www.mnsu.edu/toolbox
Centennial Student Union 173
(507) 389-6076

Recruitment and Retention of Group Members

Recruitment and retention is the lifeblood of any organization. The group's ability to maintain membership numbers is critical for continued success.
When recruiting, it is important to remember that people first join people. They want to join a group that has beliefs and values compatible with their own. This attracts them.

Recruitment

The key to an outstanding organization is excellent members. When recruiting members for your organization, focus on quality, not quantity. Recruitment of new members should be an on-going goal of organizations. All members of an organization should help with recruitment.

Know your Organization

Potential members know nothing about your organization. They are relying on knowledgeable members to answer their questions about the organization. You need to present clearly who you are and what you do. A simple fact sheet with the following information may be helpful:

- organization's purpose
- past successes
- types of activities
- future plans
- expectations of members
- benefits to members

Some things to keep in mind while recruiting:
* Know what sets your organization apart from the others. What makes it special?
* Escort people to their first meeting. (Remember how scary it was to walk into a room full of strangers, hoping to belong?)
* Make a good first impression. Help the new members feel like they are a part of the organization.
* Get their attention! Use posters, flyers, and table advertisements. Be creative.

Developing a Plan

You should have a variety of ways to attract members. You need to know what types of people you want to recruit for your organization. A complete recruitment plan answers the following questions:

WHO? Are there any specific types of students you want to reach? Any set criteria to belong to your organization? Publicize to the population you want to join your organization.
WHAT? What is your goal? How many people do you want in your organization? Make sure to set a reachable goal.

WHEN? When are you going to recruit? Recruitment is a full-time commitment. All members of your organization should be involved. Welcome Week is a great opportunity to recruit new members.

WHERE? Where you are going to recruit is determined by who you are going to be recruiting. Can you recruit campus wide? In residence halls? In academic departments?

HOW? Have your members discuss all the ways which they were attracted to join. Everyone has a different reason why they joined. Most members joined through word of mouth and one-to-one interaction.

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Retention

A goal for any organization is to keep their members. Retention of members is an ongoing, daily process. You are not going to please everyone, and occasionally a group member may decide that the organization is not a good match or that they have simply decided that it is time for them to experience another type of involvement. Here are a few ideas to keep your members interested and excited.

Orientation
The faster they get to know what the organization does, the sooner they will become effective, contributing members. Have a special meeting for orientation to the organization. Help them to get to know the organization and what is expected of them as members.

Fit Jobs to People, Not People to Jobs
Individuals have different strengths. Let them perform a job they are going to like and succeed at doing. Get them involved right away; give them responsibility.

Rewards
Positive reinforcement is very important to keep a group motivated. Reinforce individuals as well as the organization. Have social gatherings as a reward for accomplishing your goals. Make the organization a fun, positive environment.

Group Relations
Get to know new members, not just as members, but as friends. A big reason people join organizations is to meet other people. No one wants to belong to an organization that they don't feel a part. Listen to everyone's ideas and opinions; treat each member equally.

Teambuilding
Social events, icebreakers, and team builders are a great way to make the organization stronger as a whole. Recognize your group as a whole in newspapers or other publications and displays.

Feedback
When a member does leave the group, ask if your group could be granted an "exit interview". Conduct the conversation in a low-key, friendly manner and discuss the reasons why the individual is leaving. Departing members may give you excellent information to improve your organization's ideas and opinions; treat each member equally.

Recruitment and Retention Information used with permission from Northern Michigan University's Center for Student Enrichment.

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