

## Membership and Recruiting

Share information with organizational leadership.

New members are the lifeblood of every organization. They bring new ideas, increase the organization's person power, foster organizational growth, prevent member burn out, and take over leadership roles when members leave.

People join organizations for many reasons. They want to get involved, meet people and make new friends; they want to develop skills and have fun. Groups need new members because they bring new ideas and talents, in addition to replacing old members. It is vital that an organization has a well-conceived and executed recruitment and retention plan.

Recruitment and Retention is the responsibility of every member of the organization! Every member must be involved in the planning and implementation of a recruitment and retention campaign. Some organizations create a Membership Development Committee that oversees the design and implementation of a recruitment campaign, maintains membership information, plans and implements members training programs, coordinates the leadership selection/election process and plans social functions to enhance team building.

The following suggestions will help make your organization's recruitment efforts more successful:

### **Know and Understand Your Organization**

It is important that both the leadership and the membership know what the organization goals and objectives are. They should:

- Have an organizational meeting to discuss goals and objectives. Are your goals still accurate? Is it time to update them? Where do you plan for the organization to be in six months? A year?
- Decide on a direction to take. During this "organizational housekeeping" process, a certain theme or direction should become clear. What is this?
- Develop a membership profile. What type of people do you need to help the group succeed? Who would you like to have join? Who would complement your current membership?

### **Set Recruitment Goals**

Now that you know the type of people you are interested in recruiting, the next step is to set some recruitment goals. How many new members can your organization reasonably assimilate into the group? Will you allow people to join at any time or only during a pre-designated recruitment period? Will you hold a mass meeting or is membership by invitation only?

- Keep your membership profile in mind. When designing your recruitment strategy, ask yourself what places do these prospective members most likely frequent? Do they have special interests? What kind of publicity would attract their attention?
- Remember what made you get involved. Probably the most important step in designing a recruitment strategy is for you to think back to when you first became involved. What attracted you? How were you recruited? If you weren't, how did you hear about the group? Why have you stayed involved?

### **Get Everyone Involved**

Have your current members identifying people they know who might want to get involved. Personally invite them to attend a meeting. Word-of-mouth is the best and least expensive type of publicity you can use.

- Talk about your group. Tell people what you have to offer them. Ask them about themselves – and really listen.
- Sell your organization and the benefits of membership. Tell them how the organization can benefit someone like them. Personalize the message to each potential member. Let them know how their talents, skills, and interests would help the organization.

### **Design an Advertising Campaign Using Visual Elements**

Recruitment campaigns need to have a visual element as well. Have those members with artistic talents work on your posters, flyers, banners, bulletin boards, etc. Be creative. Get the publicity up early enough. (Read the section in this handbook regarding Publicity and Promotion to make your publicity as effective as possible.) Your publicity can be effective only if it's noticed.

### **Plan a Special Welcoming Meeting**

Many groups find it beneficial to have a meeting or ceremony to welcome new members. Group participation in some form of official initiation process is one way to make your members feel wanted, needed and appreciated.

### **Hold an Orientation for New Members**

Developing and conducting an organizational recruitment campaign is very important. Yet, as we all know, retaining these new members is another matter entirely.

- Don't make a mistake – Train your new recruits. All too frequently, groups skip any form of orientation and just place their new recruits directly on committees or organizational projects.
- Teach them about your organization. Although involvement is crucial to the longevity of the group, understanding the organization and its goals and objectives, structure, norms, and taboos is equally as important. By taking the time to orient new members to the privileges and responsibilities of membership, you create a more educated membership – people who can and will make significant contributions to the organization.
- Elements of a successful orientation program:
  - ✓ The rights and responsibilities of members
  - ✓ Organizational governance, operating policies, and procedures
  - ✓ Organizational history, traditions, and programs
  - ✓ Assimilation of new members into the organization
  - ✓ An overview of campus services, activities, programs for student organizations
  - ✓ Information about any support groups or affiliations a group may have

