



Minnesota Women of Today

Members Learning to Recruit

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Membership is not a *program* – it is **people who are learning, sharing, changing, growing and serving together**, as we strive to “leave the world a better place because we lived and served within it.”

Membership is not an annual *project* – it is a **continuous process of recruiting, orienting, activating, and renewing**. “Extend a hand of fellowship to millions of women everywhere,” so that we can maintain an organization offering community service, leadership training and individual growth opportunities.

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The Leader's Longing

By Richard Barrett

I don't care who you are, or what you do;
When I walk into our organization, I want to feel your passion.
I want to see your courage.
I want to experience your spirit.
I want to know that you care about creativity.

I don't care who you are, or what you do;
When I walk into our organization, I want to feel your caring.
I want to see your love.
I want to experience your compassion.
I want to know that you are working for the common good.

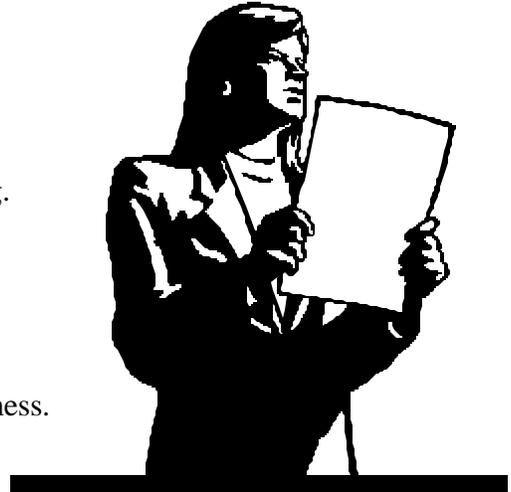
I don't care who you are, or what you do;
When I walk into our organization, I want to feel your openness.
I want to see your trust.
I want to experience your honesty.
I want to know that you will always speak the truth.

I don't care who you are, or what you do;
When I walk into our organization, I want to feel your commitment.
I want to see your engagement.
I want to experience your hope.
I want to know that you will do what is necessary to get the job done.

I don't care who you are, or what you do;
When I walk into our organization, I want to feel your authenticity.
I want to see your tears.
I want to experience your joy.
I want to know that you will never hide who you are.

I don't care who you are, or what you do;
When I walk into our organization, I want to feel your yearning.
I want to see your searching.
I want to experience your longing.
I want to know that you will never stop learning.

I don't care who you are, or what you do;
When I walk into our organization, I want to experience you!



Volunteering Improves Life

Helping Yourself, Helping Others -- the benefits of volunteering is personal health, skill building and community service.

Personal Health & Well-Being

Exercise regularly, eat a well-balanced diet and do something nice for someone - that's the advice you're apt to get from your doctor more and more, a substantial body of research evidence is indicating that there are very real personal, physical and emotional benefits to helping others – volunteering.

Dr. James House of the University of Michigan studied a group of people for more than a decade. The results of that study indicated that doing regular volunteer work, more than any other activity, dramatically increased life expectancy. The study also found that people who spend a lot of time reading, listening to the radio or watching television had a higher-than-average mortality rate. The conclusion: people need other people for their health's sake.

The late Dr. Hans Selye reasoned that by doing good for people, you inspire their gratitude and affection, and this warmth will help protect you from the stress of life.

Employment Skills

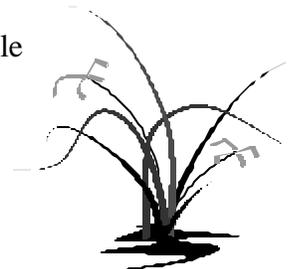
Across the nation, thousands of volunteers have developed marketable skills and made valuable job contacts through their volunteer efforts. Some areas of frequent skill development are computer skills, public speaking, project and program planning, and counseling to name a few. Women of Today offers its members many of these opportunities.

Growing A Better Community and Quality of Life

A community can only be as healthy, vibrant and active as its members are willing to make it. Making it so involves time, energy, effort and commitment - from every single member. We've all heard much during the past year about the "loss of community values" and "family values." Those values are ingrained in each of us through our individual and collective service to our neighbors, neighborhoods, and communities. As adults and parents, we model those behaviors and activities for our youth in an attempt to pass on those values to the next generation. To this extent our volunteerism significantly improves the quality of life for future generations and ourselves.

A Satisfied Volunteer Will:

- Do a good job for the organization
- Have only good things to say about your organization
- Give your organization a good reputation
- Recruit volunteers by word and example
- Be committed and enthusiastic



Who Volunteers?

Every two years, the Independent Sector produces a comprehensive profile on patterns of giving and volunteering in the United States. It is one of the most widely recognized sources of information on national trends in service and provides a wealth of information about what motivates people to give of time and money. To date, five reports have been published (1988, 1990, 1992, 1994 and 1996). The 1996 survey¹ was designed to answer the following key questions and concerns of the field:

- Who gives and volunteers? To whom? How much? What determines giving and volunteering behavior? What early experiences influence giving and volunteering behavior as adults?
- What is the relationship between membership in religious and other voluntary service organizations, and giving and volunteering behavior?
- Do social behaviors have an impact on giving and volunteering? How do economic conditions affect charitable behavior?
- What are public attitudes toward giving, volunteering, and the performance of charitable organizations?

