

Give Members a Reason to Attend Your Annual Meeting

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Your annual meeting is an important opportunity to give you members a brief synopsis on how the cooperative is doing (and why) and what the cooperative is investing in (and why). Annual meeting attendance should be judged by quality and not quantity. The challenge is to get active members to attend, vote and provide input. Members need a reason to attend.

One approach is to structure the meeting to provide the answer to one or more questions that are on the minds of the members. Some cooperatives circulate a few simple questions prior to the meeting and report the results at the meeting. Those questions can involve the farm operations. For example, you can ask “What do think is going to be our biggest challenge in the coming year?” or “Which of the following technologies (seed, chemicals or precision agriculture) has had the biggest impact on your bottom line? Alternatively, you can ask questions related to the cooperative. For example, you can ask members “What is the most important area for the cooperative to invest in?” or “What can the cooperative do to make your operation more efficient this year?” At some point in the meeting, the CEO or Board Chair can report the most prevalent or most interesting answers.

Another opportunity to answering a question that is on the member’s mind is to have a short informative presentation. Even busy producers tend to find the time to attend meetings when they can get information they can use. A cooperative annual meeting is not the right venue to dig deep into technical information but might be a fit for a short presentation on a broader topic. Perhaps you can find a speaker who has perspectives on the trade war, outlook on the fertilizer sector or thought on how the trucking industry is changing. Think of an interesting little topic that is not covered at other producer meetings.

Why should I attend your annual meeting? I will learn how the cooperative is doing and get the answer to a least one interesting question! The meal and social time are icing on the cake!

Speaking of cake, my vote is for chocolate!