## Recruitment Tips and Suggestions

- ◆ Set up a series of **Informational Meetings**.
- ◆ Create a **Brochure** that will answer questions and serve as a resource.
- ◆ Develop a **Slide Show** that will "Tell the Whole Story."
- ◆ Set up Informational **Tables** in the Student Union.
- ◆ Contact those new students who requested information about your organization by way of **PantherSync**.
- ◆ Request lists or labels of target groups from CSI. (**Direct Mail** to target groups. **Call** and invite target groups to your meetings and events.)
- ◆ **Reach** out to **UWM Staff and Faculty** who will encounter students searching for involvement Residence Halls, Career Services, Academic Departments, etc.
- ◆ Get an article in **The POST** about your organization. Advertise in the POST.
- ◆ Set up a Recruitment Table at every event you sponsor. Ask each current member to **Bring a Friend** to your next meeting.
- ◆ Make **Announcements** at all of your programs.

## Retention Program—Tips and Suggestions

Have a Retention Campaign. Continually recruiting and training new members takes a lot of time and energy. Set new members up for continued involvement. An Incorporation Packet gives new members information about the organization and current members' information about the new members.

### **Incorporation Packet Interest Form –**

Personal data, skills, experience, expectations, class/work schedule, interest areas

### **Statement of Organizational Philosophy and Goals -**

Copy of Constitution. Description of what your organization does, for who, and why.

### **Committee and Position Description –**

Should be specific without limiting creativity and individuality.

### **Organizational Flow Chart –**

Shows leadership positions. Helps people understand how the organization functions. Analyze the needs of your members. Remember why people get involved in the first place and then meet those needs.

*Adapted from Thundar Bolts, NDSU*

## Recruitment Tips

- ◆ Remember that a personal contact is always better than 1000 flyers and newspapers advertisements. People join organizations because they like the people they find

there. Nothing can replace the simple act of getting to know someone and asking them to join the organization.

- ◆ Get scheduled to make a brief introduction of your organization at each floor meeting.
- ◆ Co-sponsor campus events so that the HGB name gets out there more. Be sure to have information about the HGB at each event.
- ◆ Ask key people to give recommendations of possible members and leaders. These recommendations can come from RAMAs, CAs, or other hall leaders.
- ◆ Don't expect a person to come to a meeting in a room full of people he/she doesn't know. Offer to meet the student somewhere and go to the meeting together. Then make sure you personally introduce that person to others in the group.
- ◆ Have a membership drive.
- ◆ Feed potential members. College students are attracted to free food.
- ◆ Recruit people by the issue that interests them. There are people very interested in one issue, you can recruit them to head up a program on that issue.
- ◆ When someone has expressed an interest in getting involved to any degree in your organization, immediately get them involved and give them a meaningful task to do.
- ◆ Go out of your way to make new members or potential members feel like "players" right away.
- ◆ Go door to door in the residence hall and talk to students about the organization and invite them to come to an event later in the week.
- ◆ Get exclusive rights to a really cool "members only" job for the organization.
- ◆ Hold meetings and events in comfortable, visible, easy-to-come-to places.
- ◆ Make a list of all of the advantages of being a member. This could include public speaking opportunities, or any number of other things. Use this list of advantages as your major selling points for new members.
- ◆ Always take photos at meetings and events, then put together a scrapbook for prospective members to see.
- ◆ Create a display that you can set up in the hall.
- ◆ When working to recruit members, always try to think in terms of "what's in it for them."
- ◆ Have an informational meeting.
- ◆ Rent a video camera and make your own recruitment video. Its ok if it's amateur and sloppy, just make it funny! Show your group members at an event. Show a few minutes of a typical meeting. Show your members hanging out, playing cards. Whatever! The more hilarious, the better.
- ◆ Print up business cards for your members to carry. Be sure to have a place for members to write his/her own name and number, but the card should also say, "Open meetings! Please come!"

*From Dathe, T. and Tumbarello, T. "Advising 101" UMR-ACUHO, 1999*