level, but could/should this be done even more? This committee could help: create a process, oversee/maintain member profiles, facilitate the collection of profiles, pull the profiles from all the bulletins, solicit new profiles from the units, etc.
- The liaising with the unit membership chairs concept is intended to provide additional support to the units (and ease the burden of SLA HQ staff). The membership chairs perform a vital role in the units and having a committee to liaise or direct their efforts may stimulate new life into the grassroots level where you possibly have the best chances of recruiting new members.
- Some kind of research function for this committee was deemed incredibly important. This concept ties in with identifying the "target markets" or the "allied fields and industries."

Point 3: In discussing the size of the group and the length of the terms of service, we opted for a "smaller is better" approach. We felt that a four-person committee with two-year rotating terms (plus a board liaison and staff committee member) would be sufficient. Getting the fine mix between too few persons versus too many is sometimes difficult (three seemed like too few, five seemed like too many). Having four persons will provide a large enough committee without getting too out of hand. And, as it gets harder and harder to find volunteers for committees (this task force is an excellent case in point), smaller is definitely easier.

Point 4: the only parameters that our task force felt were important were: 1) members in good standing with SLA, and 2) as diverse a group as possible (for a healthy variety of viewpoints). Trying to **require** specific types of members (geographic, unit size, etc.) would further complicate the appointment process.

FINANCIAL IMPACT STATEMENT: if approved, creating this committee would have no impact on the currently approved budget aside from a slight impact in SLA staff time to serve/liaise with the committee. The committee would work with staff and within the staff's existing budgetary appropriations to accomplish its charge. If in the future major projects are identified that would require special budgetary consideration, then a budget request would be made through the proper channel and in the proper timeframe.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

Tom Rink (Chair)
Gail Stahl
Sylvia James
Paula Diaz (SLA staff member)

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