Findings reported in the 1996 publication include:

- In 1995, 48.8% of the population volunteered; that's 93 million people. Volunteers gave an average of 4.2 hours per week.
- Volunteers gave a total of 20.3 billion hours in 1995, up almost a billion hours from 1993.
- When asked how they learned about their volunteering activities, people said (1) they were asked by someone, (2) through participation in an organization, or (3) that a family member or relative would benefit.
- Of people who volunteered or knew about volunteering when they were children, 55-67% volunteered. Only 29-44% of people who didn't know about volunteering when they were children actually volunteered.
- 34.1% of non-members of religious organizations volunteered and 54.9% of members of religious organizations volunteered. 75.6% of respondents who were members of both religious and other organizations volunteered.
- 85% of people, who were asked to volunteer, did. Members of religious organizations were more likely to be asked to volunteer than non-members of religious organizations.
- 70.7% of college graduates volunteer. 43.1% of high school graduates volunteer.
- 80% of all respondents agree that the need for charitable organizations is greater now than five years ago. Of this 80%, 53.7% were volunteers.
- Of the 40% of respondents, who volunteered in April-May 1996, 3.7% were tutors and 1.2% were counselors (like big brother/big sister); 21.5% did religion-related volunteering.

¹ Source: Giving and Volunteering in the United States, page xiii, 1996 edition

What is the Value of Volunteer Time?²

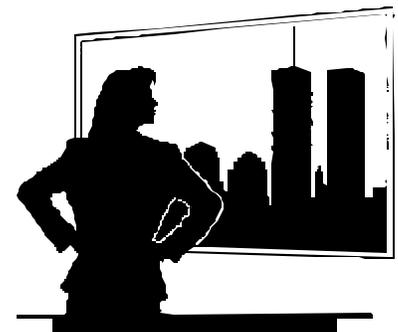
Independent Sector announced an increase in the rate for calculating the value of volunteer time. The dollar value is now \$14.83 per hour. This amount is calculated by taking the average hourly wage for nonagricultural workers in 1999 as published in the Economic Report of the President 2000 edition, and increasing it by 12% to account for fringe benefits.

Volunteer Statistics	1998	1995	1993
Percentage of population volunteering	55.5%	48.8%	47.7%
Total number of volunteers (in millions)	109.4	93.0	89.2
Average weekly hours per volunteer	3.5	4.2	4.2

- 56% of adult's aged 18 or over volunteered a total of 19.9 billion hours.
- This is the highest ever-recorded level of participation in volunteering during the Independent Sector survey series; a 13.7% increase in the rate of volunteering.
- The volunteer workforce represented the equivalent of over 9 million full-time employees at a value of \$225 billion.
- A higher percentage of women (62%) than men (49%) volunteered.
- 90% of individuals volunteered when asked. 42% of the volunteers found out about activities through personal contact, while 35% through participation in an organization.
- 41% of volunteers contributed time sporadically and considered it a one-time activity. 39% of volunteers preferred to volunteer at a scheduled time. 9% reported volunteering only at special times of the year such as during religious holidays.
- 1% of respondents learned about volunteering via the Internet.
- 76% agreed that nonprofit organizations generally played a major role in their communities.

Some Women of Today Statistics

- A current member recruits over 80% of new members.
- We maintain a renewal average of 70%.
- On average we sign 750 new members each year.
- Annually we retain at least 92% of our chapters.



² Data From Independent Sector - 1999 National Survey

A Focus Group of Twenty-Somethings³

The **League of Women Voters of Minnesota** held a focus group of younger members to find out what makes young adults get involved and what might attract them to an organization. You may find their responses useful in thinking about recruiting and retaining younger women for Women of Today.

What Motivates Young Women to Join Groups?

- Something to put on a resume, contacts, networking, career-orientated
- Favorable organization plan
- Agreement with the mission statement
- Making a difference
- No obligation
- Good for social life
- Offsets boredom of my job
- Camaraderie
- Membership benefits (i.e., manuals, programs)
- Impact on my life and the lives of others in my community
- Occupation of the time I wish to invest
- Ownership is shared

What Characteristics should a Group have to Attract You?

- Inclusive, organization, friendliness
- Opportunities for development
- Established, well-known, affordable
- Location, convenient meeting time
- Acknowledgments, appreciation, awards
- Diversity of all kinds in the organization
- Fun!

What Deters You from Joining Groups?

- Impersonal, negative impressions from members
- Aggressive recruitment, high cost
- Materials of poor quality; lack of a professional look
- Need accessibility for children
- Junk mailing lists sold with my name

What do You Need from a Group in order to Continue Membership?

- Feel needed
- Have activities or events in which to participate
- Be able to take a break every now and then

What is a Reasonable Dues Amount for a National Organization?

- Depends on the benefits
- Typically \$125 for professional organizations
- \$25 or more for service organizations
- Trial membership for the first year
- Depends on what you get, what you contribute, how it affects your life, and how active you want to be

³ September 21, 1999

What is Recruitment?

Recruitment is a constant, year-round process of keeping your organization's name in front of people.

