

Moving Forward with Advanced Recognition

Executive Summary

- The existing Silver Leaf program no longer meets the needs of POC members or the public.
- POC wishes to recognize the accomplishments of its diverse membership, while providing meaningful information to the public.
- No single advanced recognition program will be able to meet these goals as there are too many important factors to consider.
- Advanced recognition will be the umbrella under which different types of attributes will be highlighted.
- Silver Leaf status, which denotes five years in business and two years as a member of POC, will remain unchanged.
- Gold Leaf status will be implemented with criteria including having attained Silver Leaf status, ten years as a member of POC, and a set number of volunteer service points.
- Attributes of particular importance to the public (such as education, insurance, and years in business as well as membership in POC) will be highlighted in the member profile section of the “Find an Organizer” directory.
- Recognition on an annual basis will be implemented for those members of POC who have achieved certain milestones such as membership for five years, ten years, etc., as well as members retiring after at least ten years membership in POC.
- Continuing Education requirements are a separate matter and a priority of the board but will be managed separately through the Education portfolio.
- Rather than implement an application fee for any of the advanced recognition initiatives, additional costs incurred will be partially funded by the elimination of the Silver Leaf discount on annual dues and conference registration fees.
- The mandate of the Silver Leaf Committee will be modified to reflect the expansion of its role in all aspects of advanced recognition.

Overview

At its mid-year board meetings in Toronto, April 15 – 17, 2011, the national board of Professional Organizers in Canada came to a consensus with regard to advanced recognition for our members.

This was the culmination of many months of consideration and work by the national board, the Silver Leaf Committee (SLC) and, in particular, the Silver Leaf Advanced Recognition Sub-Committee (SLARSC).

As a starting point, there was consensus that the current Silver Leaf recognition no longer meets the needs of POC’s members. This is primarily because Silver Leaf status is solely dependent on longevity, and that any new advanced member recognition must be both holistic and able to serve POC’s members well into the future. Any advanced recognition program must raise the standards in our profession and among our membership, recognize individual achievement, plus be meaningful, balanced and cost-effective.

With this daunting “wish list” in mind, in random order each board member was given the opportunity to state what he or she would like to see incorporated into an advanced recognition program. The responses were varied and wide-ranging, but in the end three viewpoints stood out:

1. There are so many factors to be considered in terms of advanced recognition that any **one** program is bound to fall short, be unnecessarily complicated, or exclude some categories of members of POC;
2. The qualities that POC would like to recognize include years in business, years of membership in POC, education, insurance, and volunteer activities.
3. The existing SL program should remain as is. Changing the criteria, eliminating the program, or allowing members to qualify under different rules would be overly complicated and counterproductive.

With those guiding principles in mind, the board was able to decide upon a number of different aspects to be included under the umbrella of advanced recognition.

Recognition of Status

The existing Silver Leaf program is not a category of membership (as all recipients are and continue to be “Regular Members” of POC). Rather, it conveys a status on its recipients indicating that they have met the criteria of having been in business for at least five consecutive years and having been a member of POC for at least two consecutive years.

In order to continue to recognize members who have met certain criteria within POC, another status level will be added, that of Gold Leaf. Criteria will include having attained Silver Leaf status, having been a member of POC for at least ten consecutive years, and having accumulated a set number of volunteer service points.

There is a provision to add a third status level in the future, likely Platinum Leaf, with criteria to be determined as POC continues to grow and evolve.

Recognition in the Marketplace

Part of the goal in awarding advanced recognition to a member is to assist the public, including prospective clients, to more easily identify a professional organizer who has certain attributes. At present, the leaf icon in the member directory indicates that a member has been in business at least five consecutive years and a member of POC for at least two consecutive years.

The minimum attributes that the board would like to see recognized are how long the member has belonged to POC (“member since” field), whether or not that member carries insurance, and what education that member has attained (whether inside or outside the field of professional organizing).

Highlighting these attributes will provide the public, including prospective clients, with the best information possible, in a standardized format through the member profile. Icons denoting insurance and education, at a minimum, will be added to the leaf icon currently in use. It may also be possible to modify existing search features (currently geographical and specialty) so that members can be sorted based on selected criteria.

Annual Recognition

Not all of POC's long-term members have the opportunity or inclination to work towards status levels, or to pursue the attributes that will be recognized in the member directory. However, POC values and wishes to recognize those members who have made a long-term commitment to our organization by virtue of their continuing membership.

Beginning at conference in 2012, POC members who have met certain milestones will be recognized at the gala evening and on the awards page of the website. The milestones recognized will be five-year increments of consecutive membership (i.e. five years, ten years, fifteen years, etc.) as well as recognition of members who are retiring from professional organizing after at least ten years as a member of POC.

Continuing Education

It was determined that Continuing Education (CE) is not a matter for advanced recognition, but is a separate priority for an organization that wants its members to continue to learn, grow, and be leaders in the field of professional organizing.

Other than highlighting the educational accomplishments of POC's members within their profiles on the website, CE will not be part of the advanced recognition initiative. It will be a stand-alone requirement, mandatory for all professional organizers who want to continue their membership in POC, and will be managed under the Education portfolio.

Costs

With any enhanced advanced recognition, costs are incurred for certificates, pins, changes to the website, and for services provided by POC's association management company. Rather than implementing an administration fee for those applying for Silver Leaf, Gold Leaf, or any other type of advanced recognition, it was decided that the existing Silver Leaf discount on both membership dues and conference registration will be eliminated in 2012. This will free up some funds to be used for the new advanced recognition program, and will result in some future savings as two fee levels for regular members will no longer have to be maintained.

Any costs associated with advanced recognition, over and above the savings from the elimination of the SL discount, will be managed through the Membership portfolio, which has responsibility for all membership benefits, including advanced recognition.

Committee Support

Since Silver Leaf status will no longer be the only level of advanced recognition, the mandate of the existing Silver Leaf Committee will have to be expanded to take into account its new role.

Discussion on how to accomplish this will need to take place as soon as possible with the committee.

Summary

With the awareness that no one advanced recognition program can adequately acknowledge the variety and diversity that is evident in POC's membership, the board feels confident that implementing new streams and types of advanced recognition will not only serve POC and its members, but the public as a whole, particularly prospective clients.

It is hoped that the new advanced recognition program will encourage each member of POC to become the very best professional organizer possible, based on priorities and abilities. In turn, recognizing the achievements of our members will bring greater awareness to both POC and the entire organizing profession.