



UNITED STATES *Dressage* FEDERATION  
SECTION FIVE - MEMBERSHIP

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*Members are the backbone of any association.*

This section is a guide for organizing a membership department. The included suggestions and examples should give you some ideas to meet the specific needs of your GMO.

The membership is the only reason the organization exists, regardless of their size.

Three main components keep a membership properly functioning:

- PROMOTION – recruit new members.
- SERVICE – service the members you have.
- RETENTION – keep them as an active part of your organization.

### **Membership Promotion**

Attracting new members is very important for any existing GMO. It guarantees ongoing growth and continued success. New members not only add revenue to your GMO, they give your national voice more weight, and also help strengthen the sport of dressage.

Membership promotion can be very complex. Methods include, but are not limited to, public service announcements, direct mail campaigns, or placing flyers in your area. Whatever your method, **the message is important!** Most effective is to stress the tangible benefits.

**Begin by mapping out a plan of action** (organize a committee if needed).

- Set a realistic goal for the number of members you wish to attain for each year.
- Use, if possible, more than one form of promotion.
- Track the response from each promotion to determine the success of each.
- Recruit volunteers with an “insider view” who understand and enthusiastically represent your particular GMO.
- Emphasize in all promotions the benefits your members will receive and explain the value of these benefits.

*The leadership has to serve the members, not the membership serve the leaders!*

### **Member Service**

Member service starts with a positive attitude. Very important is the constant communication between membership and leadership (board). The membership chairperson should always have an open ear for all needs, suggestions and ideas of every individual member and report continually to the board.

### **Develop a service concept and follow up on it:**

- Elect or appoint an enthusiastic membership chairperson with a positive attitude.
- Continually provide your members with local, as well as national, Dressage info (Newsletter, general meetings).
- Set highest importance for quick response to any inquiries.
- Express the value of membership by providing all possible benefits (tangible and intangible).
- Create an active GMO life by organizing horse activities (schooling shows, clinics, and educational sessions), and social events (year end awards, BBQ's, Christmas Parties).

*The best way to build a solid membership base is to retain current members.*

### **Membership Retention**

Service and retention go hand-in-hand. If the job of servicing is well done, the retention rate should remain high. That benefits a GMO because current members are less expensive to retain than new members are to attract.

Retention begins as early as receiving an application. Service is the first step for retention.

Build confidence and show appreciation for new members by assuring what your GMO will do for them:

- Acknowledge any new member with a welcome letter and let them know how important they are for your GMO.
- Follow up immediately by providing information and communication.
- Continue to reinforce all benefits they receive as a GMO member.
- View your members as “customers” and treat them accordingly.
- Assure them of what we all share: our common interest in dressage.

The yearly renewal process continues retention. It is an additional way to communicate with your members.

### **Design a positive renewal process**

- Send out renewal notes in a timely manner. Best results are achieved with three mailings. The first mailing should reach your members 60 days prior to cancellation. The last notice should be sent on or just after the date of cancellation.
- Design your notes as personal as possible. A cover letter, for example, gives a personal touch.
- Be positive, but firm. Point out that there is no grace period and by missing the renewal deadline that they will miss all offered benefits.
- Smaller GMOs might consider follow-ups with personal phone calls from designated volunteers or the leadership committee. This form of communication can bring great results.

### **Benefits of Joining a GMO**

**There are as many benefits for your members as your GMO has fantasy.**

One of the benefits for **ALL** GMO members is the automatic Group Membership with USDF.

The benefits associated with USDF include:

- Subscription to *USDF Connection*, USDF's official monthly publication.
- Eligible for USDF Rider Awards.
- Eligible to earn USDF University Credits.
- Eligible to apply for different grants to support educational goals.
- Member-discount rates for USDF events and the Annual Convention and National Symposium.
- Representation at the national level through a delegate of their own GMO at the National Convention.

*Creating the right dues structure for your GMO is most important because you have to with it for some time.*

### **Sources of Income**

Since membership dues typically represent about 35% of total revenue for most associations, your dues structure should meet the demands of your organization, generate an adequate income, be equitable and lead to accuracy in reporting, but yet be easy to administer.

*The minimum number of members needed to form and maintain a GMO is 25!*

### **General Information**

In September, USDF will send a list of the GMO's actual members on file. It is the responsibility of each GMO to make any changes and/or additions to that roster. The corrected roster and appropriate dues must be returned to USDF by November 1 and are considered delinquent if not postmarked by December 1.

The GMO membership year now runs concurrent with the USEF and USDF Participating Membership year from December 1 to November 30.

As the year progresses, the GMO is required to send quarterly updates to USDF. However, USDF prefers that changes be received monthly because new members are more quickly recognized and receive their Group Membership card and the *USDF Connection* in a timely fashion.

All current GMO rosters are available at all times on the USDF website: [www.usdf.org](http://www.usdf.org).

Each GMO pays annual dues to USDF on the basis of per capita assessment of its due-paying members as are contained in the roster. Each member of the GMO needs to be included on the roster and dues paid for each member – no exceptions. Each dues-paying member is then considered a Group Member of USDF.

In case a member belongs to more than one GMO, they may request a refund of dues paid to GMOs other than their primary GMO between April 1 and August 1 of the current GMO year. However, this is not necessarily advisable as your membership will only count towards delegate votes for your primary GMO.

**\*\*Supporting Family Members are NOT eligible for this refund.**