

UNITED STATES POWER SQUADRONS®

National Planning Committee



2007 - 2008

MEMBER SURVEY

A message from the National Planning Committee

Surveys offer an opportunity for members to indicate their preferences; their voices are heard. From their shared responses come many areas of opportunities that can be applied at the squadron, district, and national levels.

The demographic information is very consistent with previous surveys taken, so we believe that this survey accurately reflects the views of our membership.

USPS thanks you for your participation and input. It should be noted that at the national level some suggestions are already in the developmental stages and others are beginning to get attention.

Change is always something that creates resistance. It may be difficult to make some of the changes at each level, but we must challenge ourselves to focus on the long term benefits that change will bring to our unit whether it be squadron, district, or national.

A common belief in the Planning Committee is that collaborative efforts are needed among committees at all levels. We can see the TEAM approach (Together Everyone Accomplishes More) is growing. Many committees need the support from other committees for maximum success. Some may remember a mantra, “We are all in this together, and together we can make a difference.”

How can the survey help you? What can you do at the local level? There are many areas of opportunities. You can use the Demographic section to help focus your recruiting and retention efforts. The member profiles lead to a better understanding of your customers.

The Benchmark section will also help in recruiting and retention. The perceived importance of each leg of the USPS triangle changes; this offers opportunities to shift the emphasis of various activities.

The Feedback section has opportunities that can be applied at almost all levels. Explore what can be done locally to improve the value of membership.

We are pleased to report that currently at the national level all of the Feedback opportunities are being given great consideration. Some have passed the planning stage and are in development. I am sure you can find many areas of opportunity to apply at the squadron and district levels.

Thank you.

National Planning Committee Report

MEMBER SURVEY

November 2008

The Member Survey started at EXPO in Jacksonville, 2007. It was then improved and converted to an online survey by Stf/C Jeff Hamilton, AP. Over 1850 members, representing all districts, responded. District 28 had over 10% participation followed by D27 and then D15. *Six By Lands and By Sea* cookbooks (donated by P/Stf/C Lyle Rea, SN) were awarded to these districts. We thank all of those that shared their views with us.

There were three sections in the survey. We have found that much of the input represents the same concerns that many have voiced over and over for a number of years. Progressive expediency in addressing many of these matters may help curb our membership losses. National, districts, and squadrons can find elements that should be implemented at their level.

It should be noted that each successive section of the survey had a drop in responses. The percentages are based upon the number of responses shown. The number of responses also contained some answers that were too vague to categorize, an unrelated complaint or suggestion, or a statement why they gave no answer.

Section One: Demographics (1851 responses)

The majority of responses are from power boaters (62%) who boat in saltwater (68%). The average respondent has been boating for approximately 31 years and has been a member for approximately 14 years. Most respondents were male (81.5%). Age-wise, the majority is found in the 48 to 67 year-old range (56.1%) followed by the 68 to 88 year-old range (37.6%); these two ranges comprise 93.7%.

Boating Activity of Choice

Power boaters	61.6%
Sail boaters	26.6%
Non-boaters	7.5%

Area of Opportunity

Increase the appeal of membership to sailors and paddlers.

Water Type

Freshwater	32.5%
Saltwater	67.5%

Area of Opportunity

Offer more benefits for inland boaters.

Years Boating:

Mean	31.69
Median	32
Mode	40
Range	0 – 80

Area of Opportunity

Increase boating and other activities for younger members.

Years of Membership

Mean	14.44
Median	10
Mode	1
Range	0 – 60

Area of Opportunity

Continually increase involvement efforts.

Birth Year

1920 – 1940	37.6%
1941 – 1960	56.1%
1961 – 1980	6.1%
1981 – 2000	0.3%

Area of Opportunity

Find effective methods to increase membership for those born in the 1960s - 1980s.

Gender

Male	81.5%
Female	18.5%

Area of Opportunity

Develop more appeal to women that boat.

