

Finding New Members

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

—Unknown

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

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

Your Attitude—Your Group

Each member's attitude is one of the most important ingredients in successfully recruiting new members. Your attitude is either positive or negative; there is no neutral.

Make your group a giving organization, not only a taking group. In other words, does your group give more to your members than it asks of them? What are the positive consequences of membership in your group?

Is your group an organization of persons having similar interests and concerns, who work to improve themselves, their families, communities, and world? Your group should first be educational, and then also informative, enjoyable, and stimulating for those who attend meetings. It is a time to be with friends and neighbors, and a time to get to know new people.

Each individual in the group needs to be interested and willing to take a part and be involved. As a member, your enthusiasm (or lack of) will show. Very few persons will want to continue with a group in which the current members lack enthusiasm or have negative attitudes.

How is your attitude? How enthusiastic are you? If your attitude is poor, it will be reflected on other members. One person's attitude may be upsetting the entire group. Be more optimistic. If you come to the meeting complaining, before long the entire group will be complaining. Put your attitude in the positive mode. Work to help other members be positive and enthusiastic—both are catching. New members come to groups that are positive, productive, enjoyable, and able to provide something of value.

As a group, anytime you stop getting better, you begin to get worse. If you're not growing, you are dying. Finding new members is possible.

Each member must take a positive attitude and be enthusiastic about the possibilities of gaining new members. Members must take the time to plan, be willing to ask, ask, and ask again. They must be responsible for part of the job of recruitment, and finally, show both kindness and recognition to current and new members. If "old" members obviously enjoy and appreciate their group and its current members, new members will want to be a part of the positive atmosphere that is shared.

Reasons People Belong to a Group

- An opportunity to gain personal satisfaction
- A sense of being a part of something worthwhile
- A feeling of being wanted

- An opportunity to be with and work with others
- A chance to give of one's self
- A chance to use or to develop skills and talents
- An opportunity to stay active and involved

Where to Look for New Members

Where does this membership roundup begin? Think of it as a hide-and-seek game. You have to seek, for they are hidden! Keep your ears and eyes open and tune in to looking for persons you may invite to join your group.

Where do you seek potential members? Think about other groups you are involved with. Also consider persons at your church, work colleagues, your neighbors, persons getting close to retirement age, PTA members, newcomers, and your family.

Brainstorm as a group for potential members. For one month, think of everyone you see as a potential member. Talk enthusiastically about your group and ask people to be guests at your meeting once or twice before they make the decision about joining.

Everywhere you go be on the look out for those potential members who are hidden.

How Do We Recruit?

Be positive, be enthusiastic, and ask them. Make a list of potential members to invite. Go over your list of names each month. Were they invited and offered a ride? When they come, make the experience enjoyable and make them feel welcome.

Make New Members Feel Welcome

Be the first to say hello and talk. Wear name tags if the new person does not know everyone in your group. Give the person an orientation

and take time to explain things about the group's programs and procedures that everyone else understands. Ask at least two or three members to act as "buddies" for the first year. If the person misses a meeting, have two members call to say he or she was missed, and to give a reminder of the next meeting.

Nurture New Members

Each of us needs to be a part of something. A little bit of personal recognition goes a long way toward making people feel like they are part of the team, and gives them an incentive to do their best work. Appreciation holds us together. It is the glue that bonds us and makes us glad for our place in a group.

After asking persons to join, make sure you nurture and care for them. As a member, plant the seeds of a positive atmosphere, stir the soil of everyday living to seek potential members, ask and water gently with kindness, and finally take it personally to provide the sunshine for growth. Let each person know that he or she is valued and appreciated! It is the best tool you have to keep a person coming back to your group. May your group bloom and grow!

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