Before looking at some basic steps of the recruitment process, let's define what we mean by recruitment. For many people, the distinction between public relations, marketing and recruitment is unclear.

Public relations is the art of helping the public to understand what your organization does and encouraging the public to regard your efforts positively. It is designed to influence as large a segment of the public as possible at any one time with the message you have selected to share.

Marketing involves determining the needs of select or target audiences and then designing goods, services and opportunities that respond to those needs. "It relies heavily on designing the organization's offering in terms of the target markets' needs and desires, and on using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate, and service the markets"⁴

Recruitment is the act of identifying groups and individuals for service, and then actually asking them to volunteer.

While public relations, marketing and recruitment are not synonymous; they do support each other and benefit the overall mission of your organization. When the public knows the name and service provided by your organization, people are more likely to remember your organization when they think about serving. When employed properly, marketing strategies can help target your recruitment campaign to the people who are most likely to say, "Yes!"

Steps in the Recruitment Process

Finding volunteers to meet your agency or organization needs requires careful thinking and planning *before* an appeal is made. Prior to actually going out and asking people to help, you must

- Clearly identify volunteer needs and position descriptions
- Know what you have to offer - the "costs" and benefits of volunteering
- Plan a recruitment approach based on volunteer needs and position descriptions
- Implement your plan

Once the groundwork has been laid, you are ready to implement your plan and make the appeal.



⁴ Kotler 1975, p. 5., full citation

How to Recruit

So, how do you listen? That depends on how much time you have, where you are, and how much time you want to spend right now with each person. There are a great many situations how you will be recruiting. Feel free to do it your way, as long as you follow the general outline: *Listen. Don't sell.*

Motivation

It is useful to think about the possible motivations that people might have for becoming volunteers. This can help you to design volunteering opportunities and influence your recruitment message. Motivations for volunteering might include:

- **Commitment to a cause** – emphasize how their contribution will make a difference
- **Meeting people** – volunteering can be a very sociable activity!
- **Gaining skills** – when recruiting stress the skills and experience that volunteers can gain
- **Utilizing existing skills** – some people want to put their skills to a good cause
- **Keeping active** – more and more older people are volunteering

Word of Mouth

Existing members recruit most volunteers. Make sure every members knows that you are trying to recruit, and what the opportunities are. You might want to run a brainstorming session identifying people your organization knows. It can also be useful to map possible sources of recruits in the local area. A good resource on how to run such exercises can be found in *The Volunteer Recruitment Book* by Susan Ellis. Of course, if your existing members are happy and motivated they will be more effective in recruiting their friends!

Pros:

- It is particularly useful in smaller communities.
- Word-of-mouth is still the most effective method of recruiting.

Cons:

- You are likely to recruit “more of the same” – existing volunteers will tend to recruit people similar to themselves, so if you rely on word of mouth your volunteers might not be very diverse.

Print

Posters can spread your message to a wider audience. Leaflets or postcards are a handy and attractive way of providing information to potential recruits. When designing printed information remember the principles of your recruitment message. Keep it simple, and reflect the nature of the volunteering opportunities in your design. You should also consider who your target audience is. You might consider placing printed information in:

Pros:

- Printed information can be targeted at particular audiences.
- Eye-catching designs can create a good image for your organization.
- Printed materials are becoming increasingly cheap and easy to produce.

Cons:

- Printed information tends to circulate for a long time – inquiries may come long after the details have gone out of date.
- Posters and leaflets are unlikely to have much impact unless people already know about your organization.

Public Speaking

Once you have identified a possible source of new recruits you need to take your message to them. Setting up a talk or presentation might take some time – you will need to persuade the host (be it a school, an employer or whatever) that your information will be of real interest. But it can produce good results.

Try to be as well briefed as possible about the people you will be talking to and what is likely to appeal to them about volunteering. Remember the principles of your recruitment message!

Visual images such as photographs or a video can aid a presentation, but real, live volunteers or clients are the most effective inspiration. Make sure you bring printed information to support your presentation, giving people the chance to go away and think before committing themselves. Be clear about how people can get involved or find out more if they are interested.

Events

An event such as Volunteer Week is a great chance to recruit new members. You might have an exhibition stand in a shopping center or stage a public relations stunt to attract publicity. There are many places and events at which booths can be set up, including: main street, local library, festivals and carnivals, career and recruitment fairs. You will probably need to get local council permission to do this.

Pros:

- Gets you seen
- Provides the opportunity of face-to-face recruitment

Cons:

- Can be a lot of work without a guaranteed return
- Can be expensive and labor-intensive

Local Press and Radio

Events such as Make A Difference Day also provide an opportunity to get coverage in the local media. Coverage in the local media might range from feature articles to brief news stories. Try to build a good relationship with local newspapers, television and radio stations. Stress the “human interest” of local people getting involved to help the community.

A steady stream of coverage about your organization, its work and its volunteers, can help to raise your profile and thereby aid recruitment. Press coverage can also be used as a form of public recognition for volunteers’ work.

You can also advertise for members in the local press. Do your research and find out what sort of people are likely to see the advertisement. Tailor your message accordingly – for example, stressing the skills and experience that can be gained. There is also a wide range of media specialists in which you might consider advertising or seeking coverage. Company newsletters, professional and trade journals are particularly useful if you are seeking someone with specialized skills.