District Participation

District	Count	Membership	%
1	97	1303	7.44%
2	4	1819	0.22%
3	49	2157	2.27%
4	27	2168	1.25%
5	174	4048	4.30%
6	16	1349	1.19%
7	34	1483	2.29%
8	66	1970	3.35%
9	75	2655	2.82%
10	60	1455	4.12%
11	21	317	6.62%
12	25	952	2.63%
13	95	1116	8.51%
14	43	911	4.72%
15	90	1023	8.80%
16	60	2239	2.68%
17	49	1093	4.48%
18	25	524	4.77%
19	49	925	5.30%
20	49	1324	3.70%
21	47	1396	3.37%
22	196	3500	5.60%
23	16	1132	1.41%
24	67	820	8.17%
25	22	910	2.42%
26	26	1946	1.34%
27	204	2122	9.61%
28	65	629	10.33%
29	6	1094	0.55%
30	40	457	8.75%
31	4	459	0.87%
32	22	653	3.37%
33	28	847	3.31%

Section Two: Benchmarks (1775 responses)

Education maintains a strong reason for joining and remaining a member. The desire for fraternity attracts about a third of our new members; that number then climbs to just under two-thirds for retained members. The expectations of Civic Service opportunities more than double as members increase their involvement.

Reason for Joining

Self-education	81.6%
Fraternity	35.5%
Civic Service	15.5%

Area of Opportunity

**Maintain a strong educational program.
Work on more appealing fraternal activities.**

Reason Remaining a Member

Fraternity	60.2%
Self-education	51.2%
Civic Service	36.3%

Area of Opportunity

**Increase the scope of fraternal activities.
Offer better incentives to take courses.**

Recommend Membership

Yes	96.5%
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Area of Opportunity

**There may be a parallel between the optimism of those taking the survey and those that actively promote USPS.
Reward the promoters locally.**

Number Recruited

Mean	7.07
Median	3
Mode	0
Range	0 – 200

Rating USPS to Other Activities on a 1 to 10 Scale (Low to high)

1	1.2%
2	2.0%
3	3.7%
4	5.3%
5	9.7%
6	8.3%
7	16.8%
8	26.2%
9	14.4%
10	12.3%

Area of Opportunity

Total for 7 to 10 = 69.7%. USPS is rated very high over other activities. Develop a continuous internal PR campaign that maximizes recognition and awareness of USPS and our members.

Section Three: Feedback (1558 responses)

The details of the four free response answers are summarized individually.

What is the most valuable member benefit (Available or Not)?

Two-thirds of our members place the greatest value on the potential of our current and future educational offerings. Group discounts in insurance and in all boating-related items were desired. Fraternity is viewed in a variety of purposes including: fun, intellectual, and group activities. Most of the Operational Issues referenced a need for improvement in an existing process or the need for specific desired outcome.

Area of Opportunity

Continually update and improve the quality of our educational programs and instructors.

- Education (66%)
Cheap, builds confidence, local knowledge, maintenance help, online offerings, on-water learning and demonstrations, electronic books
- Group Discounts (13%)
Insurance, boating equipment, fuel, dockage, repairs, rentals, towing, AARP type benefits, at Big Box stores
- Fraternity (9%)
Fun activities – Cruising, day trips, social functions, building friendships
Intellectual activities – Associate with like-minded boaters, planning in squadrons and districts, networking, exchanging knowledge, civic service
Miscellaneous – Group activities, family oriented programs
- Organizational Issues (8%)
Leadership opportunities, training programs, interesting meetings, online interactive help. Simplify jobs with less reporting, meet at cheaper venues, improve marketing and awareness activities

What is the single biggest problem?

The greatest dissatisfaction comes from many of the same areas that are steeped in tradition or deal with communications. Generally, age creates problems. Many members are old-thinkers (nearly 40% are over 70 and 60% over 50) with no boat and are resistant to change. Younger members are needed but difficult to recruit because of the time and expense of membership. Poor efforts and programs and the lack of awareness make recruitment and retention difficult. Lack of trained leaders along with poor planning directly decreases involvement. A wider variety of educational venues and opportunities are needed to remain competitive.

