



Recruiting New Members

New members are the life of any organization. Everyone wants new members. New organizations are starting all the time and as the number of student groups increase, the competition for new members intensifies. This handout is designed to help your group successfully recruit and retain new members.

GETTING STARTED

The first step to take in planning a recruitment drive is to look at your organization: you have to know the product before you can sell it. The best way to run an unsuccessful campaign is to be unsure of the goals and objectives of your own group. What is your purpose? What are the future plans of the group? Knowing the answers to these questions will help you define who and how to recruit prospective members.

Build a profile of the person you want to recruit: Freshmen? Grad student? Male or female? What major? Interests or hobbies? A residence hall? A particular college or department? What medium will most likely appeal to this person? Posters? Music? Keep this profile in mind when you advertise.

Think of the things your organization has to offer to prospective members. Fun? Prestige? Leadership possibilities? Developing interpersonal skills? **Be sure to incorporate what you have to offer into your publicity.**

PUBLICITY

The publicity for your recruitment drive will require your best effort in many areas, including creativity, budgeting, and time management. Do not be afraid to delegate authority. Organize committees for publicity and other areas. Get the whole group involved: the group will work better if everyone is given a role in planning and implementing the drive. **A satisfied customer is your best advertising**—if your members are pleased with your organization (and their role in it), they will do a much better job of selling the product.

Be Creative. Your publicity is more likely to be effective if it is noticed. Make a realistic budget and stick to it. Any publicity must be cost-effective to be successful. Write out a time-line of all deadlines to be met—be sure to plan the entire campaign well in advance (e.g., when is the deadline for getting the publicity to the printer so that it gets back to us in time?).

KEEPING YOUR PRIZE...RETAINING YOUR MEMBERS

Above all, your new members (like your old members) will need to feel like they belong in the group. Get them involved in the workings of the organization. Get to know them. Help them get to know the organization. Let them know that their contributions are needed and appreciated. Following these steps will lead to a more enjoyable and rewarding experience for both the new members and for the organization.

REMEMBER: A group with no members has short meetings!

Adapted from Leadersheets, University of Alabama

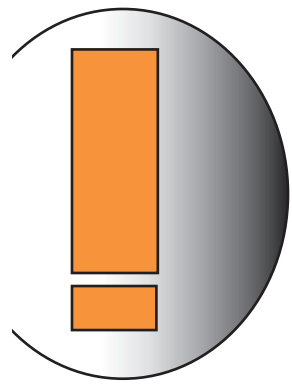


Member Retention

Joining a new organization is an exciting and fun experience for new members, but how does the organization maintain them as members? How do organizations keep current members active and interested?

If you want a member's loyalty, interest, and best effort, you must take into account the fact that:

1. The members of your organization need:
 - a sense of belonging.
 - a feeling that they are sincerely welcome and no one objects to their presence.
 - a feeling that they are needed for their total self, not just their hands, money, specific talents or because they know someone. Make sure you introduce new or potential members to everyone in the group. The new members will then feel respected and treated as equals with everyone else.
2. The individual member needs to have a sense of being a part in the planning and the execution of the organization's objectives; she/he needs to be a part of the idea sharing, the brainstorming and the production and decision making process of the organization. Involve new members in specific activities immediately and not just busy work or stuff that no one else wants to do. This is very important —if a new member has nothing to do, he will feel that joining has been a waste of his/her valuable time.
3. She/he needs to feel that the goals and objectives are consistent with his/her values and reasons for joining the organization. Members must also believe that the goals of the group are decided upon by the group, are within reach, and that they make sense. It is also important that their membership makes a difference to someone and their contributions are appreciated. Recognition at meetings and in newsletters, among other things, are also important.
4. The individual member needs to know clearly what is expected of him/her and not only the detailed job, but also future opportunities. The individual must also know that what he/she does relates to the total outcome of a group project.
5. The individual member needs to be given responsibilities that are challenging and that are within the range of his/her abilities and interests. The responsibilities should help the member to become a leader. Be sure to train him/her to do the job assigned. A subtle form of training is to pair members into two-person teams, an old member and a new member in each, for each task.
6. Do not limit your understanding of retention to strictly new members. Remember the seniors in your organization who drift away that take with them good experiences or leadership that could benefit your organization. Also, remember those members who float in between who feel the organization is only focused on retaining new people.
7. Keep seniors involved! When doing this, remember that their goals may have changed from when they first joined so the organization needs to be sensitive to that.



Finally, the key to keeping members is information. Make sure to give your new members all of the information they need to develop into fully functioning members. Gaps in a person's understanding of an organization is probably one of the quickest ways to lose a member.

Keep Your Members' Spirits Up!

- Offer feedback from advisors and peers
- Organize an effective training program
- Provide a sense of unity
- Compliment good work
- Reward good efforts (certificates and trophies)
- Initiate recognition (press releases, awards)
- Provide financial reimbursement (out-of-pocket expenses)
- Initiate social interaction (parties, contests)
- Recognize individual achievement (remembering birthdays, special honors)
- Allow for new challenges
- Install a suggestion box
- Allow volunteer participation in decisions which effect workers

Christense, V.R. and Myers R.C. "Motivating Volunteers: What Makes Them Tick" Programming, November 1979, page 48.