Local Businesses

When assessing your local area for possible sources of recruits you might well come across local companies whose employees are eager to get involved. You might be able to recruit individual employees or groups. It will help if you can get the support of someone senior in the company to allow you to address a staff meeting. Once employees are volunteering, the company might also be willing to offer other kinds of support.

Basic Steps in Volunteer Recruitment

A Dozen Lessons in Recruitment

- Lesson One.* **Everyone can learn to be a recruiter.** Practice and patience enable members to gain the experiences that allow them to become good recruiters. All members should learn the phrase, “replace yourself every year” and heed this message. Develop a habit of regularly inviting guests and you’ll find that as you do recruiting will become easier.
- Lesson Two.* **The more you ask, the more join.** Each time you ask someone to join you will either recruit them, or you will learn a great lesson that can be applied in future attempts. In fact the more times you try, the more successful you become at recruiting.
- Lesson Three.* **You must ask them to join.** It seems like an obvious thing to do; yet it is most often omitted. Either assign someone, take turns to make sure someone asks your guest to join or make it an agenda item. Just think of how the visitor feels if no one asks them! The key to recruiting seems to be to directly ask a person to join.
- Lesson Four.* **Know what to say.** Be prepared to answer this question: why should I join? Create your own sales pitch to encourage someone to become a Women of Today volunteer. Become familiar with our mission statement and creeds to help you find the right words.
- Lesson Five.* **Believe in our product.** A successful sales tip is the advice to “believe in the product.” This is a key element that works for the Women of Today, too. We do so many worthy deeds that we often forget how wonderful we really are. Look at our organization and find selling points of your own.
- ❑ Annually we raise over a quarter of a million dollars to be given to foundations and distributed to communities all across Minnesota. Find out how much your chapter has raised this year, or the last ten years, and show what an impact you’ve made in your community.
 - ❑ Certainly everyone can think of a “worthy deed” that has been done. Speak from the heart to share this information.
 - ❑ From project chair, to Local Program Manager, to president, the training we offer is often a forgotten, yet important, recruitment tool.
- Lesson Six.* **Follow up on a prospective quickly.** Develop a process for checking back with guests that have attended your events. Contact them by mail, or by a simple phone call. Having an event soon after your M-Night gives you a reason to get back in touch with them. Chapters that hold their M-Night close to a meeting night show high success in activating the member right away.
- Lesson Seven.* **Ask them to help.** It has been our experience that people will help if asked. Volunteers do not need to be interested in being future presidents. In fact, some might not have the qualifications to serve in the position. But that doesn’t mean they can’t provide useful assistance. Develop committees or projects that could use additional help, and make it available to others. When asking for help, however, limit your expectations to what can realistically be anticipated. Do things directly in the neighborhood, or perhaps you can identify a skill they have that would prove useful or beneficial to your group.
- Lesson Eight.* **Listen to them.** Challenge yourself to effectively listen to them to hear about what their interests are. **Then the key is to make the connection between their interest and the Women of Today.** You need to be sure you are doing more of the listening than talking.
- Lesson Nine.* **Identify their qualities.** Find out a person’s full range of interests and not just what they do for a living. STEP, Personal Enrichment and internal programming exercises play a huge role to help chapters find out this information.

- Lesson Ten.* **Take away their fears.** See if you can find out what their greatest hesitation is – if it’s money; help them see they will gain many things for a small investment. Help them see the people skills you gain from networking with women from all over the nation. Discuss possible reactions as a group prior to having guests and practice reasonable answers.
- Lesson Eleven.* **Identify things you have gained.** Recognize the great lessons that you’ve learned from being a member. Mention these skills and work them into your conversation. Use real stories about what you’ve learned from Women of Today and how you’ve applied it to your home, work or other areas of life. All in all WT has made us better...a better employee, a better advocate, simply a better person. Look for the lessons that helped you continue your belief in the organization.
- Lesson Twelve.* **Understand the time factor.** People trade time for that which is valuable to them. If you make Women of Today a worthy trade, they will make the investment, however, if members are not getting something back, you will lose them. Once again, you need to know what their interests are and you need to make sure you fulfilling them.

10 Pointers for Effective Invitations to Volunteers⁵

People who are asked to volunteer their time are more than three times as likely to do so than others.

The following pointers are applicable to volunteer recruitment in a wide variety of service settings.

