

INCREASING NEW MEMBERSHIP

We often hear from our club members that increasing membership is one of their biggest challenges. How can you attract new membersand keep them?

Listed below are a few ideas:

Get Help from current members:

Host a “bring a friend” meeting – encourage members to bring someone. This could even be a recurring event so that new members are continually bringing new friends!

Reach out to former members – Some people might be ready to come back.

Encourage members to share your newsletter – Especially if they are featured in it!

Invite members’ families to events – Spouses, siblings, parents, and (grown up) children are all potential members.

Help members develop an “elevator speech” about their membership - Why are they members? What is the biggest benefit of membership? Can they explain the purpose of the club?

Ask your members for recruitment ideas - They may have an idea you haven't thought of before, or know about opportunities within their own social networks.

Offer club business cards to your members – It's an easy way for them to point people to your club and share more easily with their network. Put a line on the cards for the "referral source" so the member gets credit for referring someone new.

Offer an alternate meeting time to attract people with different schedules – is your meeting time leaving out a whole group of people, like those with a 9-5 job or early bedtimes? Switch up your offerings to attract more people.

Volunteer as a group – You will get to do good as well as meeting other volunteers in your space.

Coach members on creating a welcoming experience – Getting potential new members to attend meetings is only half the battle! Remind current members to greet newcomers and avoid club jargon when there are visitors.

Ask members to list their membership in their professional bios – It gets your club's name in front of more people, builds your organization's prestige, and reminds members to talk about it.

Create an invitation email template your members can use – Make it easy for members to send invitations by doing most of the work for them. You could also create paper-based pamphlets or member application forms, or boiler-plate text

that current members copy and paste into emails or Facebook messages that they send to colleagues.

Give members a button or pin and encourage them to wear it – Make sure it's stylish so members will be more likely to wear it, and people will ask what it's about.

Conduct exit interviews with departing members – When you know why people are leaving, you can start figuring out ways to keep them.

Create perks for club members who recruit new members – Little perks and freebies can really motivate people. Think about gift certificates, a shout-out at your next meeting, or even reserving a coveted parking space for members who bring in new blood.

Create a promotional video – Members can share it with their contacts, and you can share it on social media.

Thank your members regularly – There are few different ways you can do that. Here are just a few:

1. Create a video thank-you message from the leader of your organization, and publish it video on your website, your social media profiles, and your email newsletter.
2. Each year, make a list of all the events, services, and educational opportunities that were made possible by your membership fees. Publish the list on a separate page on your site, and link to it on a regular basis in your online content and email campaign.

3. Host a yearly event to say “thank you” to your members. Consider a member brunch, picnic, pool party or other fun gathering.
4. Write handwritten thank-you notes to your members. In our digital age, a personalized note is even more meaningful and memorable.

Assign especially engaged members a “recruitment role” – You can hold special recruitment meetings to give these members tools and encourage them to recruit new members – or give them a few minutes in every meeting to announce their results and ask for help. Among your target members, what kind of individuals would make great recruiters because of their personal/professional networks? You can grow your membership exponentially if you can find a way to enlist these members.

Film member stories and testimonials – Publish them to your website and social media so you can give prospective members a visual reminder of just how engaged your current members are.

Personally, follow up with every prospect – When someone signs up on your website for an event, follow up with each one of them personally and ask them if they want to join.

Launch a direct mail campaign – If you can acquire a mailing list, or if you reach out to lapsed members, you might see success!

Launch a telephone outreach campaign – Reach out to all the prospective members in your contact database.

Website Recruitment Ideas

Create a club website – As long as your potential members are able to find you online, even a simple site can do the trick!

Add a “Join Us” section to your website – people need to know you are accepting new members and how to join you. You can also include convincing elements like testimonials from current members and the benefits of joining your club.

Set up Google Analytics or link tracking using goo.gl or Bit.ly – this will help you find out the most effective methods for getting new website traffic so you can reach out to them.

Make online registration as easy as possible – Include an online member application form. Anyone coming across your website will be much more likely to register than if they have to mail in a paper form.

Refine your member benefits – Make them as clear and enticing as possible in your website copy so that prospective members can't help but be impressed.

