



Executive Summary: “Member Onboarding: How to be More Than a Good First Date”

Session held March 27, 2018.

Speaker: Bryn Conway, Principal [BC Consulting](#)

Think about onboarding a new member at your credit union like a first date.

Just by joining the credit union, the member has already in essence agreed to—and gone on—the first date. But what steps should you take to ensure the member wants to continue their relationship with your financial institution or go on a second date?

In “Member Onboarding: How to be More Than a Good First Date,” Bryn C. Conway, founder/owner of BC Consulting, explores simple steps credit unions can take during the onboarding process that will leave members coming back to the credit union to meet their future financial needs.

“It’s all about relationships,” Conway says. “It takes comparing onboarding members to dating and long-term relationships to remind us that we’re in a long-term relationship with our members.

“The ultimate goal in dating and onboarding is to make a connection and form a mutually satisfying relationship,” she continues.

To form that connection and establish a relationship with your new members, Conway offers the following dos and don’ts:

- **Don’t wing it.** You wouldn’t want to go into a first date without a plan, so why would you want to do that when it comes to onboarding a new member? Plan on what to do within the first 90 days after a member joins the credit union. Winging it shows your new member that you don’t care enough about them.
- **Do set goals.** Make a plan and stick to it. Don’t let onboarding new members become an afterthought. Also, remember to measure your results so you’re able to see how you’re performing with your onboarding goals. Make sure everyone in the credit union understands how important new members are. “It’s everyone’s job,” Conway says. “Make onboarding goals part of everyone’s job so you can ensure you keep building the relationship.”
- **Don’t interview.** Don’t try to sell your member every product you have during your first meeting.
- **Do court and pursue.** Make your first meeting with the member feel special. Remember, you asked them to join. Now it’s your job to pursue their financial business and make them feel special. Ask them



how they would like to communicate with the credit union—phone calls, emails, text messages—and then put a communication plan in place that adheres to those preferences. And give them personal attention by contacting them, thanking them for their business, or asking how else you can assist. “A little personal attention can go a long way towards building trust,” Conway says.

- **Don’t overpromise.** Be who you are by being transparent, genuine, and authentic, Conway says.
- **Do be yourself.** Your credit union has created and operates under a core purpose, mission statement, vision, and values. The credit union also has a unique story about how it assists members and makes an impact in the community. Tell it to your new members during the onboarding process and make those members feel as though they are part of the story. “Make your members feel like they belong with you and that they are part of something greater than a checking account or auto loan,” Conway says.
- **Don’t email too much.** While email is a tool that will give your member information, it’s hard to read tone, nuance, and intent. It’s also difficult to get to know a person, including their preferences, needs, and goals, from an email.
- **Do communicate early and often.** Get to know your member. Find out what they like, what communication channels they prefer to use. Some members may prefer to do their routine transactions using technology, but may prefer face-to-face interaction in the branch when starting a new product or making a major financial decision. Find out these preferences. And don’t forget to mix it up in terms of channel and content when it comes to communicating with members.

While onboarding new members is important, don’t forget about your long-term members. “Keeping members forever can be hard work,” Conway says. “We can’t go on autopilot. We must make a commitment to nurturing and fostering these relationships.”

To do that, Conway offers these tips:

- **Don’t take them for granted.** A person may have been a member of your credit union for years, but that doesn’t mean they don’t still need attention or to have conversations with you about how to meet their financial needs. Always ask them how you can help.
- **Do pop the question(s).** Get feedback from these long-term members. Conduct an annual survey and ask members what the credit union is doing well, what it needs to improve on, and how you can help them. This ensures you’re contacting a sample of your members annually. Ask your members about their experience at the credit union when they interacted with employees. If it was a pleasant experience, let



employees know they're doing an excellent job. If members weren't thrilled about their experience, ask how you can make it better and then follow through. And whenever you ask members for feedback, always take the time to follow up and thank them for their time.

- **Don't assume absence makes the heart grow fonder.** If you haven't heard from your member recently, don't assume everything is fine. Reach out them. "Don't go on autopilot with members," Conway says.
- **Do remember what made you fall in love.** Over the course of their lifetime, a member's need change. Have conversations with them to determine how the credit union can best assist them. Make the effort to continue the relationship strong and reach out personally to each member once a year. "Do the work," Conway says. "Your long-time members are worth it."

This and all Virtual Roundtables are a benefit of membership for the CUNA Councils. Members can review additional session archives by logging into www.cunacouncils.org and visiting the Virtual Roundtable page. To learn about Council membership, visit www.cunacouncils.org/membership