

Summary of the Summer 2018 Members' Survey

Reported by Membership Chair, Cindy Jurgensen

When asked **'is Les Dames is meeting my needs'**, many pondered what were their needs and why they joined?! So many wished they had more time to attend meetings or to be on the board and said perhaps they weren't meeting Les Dames' needs.

"The problem is I don't make it to as many meetings as I'd like to and I feel guilty. Thank goodness the group isn't judgmental"! (I had to tell many not to feel guilty and that, of course, we're not judgmental)!

Many answered with a version of 'It's what you put into it...'

"It's a philanthropic group. It's nice to belong to something that has a larger, altruistic mission. I joined to meet other women in food, it meets my need to hang out with cool women interested in food subjects".

Kudos Given:

"You guys are, actually, really, really good at keeping in touch with us, compared with WCR".

"I think it's a really exciting time for the group...let's talk about Janice, she's done an outstanding job doing things that we've taken years to do, like the website. It's an exciting time for our chapter."

"Wow, this chapter is doing really interesting things"!

"People are really welcoming and it's a nice mix of members".

"It's a warm, welcoming, supportive community of women who like what they do and share it with others".

"Pretty neat that we have scholarships and micro-grants, and I really like that we're giving money to a member to attend the conference. That's a great way to engage members".

Programs:

Many members were happy with programming and the monthly meeting cadence. Many were thankful that someone else (and not them) was doing programming, saying what a tough position it would be.

The variety of new experiences to get out of usual routines is a draw for many but many more felt that our programs are either 'flat or after the fact', that while it's nice to socialize, and they love to see everybody, there are too many 'meet and greets'.

Many members said they want to keep up with the industry, even if retired, with cutting edge programs and significant content. It's more "value added to have the opportunity to learn something, see new things. We're missing education sessions from a culinary/business standpoint, speakers of different types, webinars. Networking is nice but it doesn't meet the needs of everyone". A couple Dames suggested spending more money on food, like a restaurant opening, then have the chef speak to us.

(The Program budget is getting extra money for 2018/19. I learned that part-way through conducting the survey. When I told Dames, they were pleased and one said that should be publicized to the members).

Timing:

So many Dames would not miss a meeting if they weren't already booked for the date.

Meetings held at times that require driving across town during rush hour was a deterrent mentioned several times.

Middle of the day meetings were requested by several as well as occasional weekend meetings.

Communication:

Dames love the newsletter, even if they don't get to it right away. They find it a good vehicle for informative articles, find the in-depth introductions of the new people fun to read, they like the calendar of upcoming events and the meeting recaps. "The President's letter (in the newsletter) is always so appealing and provides an emotional connection to the group".

Dames like that the newsletter has information in one place to refer back to for program dates and that they can read it whenever they have time. Someone mentioned that too much description is given on upcoming meetings, saying that that in-depth information should be just in the invitation, that it looks like newsletter filler. Meeting recaps are too long was also mentioned.

"It's fun to see trends & other food events coming up. How about put in the national trend compilation"? A few members would like to see board meeting recaps in the newsletter or email. When not on the board they say that it is easy to feel disconnected from what's happening in the organization.

The majority of Dames like receiving communication by email and the majority would prefer that we not add text communication, though a few said it could work for an urgent reminder or blast of information, such as an impromptu happy hour or meeting location change. If we add texts, it was recommended that it be one-way, from Admin Deb to members, and somehow make it impossible for back and forth exchanges on that text.

A point was made that more information could go on our Les Dames website, say the new member introductions. Another Dames said she'd love to get to know members and their backgrounds more in depth and wondered if there's an online way to facilitate that? (Currently we only feature new members in the newsletter but we could interview all members for the website, for either the private or public area of the site).

Some suggested a weekly or bi-monthly blast of important information. Many complimented Admin Deb for her timely communications and list of attendees for car-pooling to meetings.

A suggestion was given to do program invites two ways to double the turnout...a Facebook invite along with Eventbrite.

New member communication confusion over what information comes from our local group versus international turned into a great suggestion from a newer member...a mini in-service for new members on our FB page, our website, the Dame It FB page, what content comes from Admin Deb and what is from the International organization, how to update profiles on the Intl website, etc. At each meeting have someone from the board give an update on upcoming meetings, scholarship, etc. (Board minutes are now being shared in the newsletter to keep members informed and included).

“We used to see who was coming on the invite in order to arrange car pool and there was a comment section which was a fun way to keep up”. Where did that go?

More Take-Aways:

Dame It! was applauded by many not only for the monies raised but as a way to bring members together. “Build on that as it has so much potential. It's clever and contemporary”.

Another suggestion was to firm up the informal mentoring program. (Currently the Dame who nominated the new member keeps track of and encourages that new member).

“Les Dames is super important for consultants, especially early in your career. We could get more of an understanding of what members do. FB and newsletter. Have a referral advice section on our website”.

One board member said: “Getting more involved (being on the board) has made it more worthwhile, getting to know members better”.

Another member who does not have time to be on the board hopes we can find ways at the meetings to make people feel more a part of the group. (Great point, we all understand what it's like to balance a career and life. That's what it's all about. And...there's always another year)!

We have members from the first year Minnesota had a chapter, 1996, to new members making little baby Dames. Dames who have transferred in from other states and Dames who have returned after taking a break for busy lives. We are currently 50 members strong and the board appreciates all of you!

Thank you very much for taking time to speak with me about MN LDEI. The information gleaned is very valuable for our organizations' future. And, personally, it was immense fun to catch up with each of you!

Cindy Jurgensen
Membership Chair