Create “Member-only” section on your website – including a section on your website that normal visitors can't see, can help

generate interest – they will come across it and wonder what more they're missing out on.

Event recruitment Ideas

Offer one event a year at your “members-only” rate. If you usually have one rate for members and another for non-members, pick one signature event and offer it to anyone at the members price. This is a great demonstration of the kind of value they will get if they do decide to join – which you should be sure to mention during said event!

Invite guest to meetings – Let prospective members see what they are getting into by inviting them to meetings.

Create “a welcome packet” for guests – include things like the mission, calendar, and contact information about becoming a member.

Follow up with guests – Send an email or post card or make a phone call thanking the guest for attending and asking if they are considering membership. Sending out a post-event survey can also help you see what went well and what you can improve for the next time.

Sponsor a local event – Include your club's name and logo on promotional materials, and make sure event organizers have your club information for anyone who asks.

Give a talk about your club at other organizations – Share your mission and activities with other like-minded people.

Host activities for members and non-members alike – A group activity is an excellent way to meet new people. Something like a park planting or other community service projects can attract a wide range of prospective members.

Walk or build a float for town parades – You will put your club in front of the whole town – and look good doing it!

Host seasonal met-and-greets with a fun activity – Think about a fall bird watch, a winter floral design party, a spring nature walk, or a summer garden social to attract new members.

Have a booth at a fair or festival – Give volunteers talking points to introduce your club to the community.

Have a meeting in a public location like a park or square – It draws attention and is a low-commitment way for curious potential members to check you out.

Host a guest speaker – Guest speakers attract non-members who share your interests.

Host a business spotlight event for local businesses – Local business owners will learn about each other and about you!

Hold diverse events to appeal to a variety of age groups –

Host a free luncheon – Never underestimate the power of free food to bring people to an event.

Host a charity plant sale or design program.

Consider Attendance options – Are your attendance requirements onerous? Experiment to see if a more flexible policy is more attractive.

Host low-commitment meet and greets at a local coffee shop. - Invite prospects to come for a coffee on you, simply to learn about your club and meet your members.

Digital Marketing Recruitment Ideas

Experiment with Facebook or Google ads – Online advertising can target demographics precisely, putting your club in front of the people who are most likely to be interested. As a registered nonprofit, you can also apply for a “Google Ad Grant of up to \$10,000 yearly.

Create a content marketing strategy – Starting podcast, creating a webinar, or writing articles that are on topics your potential members would be interested in and sharing them out can help generate more interest in your club.

Start focusing on SEO – SEO, or Search Engine Optimization, is the process of optimizing your website so that it is more easily able to be found by Google.

Create a complete Membership Funnel – Give potential members offers at every stage, from those who are just starting to learn about your club to those who are already on the fence about joining.

Create an email marketing campaign – Once potential members have come to your website, ask them for their email in exchange for something they want (for example, if you belong to a beekeepers' association, offer them a downloadable guide on selling honey). Then continue emailing them with ideas and tips so that they can see the value of joining your club.

Create retargeting ads – Ever wondered why you keep seeing ads for the same store online after you visited their website? Those are called retargeting ads, and you can set them up too for your club.

Send a win-back email to lapsed members – This can also include a discount or other incentive to rejoin. You can also ask them for feedback regarding the reasons they left, which can help reduce your churn overall.

Create an online community – Facebook groups are great for this!

Run online promotions during peak sales times – For example, you could host a Black Friday sale (white elephant) and promote it across your social media channels.

Social Media Recruitment Ideas

Create a LinkedIn profile for your Club – This is particularly good for professional associations. If your members can add you to their professional profile, your club can more easily attract other people with similar qualifications.

Facebook is a big source.

Encourage members to share club activities on social media – Create a photo release package so that you get permission to have them in pictures. This will ensure the photos show up in their friends' feeds as well.

Create social media packages for members comprised of graphics, posts, links, and resources they can share – people are much more likely to share out your information if you've given them a clear plan on how to do this.

Traditional Marketing Recruitment Ideas

Put up flyers around town – look for community bulletin boards and high traffic spots like grocery stores and coffee shops.