1. **Be prepared.** Have a complete description of the organization. Understand and communicate why this assignment is necessary to the work of the group or organization. Share why being a member of Women of Today is important and meaningful to you.
2. **Be sure that you are the right person to extend the invitation.** Find a member of the group who knows the prospective volunteer, or a person with good communication and people skills. Identify the best person to share the volunteer opportunity.
3. **Personalize your invitation.** Why do you want the particular individual you are asking? Talk about how this opportunity will meet an important need that he/she may have expressed, will provide an opportunity for involvement, or will offer a chance to give back to the organization.
4. **Think about how the invitation will sound to the prospective member.** Ask positively and enthusiastically. Don't apologize, distort the facts or ask negatively: "You won't want to, would you?" Don't beg. Show your interest in this person and their commitment to the organization's mission.
5. **Be enthusiastic.** Your best recruiter values the work of the organization and genuinely supports this effort. Always speak from the heart. Remember: enthusiasm is contagious.
6. **Be realistic with your expectations.** A newly retired person may need a flexible schedule; a year's commitment to a 18-year-old is the equivalent of asking a 45-year-old for three years of service; a divorced parent searching for a family-volunteering opportunity may need an alternating weekend schedule.
7. **Remember the "courtesy factor."** Whether you phone a person or initiate a conversation face to face, determine if this is a good time to talk. If not, schedule a time when you might visit with each other.
8. **Bring closure to the conversation.** A member may want to think about the request or may need to consult with family members or a work schedule. Agree upon a time when you will complete the discussion and learn of the prospect's decision.

⁵ *10 Pointers for Effective Invitations to Volunteer*, an adaptation of Leadership Training Network's Starter Kit for Lay Ministry by Sarah Jane Rehnborg; *Tips on Speaking with Groups* by Sue Vineyard and Steve McCurley

9. **Follow up quickly.** If the person is willing to sign-up, be sure that a new member orientation is readily available. Introduce the volunteer to others so that newcomers feel welcome and included.
10. **Accept “NO” graciously.** The time and situation may not allow a member to accept the opportunity, even one that seems “perfect” for the individual. Determine if a follow-up invitation is in order and thank the person for taking the time to listen to your request.

8 Reasons to Partner with Another Volunteer Group

We advise that you may take time to develop partner relationships. The important points about partnership arrangements with local organizations are:

1. The commitment of the partner organization is crucial and may take time to develop
2. Do your background work before recruiting, preparing the placements you will offer
3. Give a clear presentation stressing the benefits of volunteering
4. Have written information and application forms with you when you make a presentation
5. Follow up swiftly by presenting the options and making position appointments
6. Introduce new volunteers to their positions
7. Monitor each position
8. Try to ensure that your partnership continues into the future

Additional Recruitment Tips

Volunteers are perhaps the most critical yet most neglected resource in any community

- Figure out what you have to offer and sell it; this is the key to successful volunteer recruitment.
- Try to find something unique about the organization. For instance, we are a leadership organization for young women – see our mission statement, creed or programming areas for other ideas. Then make sure you mention it prominently in your recruitment message.
- Mention that Women of Today offers plenty of training in a variety of areas; most volunteers enjoy what they do, but they would like more training.
- Anticipate and have an answer for the following questions - Why should I join your organization? What will I be doing? How often and why? Where?
- Avoid using words that scare volunteers away; use words like “want” instead of “need,” and never use any form of the word “desperate,” which tells prospective volunteers that nobody wants the job or wants to join, and it creates suspicion.
- Get all active members involved in thinking up new methods for recruiting; pool these ideas.
- Try to think what would interest YOU in Women of Today.
- People are attracted to programs that utilize positive, honest, enthusiastic appeals.
- Be interested in your members, not only as volunteers but also as individuals.
- Involve all members in decision-making; make certain they feel they are an important part of the organization.
- Recognize their efforts; saying “thanks” goes a long way.

Telephone Calls Are Essential

Personal phone calls are vital to all areas of membership. Other than being face-to-face with someone, it is the next best form of communication. Both people are able to respond and interact, which gives it the “personal touch” you need.

When making calls you should find a quiet unobtrusive location so that you do not get distracted. Always ask the person if (s)he has a few minutes to talk, and thank him or her at the end of the conversation. If the call recipient cannot talk at that time, ask her/him for a good time to call back. Listed below are some good occasions to use the phone, some sample telephone scripts, and some suggestions for answers to commonly asked questions.

- **Phone calls are great as a follow-up** to any written correspondence you have had with a perspective, such as an introduction letter, newsletter or invitation.
- **Thank a prospective member** that attended a chapter event; don't forget to say how nice it was to meet and answer any questions the prospective member has.
- **You can use the phone for cold calling**, use a list of prospective members you have gathered from your chapter members or the names received from state-attended expos.
- **A welcome phone call to a new member is nice.** Share in their excitement!
- **Call all of your members a few days before your general meeting.** There may be some specific reminders, and it lets each member know you want them to attend.
- **Use your sign-up sheet to make reminder calls** to those indicating they will attend and also to those members who may have been absent at sign-up time.
- **In trying to activate new or seasoned members**, call them and ask if they would like to chair or co-chair an upcoming project. They may need a little nudge and reassurance that they can do it, but they will feel honored that you asked them.
- **A thank you or words of praise for a job well done** always feels good to receive. Call members and let them know how much you appreciate them.
- **It is an absolute must to call all members who are up for renewal!** Do not assume just because they did not contact you that they do not want to renew. Some may need a little encouragement; let them make the decision.



Sample Telephone Scripts

It's a known fact that more prospective members attend your events if they are called first. This is also the most important step in getting new members. Here are a few samples.

After Sending out an Invitation to a Prospective Member

Hi, my name is [YOUR NAME] from the [YOUR CHAPTER] Women of Today. Is this a good time to talk right now?