Area of Opportunity

**End the paramilitary/traditional approach.
Simplify the reporting systems for all levels.**

- Organizational Problems (22%)
Uniforms, too military, name, long boring meetings, too traditional, too much red tape and structure, poor/late communication, disconnect at all levels
- Age (16%)
Too old with no boat, too traditional and inflexible, poor understanding of today's

needs Younger members difficult to recruit and retain, not attractive to younger generations

- Expenses (14%)
Costs of membership and participation very high in time (family, work, USPS), in money (meetings, meals, transportation, lodging, mortgage, college tuition, boat payments), poor perceived value
- Recruitment and Retention (12%)
Poor efforts and programs, need more members and reasons to stay
- Awareness (11%)
Public image poor to non-existent, national and regional programs needed
- Involvement (7%)
Untrained chairmen, poor planning, need more and better on and off water activities that are geared towards younger members and their families, socializing problems, public service problems
- Education (7%)
Poor offerings, instruction, scheduling, more in-school and online education needed, electronics are learned on the boat and through video (not at our courses)
- Competition (6%)
Too many others offer the same material but cheaper and self-study, electronics vs. charting
- Resistant to Change (4%)
Old guard too resistant to change

What should USPS immediately quit doing?

A whopping 43% have governance issues with the paramilitary style. Educational course content and the high number of offerings without qualified instructors are frustrating. Membership approaches and expenses stymie growth. The new and changing technology has left some members behind.

Area of Opportunity

End the paramilitary/traditional approach. Simplify the reporting systems for all levels. Improve instructor skill levels. Find cost cutting savings for members. Better train members in IT.

- Governance Issues (43%)
The heavy military slant with ranks, insignia, and uniforms; poor merit mark system; national disorganization and bossiness; high expenses; overload of paperwork; present district structure; partnerships with USCGAux and others; ignoring large scale advertising and PR
- Education (11%)
Making unnecessary changes and dumbing down course material; generating more courses than our instructors can handle; ignoring real training of instructors

- Membership Issues 10%)
Dwelling on getting new members and the lack of members; ignoring high cost of membership
- Communications (7%)
The overuse of computers and the newest technologies without proper training sessions; long, boring, and expensive meetings

In what areas should USPS significantly increase investment?

Members overwhelmingly selected Marketing/Awareness (33%) and Education (30%). USPS should strive to increase awareness of the organization and its marketability on a national level. Improve educational offerings, upgrade instructors' skills level, and increase the availability of on-water and Internet courses. Improve methods to recruit and retain members and obtain better benefits geared towards younger members and their families. Increase social activities while keeping member expenses at a minimum by increasing non-member revenue. Upgrade the computer systems and the Web site at HQ. Address various governance issues and newer communications techniques.

Area of Opportunity

Invest in a nationwide marketing plan. Keep educational courses relevant with more hands-on, on-the-water, and Internet offerings.

- Marketing / Awareness (33%)
Nationwide efforts focused on TV, radio, Internet, magazines, etc., greater partnering with major businesses and government agencies in environmental and community outreach programs
- Education (30%)
More relevant and updated courses with better trained instructors that use more hands-on activities, courses and seminars available on-the-water, on-demand, and on the Internet
- Membership (17%)
Promote training in recruitment and retention efforts; promote more youth and family activities; remove barriers; increase benefits to members and services to squadrons; encourage and improve social / fraternal activities, cruises, interesting meetings and public events
- Expenses (4%)
Reduce costs wherever possible: meetings, meals, hotels, etc.; and increase revenues to get off dues-basis, increase more grants and fundraising
- Headquarters (3%)
Improve the delivery of materials, update the computer software, rework the Web site
- Governance (3%)
New name, no uniforms, mandatory education, modify the governance structure, hire an executive director or secretary
- Communications (1%)
General improvements, network, better prepare use of IT materials, help committees get what is needed, promote e-mail mailing lists for special interests groups.