

Recruiting New Members

by Del Suggs

In order for an organization to grow, it's important to recruit new members. It can be the hardest part of developing an organization. Below are some steps that current members can follow to help attract new, contributing members to your organization.

Step 1: Clearly Define Your Organization

Have you ever gone to a store to buy a product and the sales person was uninformative and knew very little about the product? When a sales person doesn't know the product, it's impossible to make a sale. The same thing is true when recruiting new members. If you don't have a solid understanding of your organization's goals, activities, and purpose, how are you going to sell your organization and attract new people to join?

Before setting out to recruit new members, make sure you know the following information about your organization:

- What is the group's purpose? (Develop a mission statement.)
- What are the group's future plans? (Set some short and long-term goals.)
- How many people does the group realistically want in order to constructively function as an organization? (Set a target number of how many people you want to recruit.)

By knowing this important information about your organization, you will create a common purpose among current members, which will help them to better explain your organization to others. You may even want to

create a flyer or brochure about your organization that contains your mission statement and your goals, as well as past and future activities.

Developing a Mission Statement

A mission statement should state who your organization is and what it does. It should be the basis for all future activities. Here are some tips on how to create an effective mission statement:

- Explain your organization's intentions and priorities.
- Keep it short, concise, and use easy-to-understand language.
- Focus on your final outcome, not the process.
- Use the "Five Whys" method.
- Use your mission statement on all published materials such as flyers, posters, and web sites.
- Review the mission statement regularly to make sure you follow it.

The following is an example of a fictitious mission statement:

"The College Chessmasters' Club seeks to promote Chess by encouraging a greater understanding and a deeper appreciation for the game."

Step 2: Determine a Recruit Profile

After you take time to develop an understanding of your organization, you can then begin to focus on who you want to recruit. You want to make sure that you recruit members who are

committed to your organization's purpose and will be contributing members. Think about the following:

- How will diversity among your members enhance your organization (gender, ethnicity, religion, age...)?
- Is academic major important?
- Is academic level important (For example, an honors society may only want to recruit people with a certain grade point average)?
- Are there any skills or talents you are looking for in members?
- Is there a particular hobby or interest your members should have?

Keep in mind that everyone is entitled to join campus clubs. In deciding on a recruit profile, you are only trying to determine who would be most interested in your club so you can target these people as potential members. However, people you don't expect might be interested in joining.

Step 3: Advertise

Now that you know who you are going to target for new members, you need to start advertising your organization and promoting it to your prospective members.

- Decide what medium would appeal to your new members. If you are creating a music club, you may want to advertise on the campus radio station.
- Is there a certain spot on campus this person is likely to be? For a theater club, the performing arts center would be a logical place to hang flyers. For a math club,

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perhaps you could get faculty permission to talk about your club during math classes. You might find potential members for the Outdoors Club at the local outfitters' shop.

- What resources, such as time, money, and people does this organization have to give to a publicity campaign? There are also free ways to advertise, such as in the campus newspaper, hanging flyers in appropriate locations, setting up a table in the quad, Club Fair tables, etc.

- What does your organization have to offer prospective members? This is where the flyer you created with your mission statement and activities will come in handy. Distribute this to your future members.

Step 4: Retaining Your Members

Now that you have new members, it's important to keep them interested and active in your organization!

- Have regularly scheduled meetings.
- Be active. Don't forget about the future activities you had planned!
- Keep everyone involved.
- Communicate upcoming events and meetings to all members.
- Be positive! Have fun

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Five Sure-fire Ways to Attract New Members by Brian Root

1. Reach out to the incoming first-year students.

I love summer orientations with the incoming new students. These students have the most energy and are the most eager and willing to get involved. In fact, many are already talking about starting new organizations and joining ones that suit their interests. If you can make contact with these students early on, perhaps during summer orientation or freshmen-specific programs, you'll be in good shape. The typical incoming freshman is looking for a way to become connected to the university as quickly as possible. Involvement in an organization is one of the easiest ways for them to make that happen.

2. Face-to-Face Interaction

This is a no-brainer. Recruitment starts with your members. They must believe in their organization and believe in getting their friends and classmates involved. They must be able to articulate the purpose of the group and do so enthusiastically. True recruitment is a result of one student raving about his/her experience to another student who in turn wants to become a part of that experience.

3. Strong marketing campaign.

Although most student activities/affairs professionals will tell you that face-to-face student interaction is the number-one way to get students to join your organization, I would argue that a solid marketing campaign is just as effective. Start early. Use slogans. Use photos of students, but not just any students – smiling students! Give away branded (imprinted) items... if your budget permits, of course. Get your organization in the student newspaper, on the Web, on Facebook, and on the walls throughout your campus. You want people to know that your organization exists and is alive and

well at your institution. A student club that has poorly designed marketing materials gives off a lackluster impression to prospective members.

4. Advertise the perks of membership.

Students are selfish beings. In fact, we all are. Remember Maslow's "hierarchy of needs"? This theory is based on the assumption that we have basic needs that we need to satisfy. Our students have needs, and they usually join clubs & organizations in order to meet their personal needs. What is it that your organization can offer to students to help fulfill their needs? Once you figure out what that is, make sure your students don't hesitate to spread the word.

5. Have a plan.

If your club doesn't have a plan, I can guarantee the recruitment campaign will be rather unsuccessful compared to the group who sat down during the summer or early fall and planned out their recruitment efforts. There needs to be a conscious and collective effort by everyone in the organization in order to get members. I don't believe in leaving recruitment up to a single committee chair, because recruitment is the responsibility of the entire group membership. It's important that you and your students believe in this philosophy, as well.

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