[IF NO] When would be a good time to talk? [GET A TIME TO CALL BACK.]

[IF YES] Thanks. Did you receive your invitation to our [EVENT NAME]?

[IF YES] Great. Did you think you might be able to attend? Do you need a ride or further directions? Did you have any questions about our organization? Thank you for your time and I will be excited to seeing you there.

[IF NO] I apologize that the invitation did not get to you yet; it was sent. Let me explain to you what will be happening, on [DATE] we will be...[EXPLAIN YOUR EVENT] Did you think you might be able to attend? Do you need a ride or further directions? Did you have any questions about our organization? Thank you for your time and I will be excited to seeing you there.

Working on an Extension

Hi, my name is [YOUR NAME] from the [YOUR CHAPTER] Women of Today. Is this a good time to talk right now?

[IF NO] When would be a good time to talk? [GET A TIME TO CALL BACK.]

[IF YES] Thanks. Currently we are working on starting a chapter in [COMMUNITY NAME]. Women of Today is a community-service and leadership-training organization. We are excited to be expanding in your area, and we would like to know if you would be interested in attending a meeting on [DATE] and find out more about our organization

[IF YES] Great. Did you think you might be able to attend? Do you need a ride or further directions? Did you have any questions about our organization? Thank you for your time and I will be excited to seeing you there.

[IF NO] If you are not able to make this meeting, would it be OK if we sent more information and an invitation to our next meeting? Thank you for your time and I to meet you soon.

Telephoning a Prospective Member Referred to Your Chapter

Hi, my name is [YOUR NAME] from the [YOUR CHAPTER] Women of Today. [NAME OF CURRENT MEMBER] suggested I call you. Am I getting you at a good time to talk right now?

[IF NO] When would be a good time to talk? [GET A TIME TO CALL BACK.]

[IF YES] Thanks. I'd like to talk to you about a women's community service organization to which [NAME OF CURRENT MEMBER] and I belong. The organization is the Women of Today. Our organization has three main focus areas: service, growth and fellowship. The service area raises money for community organizations and nationwide foundations. By growth, we mean developing our own skills and talents. Fellowship is making

new friendships in our own neighborhoods, and having a lot of fun! We would like to know if you are interested in finding out more information about us? Great! There is a meeting on [DATE] at [PLACE]. The meeting can run anywhere from one to two hours. Are you free that evening? Wonderful. Do you need a ride? Thanks for your time; I'm looking forward to meeting you!

Comfortable Answers to Challenging Questions

Q: What is Women of Today?

A: Women of Today is a non-profit, community service organization which offers leadership training, fellowship, and the chance to make your community a better place to live.

Q: What did you say your organization is again?

A: We are a leadership-training organization who sponsors community education and fundraising activities. We have over 125 chapters across the nation. Our members are community volunteers who use or gain leadership skills through their activities within the community. Our group is composed of mostly women over age 18, from a diverse background – our diversity is one of the reasons many have joined.

Note: Often people may use this question as a “shield” to distract you or throw you off guard. It usually means they are not really listening to your first words. You will have a bit harder “sell” with a person who tosses you this question, but all is not lost. Now is the time to use what you might already know about the person (children, interests, profession) or what you can gather (new to the community, children in the background) to sell them the piece(s) of Women of Today that will be most appropriate.

Q: What kind of leadership training would I get?

A: We offer personal enrichment programs to improve your speaking, writing, leadership and personal skills. You also will have the opportunity to chair projects, work on fundraisers or hold leadership positions.

Q: In what ways can I improve my community?

A: Our chapter serves the community in many ways. [EXPLAIN SOME OF YOUR SERVICE PROJECTS] We are always looking for new ideas, plus we get lots of ideas from our state and national organization.

Q: What is the time commitment?

A: One of the great things about Women of Today is that you can be as involved as YOU want. There are no “requirements,” but it is suggested that you attend the monthly general meetings to keep up-to-date on what is happening.

Q: How big is Women of Today?

A: The average chapter size is around 25-30 members; the national organization has about 4000 members.

Q: Why should I become involved with the organizational levels outside my community?

A: District, state and national meetings are a wonderful opportunity to get the “big picture” of our organization. It's like seeing opening night of a play – all the smaller, but equally important, pieces come together. Things make sense when you see the whole picture. We are a vital part of community service in 18 states. Across

Minnesota, we have over 125 chapters and more than 2200 members. The volunteer service hours reported at these meetings are overwhelming. We work with several foundations and special charitable organizations as a state and national group, even though a great percentage of this money stays within the local communities.

Q: Why should we raise money for people in other communities?

A: We help people all around us: in our towns, counties, state, nation and globe. We help them because we believe in helping each other and helping people whom, some day, may help us or someone we love. Our support of the Kidney Foundation or the March of Dimes may one day benefit our next-door neighbor or even our own family.

Q: How come it costs so much money to join?

A: Cost wise, the Women of Today dues are about \$2.50 per month. That money is not wasted – you receive training materials, programming ideas, project “how to” materials, educational materials from the various programming areas, public relations information and much more. The dues also provide you with a core of volunteer leaders at your disposal – the dues provide for district, state and national officers within a phone call away. At many meetings on all levels of the organization, training forums are offered. This is both educational and personal – trainings for which you would pay substantially outside of Women of Today.