Create an informational brochure about your club – Include the club's mission and activities, as well as contact information.

Place club materials at related businesses – Flower shops, Garden centers, botanical gardens, etc. Think about where people who share your interests are likely to be.

Share club information with new residents – Do local realtors give welcome baskets when someone moves to town? Ask to include your club information.

Announce club meetings in local newsletters – Look for neighborhood and special interest newsletters, whether online or on paper.

Put all meetings on community calendars – Usually you can submit your information quickly online and get listed quickly.

Submit your club information to local directories - Your chamber of commerce or other local groups may publish a directory - list your club.

Place an advertisement in the local paper – Paid advertising can pay off if you select publications potential members read.

Put a PSA on the radio – Let the community know about your club or its events in a short radio message.

Send media releases to local outlets when your club completes a project – Learn to write a press release so you can attract media attention to your club.

Networking Recruitment Ideas

_ Network with other clubs – Work together to increase your visibility. Consider hosting a club mixer to get to know each other.

Visit a Chamber of Commerce meeting – Connect with your local movers and shakers – some of them are looking for clubs to join or will be willing to share your information with others.

Introduce your club to local businesses – Send a letter or stop by and introduce yourself. Bring along your informational brochure and club business card.

Introduce your club to local government – Send a letter or make an appointment to introduce yourself and share your informational materials.

Put up a stand with club information at a general meeting or District meeting during a scheduled “meet and greet”.

Reach out to universities and colleges in your area – Students may be interested in joining, or you can partner with them for events. A good way to bring in youth.

Organizational Recruitment Ideas

Put up a sign at your meeting place – It’s amazing how many people discover clubs by simply walking or driving past their sign.

Report on your membership numbers and goal progress - Keep the members up to date on how recruiting is going to motivate them to help.

Consider the affordability of dues and events – Consider if the dues and event prices are a barrier to potential members. Tiered membership or special rates may result in more interest. You can also reorganize your membership model to better reflect different membership values.

Make sure your contact information is up to date on national, regional and state-wide directories. Often these are posted and then forgotten. You may have information out there that is not correct.

Remove barrier to attendance – Think about what might stand in the way of joining and try to resolve those issues. For example, childcare during meetings.

Create a club bumper sticker – Put your name out on the road!

Consider membership tiers – If full membership requires too much commitment, maybe a lesser commitment (with fewer privileges but also lower dues) would appeal to new people. (Norristown tried this).

Offer a trial period for new members before they pay dues – If there is no cost for trying it out, potential members may stay long enough to see how much they like your club. (How many meetings are nonmembers allowed to attend.

Create a membership drive budget – Ads, events and promotional materials all cost money. Prioritize your membership drive by budgeting for it.

Offer online registration and payment – Make it easy to join your club without paper forms or checks.

Create a structured early recruitment plan –

Create new programs that might entice more diverse members - Create a mentorship program for new members.

Offer educational courses that are related to your mission. Design, horticulture, etc.

Designate a Welcome or Membership chairperson – Increasing membership is a worthy effort, so appoint a team chair to head it up.

Set a membership goal – A concrete goal encourages members to recruit new people and puts everyone on the same page.

Talk to other similar organizations to see how their membership efforts are going - Revise, change, add as needed.

Track how new members join – That way, you can assess the effectiveness of your membership recruiting activities. Cut ineffective ways and pour more resources into the ones that actually work.

Create better benefits and resources – Be something that others can't get elsewhere.

Look into points of friction or contention for new members.

Is it easy for new members to join? For example, filling out a paper application and mailing it in is required, you might gain more members simply by shifting to online member application forms.

Unconventional Member Recruitment Ideas

Stop doing anything to get new members – Instead focus efforts entirely on your own members. Pour all your marketing resources into giving current members a better experience – word of mouth will likely increase membership.

Find a “starving crowd” – Find a market of people needing something and give it to them by joining your club. Interested in floral design, landscape design, horticulture, etc.

Offer discounts to members only – This works as an ad for membership to prospective event attendees to become members to receive the discount also. You can even include some math like “Thinking of attending 3 or more meetings? Become a member to save XYZ...?”