

Finding New Members

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If it is to be, it is up to me!

—Unknown

New members provide for the growth of new ideas and new possibilities. Members are the most important possessions of any group.

Objectives

- Understand why persons join a group
- Find where to look for potential members
- Get ideas for recruiting members
- Understand what initially attracts persons to your group and what keeps them coming back

Why Look for New Members?

Anytime your group stops changing and getting better, it begins to get worse. If we are not growing, then we are dying. A group must not get too comfortable, for the future does not belong to those who are content today. To be a group that people want to be a part of, we must continue to grow, improve what works for members, and implement the small changes that will attract and keep our members active, interested, and involved. New members give new outlooks and renew enthusiasm within the group. New members share new perspectives and shed new light that brightens us all.

Why Persons Join Groups

- For a sense of being a part of something
- As a source of learning and enjoyment
- For a feeling of being wanted and needed

- For an opportunity to work with and for others
- A chance to give of self
- An opportunity to use skills and talents
- To fulfill a tradition

Set Your Goals—Plan

As a group, set your goals as to how many new members you would like to recruit. Set your time frame. Plan what will be done, how it will be done, and who will do it.

Activity 1

Break into groups of two or three.

Have these groups prepare a list of persons who may be potential members. Come back as a total group and list all the names on a chart. Do not allow any name to be deleted because someone in the group says the person is “too busy.” Ask the person to be your guest, and he or she can give you an answer.

- After your list is compiled, ask members to identify persons on the list that they will invite to your club meeting. Write this down and check on progress at each meeting.
- Remember, two persons can invite a potential member. If you can offer a ride to the first meeting or two, you may be more successful at getting the person to attend.

Invite persons to attend a special event or your meeting as guests and give them time to make their decision about joining. Be so positive and enthusiastic, and have such enjoyable and educational meetings that they will want to return. If someone decides not to join you, do not be discouraged. You issued the invitation; it was just not the thing for that person. Be positive and move on to the next potential member.

Where to Look for New Members

- Check other groups in which you are involved—family, neighborhood, new people who move into your area, work, church, PTAs, Welcome Wagon, and new retirees. Also put membership information at special events, fairs, and mall exhibits.
- Remember that baby boomers are a potential group who are today in their early 40s through late 50s. Actively recruit this group since they are near retirement. They are accustomed to being active, productive, and involved, and they enjoy learning. Your organization is sure to fit their needs if you market your mission, your programs, and your vision.
- Look for members wherever you are and with whom you are involved.

Special Recruitment Ideas

Set a special time and/or place and have two or three members share special demonstrations. Take time to explain the organization's mission and purpose. Share about educational lessons, workshops, conferences, educational committees, international students, community services, and the history of the organization. Also explain the linkages to West Virginia University Extension Service, each county, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Suggestions:

- Organize a membership coffee or tea.
- Have a booth at the mall. Have a door prize—when people register to win, have a place to check if they are interested in joining a club.
- Do an eye-catching display and have information to share about the organization.
- Select potential members and give them a “membership gift certificate” which pays their first-year dues. You may want to make this a yearly project in your club.
- Invite a potential member to do a program for your club. Then invite the person to be a guest at the next meeting.
- Ask them, ask them, and ask them again.
- Put articles in the paper about membership being open and give phone numbers to call.
- Ask the Welcome Wagon or local doctors or dentists to allow you to leave brochures for their clients.
- If your club has the maximum membership for your meeting place, be a sister club. Form another group to meet at a different time and be supportive of them as they get established and grow.

Activity 2

- Break into small groups and brainstorm some special ideas for recruiting new members.
- Come back as a total group and have each small group share their ideas.
- As a group, you may want to select one or two ideas and carry them out.

Care of New Members

If you invite them, and they join—you must take care of them!!!

Ways to make new members feel welcome:

- Wear name tags.
- Smile and make sure they are not sitting alone.

You and New Members

- Do not use them—see that the club gives more back than it takes from members.
- Include them but do not take advantage of them.
- Give them a ride.
- Call and remind them.
- Introduce them...again, and again, and again.

The Club and New Members

- Every club member should smile and talk with new members each meeting.
- Membership committee members can give them a special welcome.
- Make it easy for new members to learn everyone else's names.
- Attend to any special needs, such as diet.
- Get to know them, but don't pry or gossip.
- Let them know you are glad they have come.
- Do not be too busy to be friendly.
- Make sure your club gives more than it takes.
- Send them a card after they attend two meetings to say how glad you are that they came.
- Give little extras to new members at each of their first four meetings. Assign this to various members. Give a little something to the ones who asked them to join.
- Make your meetings such that new members look forward to the next one because you do special little extras.

- If two or more people in your club want credit for the new member, by all means give credit to all who asked the person to join.
- Show them what's in club work for them.
- Make them feel valued and important.
- Make your meetings efficient and interesting.
- Make them feel a part of the group and make it fun.

The County and New Members

- See that new members receive special recognition.
- Have a new member event and invite the new members and the persons who asked them to join. Make it fun.
- At countywide meetings, have special name tags for new members so others can say welcome.
- Be sure to include names in news releases.
- Send a welcome card from the county officers.
- The Marketing and Membership Committee may want to do something to recognize new members.
- Send a follow-up note about 10 months into the year; it may help to ensure that they rejoin.
- At the yearly recognition event, make sure new members receive a special welcome.

Remember: If it is to be, it is up to me!

Be the spark that gets the flame going in your club. Plan for a good harvest, but keep on hoeing. The harder you work, the luckier you will get.

The fun is in the journey. Enjoy it. May you find those new members!

But remember: Keep the old...one is silver and the other gold.

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