Q: Why should I pay dues to be a volunteer?

A: Your dues pay for the support you and your chapter will receive from our state and national organization. These organizations provide training, monthly mailings and updates, organizational newsletters, service by officers, and a great deal of programming information.

Q: What if I do not have the money right now?

A: The cost of joining is comparable to a magazine subscription, basic cable for a month, or one self-help class. We believe that it is money well spent and believe you too will agree as soon as you join and become involved with community projects.

Q: Why do you need to have a separate organization – there are enough organizations in this town already?

A: Women of Today can complement those other organizations. We can jointly work on projects and fundraising. At the same time, we are providing opportunities for young women to support and encourage each other's development as leaders.

Q: How can I find time; I'm a very busy person?

A: You do not need to do more than you wish. You pick the projects or fun nights that fit with your interests and your schedule. We value your contributions whatever they are. Also the more members who join, the more the workload is shared. It may seem busy at first, as there are such things as organizational paperwork and items to complete. As you grow, you are more able to choose what involvement you want. Most of our members are employed, have children and partners. We have found that our members are involved in a number of areas within their communities, and we encourage that. Busy people know how to get things done and manage their time. We encourage chapter members to do what they are interested in and committed to

doing. We also realize that there are times when you cannot be as active; at those times we suggest you step back and take a break so you won't get burnt out.

Q: How could I possibly fit this in; I'm already involved with too many things as it is?

A: Then you already are an active volunteer. What other groups are you involved with?

[WORK RELATED] Many of our members have joined Women of Today because it offers the chance to network with a large and diverse group of people. There are many who are looking for friendships and contacts beyond work or office friendships, and have found that variety within Women of Today.

[PERSONAL] Are you finding them to be enjoyable? Sometimes our community involvements lose their interest just as other things within our life often change. Do you find that there are sometimes not enough volunteers to get a project or activity accomplished? If that happens, I hope you will consider calling the Women of Today – we often partner with other projects and groups within the area. Many people find the educational activities and fundraising that we are a part of to be very rewarding. What is the focus of the other activities you are in?

[IF THE FOCUS IS PURELY GIVING] one of the best features of Women of Today are the personal enrichment, focus on women, educational, and informational activities in which we participate.

[IF THE FOCUS IS PURELY ON DOING] Women of Today features many fundraising and community service projects. We are a fun group, you should visit a meeting sometime.



Handling the Negatives

Remember that the prospective member may view you as a salesperson. The goal may be to get you off the phone as soon as possible. Your object is to sound like someone with whom the prospective member could be a friend, and to get them to hear what you have to say. Keep in mind that you want to sound friendly, feel free to wander a little if the conversation seems to need it.

Unique Recruiting Events

The R-Night

Purpose: The R-Night is an evening for renewing our commitment to Women of Today.

Overview: The R-Night can be held any time, but the best time would be the middle month of the quarter. They can be held once a year or each quarter. These nights are informal and are hosted by the chapter president or membership vice president. Members whose renewals are due are invited, along with any other members who wish to attend. Renewing members are asked to bring nothing but the dues – the host provides the refreshments.

Activities: What you do with your R-Night is up to you. It can be an informal gathering where members not only renew the membership, but also renew friendships and commitments to Women of Today. Here are some suggestions for other activities for the evening:

- Fill helium balloons with sayings that go along with the chapter president's theme, and/or money-off membership renewals
- Invite renewing members to write down goals for the year on a self-addressed postcard, collect them, and send them to the members at the end of her/his WT year
- Present a team-building exercise; have a contest to see how many words can be spelled with the letters in the word "renewal"
- Recognize members who signed the renewing members

Favors: Party prizes or favors allow the attendees to bring something home from the evening.

- Packs of gum with a note saying, "thanks for sticking with us"
- \$100 Grand candy bars with a note saying, "You're worth 100 Grand to us – thank you for renewing!"
- MNWT supplies from the state store; personalized business cards, address labels, or letterhead
- Hand-stamped note cards or bookmarks with the president's theme or "thanks for giving more than you'll ever receive"

Anniversary Party

Purpose: To celebrate the service and friendship of your Women of Today members.

Overview: This event can be held at a general membership meeting, or make it "extra special" by holding it as an event on a special night. You can hold it annually or quarterly. These nights are informal and are hosted by the chapter president or membership vice president. Members whose renewals are due are invited, along with any other members who wish to attend. Renewing members are asked to bring nothing but the dues – the host provides the refreshments.

Activities: What you do with this evening is up to you. It can be an informal gathering where members not only renew the membership, but also renew friendships and commitments to Women of Today. Here are some suggestions for other activities for the evening:

- Hold a renewal ceremony where members renew their commitment to who we are, what we do, and the fellowship of Women of Today.
- Order a very large cake and challenge your members to EACH put a candle on for EVERY year of membership. In many chapters, this could be a fire hazard to light, but when you see that cake with all

the candles, it's a great visual statement of the incredible service Women of Today members offer the community. Take a picture of the cake, with all it's candles, and send a copy to your newspaper with a press release.

