

# The CSE Marketing Initiative

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As reported earlier this year in *Science Editor*, the Council of Science Editors has selected consultant Marilyn Peterson to serve as our marketing, member-recruitment, and membership-development specialist. I am pleased to report that we are moving forward in this working relationship.

In this article, I'd like to clarify what we hope to accomplish as it pertains to marketing and member development and distinguish it from the blanket desire for simply "more members".

For most of the last 20 years, our organization has had about 900 to 1100 members; there has been little fluctuation. Now that the Council of Biology Editors has become the Council of Science Editors, one of our goals (as enumerated in the CBE scope and mandate report of 1998) is to expand our membership base to include people affiliated with scientific editing and publishing in other fields of science.

This presents a multifaceted challenge: How do we attract people to CSE (who haven't considered CBE in the past) while retaining that which maintained our established, loyal base of members? Moreover, many current members consider the size of our group one of its attractions. As Peterson explained to us at the CSE board meeting in February, the best way to address this challenge is to concentrate on two activities: smart growth and membership development.

## Smart Growth

Do we want growth for growth's sake?

We don't believe so. The recruitment of a substantial number of members without a framework to introduce and develop them would probably yield a 1-year spike in membership. That would not serve the members of CSE or any financial goals, given that money would have been spent to pursue these probably short-term members.

"Smart growth" is predicated on the notion that we should concentrate on grow-

ing by introducing peers in other sciences who will benefit from the experience of CSE and enhance the CSE experience for our "traditional" members in biology and medicine. The involvement of our colleagues who have historically never considered CBE will enrich the networking and education opportunities of CSE.

Accordingly, our CSE membership recruitment efforts will be based on the involvement of CSE members in providing referrals. To use Peterson's term, we need to focus on "new name generation" efforts to grow responsibly. The names can be those of individuals or of organizations that potentially will yield new members of CSE.

If we have a stream of prospective members and a professional approach to contacting them, we can expect to have the opportunity for the Council to grow.

As we introduce new members, we plan to conduct an annual return-on-investment (ROI) analysis to ascertain which activities yielded the most favorable results (targeted e-mail, phone calls, and so on). Peterson believes that the ROI analysis is critical for sustaining growth while retaining current members.

## Membership Development

It appears that we will achieve our goals if we can retain and add to our membership. However, according to Peterson, the situation is somewhat more complex. Adding new members will not in itself create a vibrant CSE for the future. Only having active members can achieve that goal. Therefore, Peterson emphasizes the importance of membership development.

Imagine a series of concentric circles. On the outside ring, we have members who are generally not active. Inside that ring, we have members who buy CSE publications. Inside that ring and closer to the center, we have members who buy CSE publications and attend the annual meeting regularly. Finally, in the innermost circle, we have "member leaders". These member leaders are people on whom the future of a group like CSE is based. They are volunteers who serve on commit-

tees, chair committees, sit on the board, write for *Science Editor*, recommend speakers, and actively recruit new members.

Every organization has people in all those categories. The goal of membership development, Peterson explained, is to facilitate the gradual ascension of members in each group to a "circle" that is closer to the center than the one in which they reside—nonactive to purchasers, purchasers to meeting attendees, meeting attendees to member leaders.

Peterson's focus on membership development ensures that the resources we have appropriated for this project will not simply make us a larger group. Our investment is intended to make CSE an organization whose members will want to become member leaders. We believe that a group committed to such membership development will be a good home for new members as we pursue smart growth.

As of early spring, we had created much of the correspondence to use in multiphase targeted mailings to prospective new members. In addition, Peterson had reviewed our Web site and provided suggestions for making it more useful to those unfamiliar with who we are, what we do, or how to join. Peterson also has interviewed current and past members of CSE, visited with many of our member leaders, and attended a board meeting. Efforts now under way or about to begin include initiating the recruitment campaigns, evaluating our renewal process, developing and instituting a retention plan, and creating a marketing plan for CSE publications.

Please send me e-mail at [bdavis@tsp.sheridan.com](mailto:bdavis@tsp.sheridan.com) if you would like to assist in our marketing efforts, become more active in CSE, or call our attention to people who might be interested in CSE. All we need are the names and addresses or telephone numbers so that we can (unobtrusively) contact them. We can't stress enough how important it is to have a flow of new names of prospective members. Take the opportunity to help create the CSE of the future by recommending your peers for membership!