

# Membership Growth and Retention Committee

July, 2025

An emphasis on Membership Growth and Retention (MGR) is essential if we are to ensure the viability (even the survivability) of the ACBL. Traditionally, we have relied on grass roots efforts of local clubs and teachers to foster growth. In recent years, many new tools and programs have been added to support these efforts, but the inevitability of demographic shifts highlight the need for more proactive efforts. While we must continue to foster volunteer involvement, we need to seed the clouds a little to produce rain.

We are reaching the tail end of the baby boomer generation. Recent retirees have been and will continue to be a rich source of new blood for the organization; declining birth rates however, will begin to erode that source. We must seek new ways of growing membership and improve the value proposition for our existing members.

## Recommendation: New Media

Younger generations, along with a lot of Baby Boomers, now are far more likely to watch a video than read a book or an article. It is time for the ACBL to create a video production department.

New media include social media such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Vlogs and YouTube. Properly fed with content, a social media engine will both attract new players and aid in the retention of existing members.

A few examples of potential content:

- Hand of the Day (i.e. the old newspaper bridge column)

- Interviews with important personalities in the bridge world.

- A series on the History of Bridge

- Educational videos (targeted to specific demographics (e.g. youth, junior, adult))

- Tournament and Event highlight videos

Note: Interns could make up part of the staffing needed to perform these functions.

## YOUTH BRIDGE

Bridge is a game for life. Many of us learned the game at a young age and will continue to play until we no longer can.

While there are a great many activities available to youths and juniors today, one thing has never changed....kids like to have fun. Heck, so do most of the rest of us. We must develop youth and junior activities which focus on fun. The youngsters' natural desire to learn and compete will take over from there.

There are many examples of successful youth bridge programs internationally. In Swedish schools, when a Mind Course elective was offered more than half the participants chose Bridge (over Chess and Go). The WBF is prioritizing youth bridge initiatives.

### Recommendation: Bridge is Fun

[www.bridgeisfun.org](http://www.bridgeisfun.org) is a website which has been inactive since 2023. The site was used to promote bridge camps in District 8 in cooperation with the ACBL Youth Foundation. We believe that the ACBL should attempt to obtain this URL and build a youth bridge environment around it. This is another area where content from a video team will be useful.

Here in ACBL land, there is an organization providing chess programs for kids as young as 3 years old through high school. It is called The Knight School ([www.theknightschool.com](http://www.theknightschool.com)) and offers a wide variety of programs offered through schools (primarily private), online and through community centers. Kids earn colorful wristbands and compete for Mardi Gras beads. These programs are funded by the student's family; the Knight School is a for-profit entity which operates in 20 U.S cities.

A pilot program, based in part on the Knight School model, should be developed to offer bridge programs for youth. We believe that initial funding to develop this program might be obtained from foundation grants, including but not exclusively, the ACBL Youth Foundation.

## RETENTION

### Recommendation: Onboarding

We believe that retention begins the moment a new member joins our organization. We must engage new members right from the beginning with a structured approach to ensure that they feel welcome, supported and equipped to participate. We believe the current process lacks a certain *je ne sais quoi*.

1. Create a new member welcome email series, including a personalized welcome email, and several follow ups which will provide information about opportunities and resources available to new members. This will include information about local clubs, teachers and events, as well as global membership benefits, such a guide to the ACBL website and MyACBL.
2. Each unit should appoint a New Member Coordinator, who will help facilitate a comfortable path to involvement for new members, providing information about local activities.
3. Track the onboarding journey. Develop metrics about things such as email open rates, levels of club/tournament play, participation in special events, etc.
4. After a few months of membership, contact the new members with an online survey to gather feedback. Repeat this periodically to measure member satisfaction.
5. Evaluate the implementation of a CRM system to assist at all stages of the membership lifecycle (onboarding to offboarding).

## Summary

We appreciate the work done by the Clubs and Teachers Committee, which directly contributes to Membership Growth and Retention. We chose to focus for the moment on few directly actionable ideas for the Board to consider and look forward to continuing this journey.

Steve Allen  
Committee Chairman