



To Fee or Not to Fee

The second most common question asked is what level of fee (membership dues) should be collected in ShareClubs.

Facetiously, I respond to some, "As much as the market will bear." Like Robert McNamara, when asked certain questions, said that he tended to respond to the question that should have been asked. That is my response too; it makes sense to me.

The real issue asked here is need and commitment.

Eventually, members will know how the Club functions and how the dues are used in support of Club activities. If that does not come out voluntarily, ask why? Clubs, regardless of locale, need some ability to pay for token materials, room rentals, photo copies, exhibits and honorariums to name a few items. It is essential to differentiate what constitutes a Club's core activity versus non-core. There are direct and discretionary costs.

Rental space for meetings is a shared direct cost. Other costs are on a user-pay basis which are discretionary. When in-house training is provided, a member charge may be levied on a user basis or not. However, initiating new members and their training should form a part of the annual dues. The latter is the normal expectation.

Social affairs are on a separate pay basis because they are not a core function. In other words, the core activity in a Club should be covered by annual dues, others are defined as extras. But we meet in private homes and rotate, you say. Well, good for you. But there is a more solid reason for an annual fee for membership... and it is based on members making a commitment to the Club.

Membership is a choice, and some members are willing to spend hundreds on brokerage fees yet question a small Club fee. Others who subscribe to monthly or weekly news letters pay a handsome fee for them. They may not be penny pinching but you have to wonder about their Club commitment if they do. There should be no apology for asking for a fee that is commensurate with services that are provided otherwise a nil fee is saying that the Club has no member value.

Usually a Club will judiciously "acquire" items to improve on presentations which provides value to members. As Club members become friends as well, how do you respond knowing that one of your own is hospitalized?

A personalized get well card and postage may be a small cost in the scheme of things but it is recognition to the member or his/her family that we care.

If there is a Club surplus, consider a portion donated to the cost of the social event of the year...or hostess gifts when the next picnic is staged.