- Have members share memories of why (s)he joined or an experience in the early years of service. Or have members write memories down and include them in your next newsletter.
- Ask members to stand and be recognized for years of service starting at one year of service, and ending with the members who have been in the organization the longest.
- Donate \$1 for each member's years of service to another non-profit organization in celebration of your anniversary. Buy a flower bulb for each member or each year of service and plant them at your library, school or community park.

Favors: In a plastic champagne glass, wrapped in white ribbon with little anniversary bells, put: fortune cookies, because our community is "fortunate to have you as a volunteer"; a battery for "energizing" our organization; or chewing gum for "sticking with us"

M-Night for Business Recruits

Purpose: To attract career-oriented members to Women of Today.

Overview: Send out a business letter to professional people, and include a chapter or MWNT brochure along with a business card with your WT position. The letter can be sent to: local banks, utility companies, local discount stores, and any other local businesses you feel may be responsive. At the event, these business people are invited to focus on the ways your chapter benefits the community and develops leadership skills – these are the aspects of Women of Today that will be most appealing to professional people.

Activities: This meeting should be a formal gathering where attendees follow an agenda. Here are some suggestions for activities for the evening – don't forget to set them down on an agenda:

- Welcome
- Icebreaker
- Leadership training
- Review of opportunities supplied by Women of Today
- Team-building exercises

Favors: Tokens of appreciation that allow the attendees to bring something home from the evening, like candles with a small note attached that reads, "burn this candle to remember that volunteers light the way"

Sample Business Letter

[CHAPTER LETTERHEAD]

[BUSINESS NAME]

Attention: Community Services Representative

[ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP]

[DATE]

Dear [BUSINESS NAME]:

We are writing to invite your employees to be a part of the worthwhile work we do as Women of today in [YOUR TOWN].

The [YOUR CHAPTER] Women of Today is dedicated to building a better community through volunteerism, personal enrichment and friendship. We are a part of the Minnesota and United States Women of Today, an organization of almost 4000 members in 18 states. We actively work to raise funds for causes such as Breast Cancer Awareness, women in crisis shelters, and [LIST OTHER CAUSES] in addition to helping local causes by supporting our libraries, playgrounds, firefighters and children's organizations.

Through leadership and team-building programs, we work to develop the leaders of tomorrow. We also offer personal enrichment programs that develop effective writing, speaking and listening skills; financial, stress and time management; and other useful skills for your employees and women everywhere. We accomplish all this in a supportive atmosphere of friendship and fun.

We invite your employees to attend our [EVENT] on [DATE, TIME, PLACE] to learn more about who we are, what we do, and why we enjoy serving our community. Membership is available to any person 18 years of age or older. Annual dues are extremely reasonable and may be paid by the company or by the employee his/herself. Membership includes all the opportunities listed, plus a monthly newsletter, quarterly recognition and membership in the state and national levels of the organization.

To attend a meeting or to offer paid membership to your employees, please call [CONTACT NAME & NUMBER]. Together we can make a difference!

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

[YOUR POSITION TITLE – SHOULD BE CHAPTER RESIDENT OR MEMBERSHIP VICE PRESIDENT]

ROAR with Membership

Recruitment • Orientation • Activation • Retention

Recruitment

The First Step – Names

- A) Locate names of prospective members
- B) Don't eliminate someone because you think (s)he may not join
- C) Utilize ideas that worked for current members when (s)he joined

- D) Plan for a mixer activity that is fun and includes everyone
- E) Gather everyone towards the end of the night and explain about the organization
- F) Answer any questions
- G) Invite all prospective members to join

You Have Names – Now What?

- A) Recruitment lists
- B) Invitations
- C) Newsletters
- D) Telephone calls

Reasons for Recruiting

- A) New ideas for, and fresh outlook on, chapter events
- B) Excitement to the chapter's membership
- C) More members alleviates the stress on volunteers for large projects

Prospective Members – Getting them to a Meeting or Event

- A) Fun meetings
- B) Personal invitations
- C) Ride offerings
- D) Incentives for current members to bring prospective members

Always Remember

- A) Keep a positive attitude
- B) Ask, ask, ask, and ask again
- C) NEVER let anyone leave without asking that person to join
- D) Believe, and you can achieve anything!
- E) Bring incentives/gifts for attending prospective members

They're at our Meeting – What do we do?

- A) Introduce prospective members as guests
- B) Assign a seasoned member to sit next to each one
- C) Invite each prospective member to join
- D) Communicate during the Social Time of the Meeting
- E) Figure out what has worked best for you in the past

Orientation

Getting Members Orientated

- A) Complete within the first month of joining
- B) Complete STEP I
- C) Supply a glossary of Women of Today terms
- D) Avoid using acronyms at chapter events
- E) Create new member packets

Hosting an effective Membership Night

- A) Have a theme meeting
- B) Send out invitations
- C) Supply appetizers or meals

Activation

Keeping the Members already Signed

- A) Use the STEP Program
- B) Co-chair projects
- C) Work on projects
- D) Attend meetings
- E) Make meetings fun
- F) Repeat orientation in six (6) months
- G) Use newsletters
- H) Establish a calling committee for meetings and events

Retention

Retaining Members Year after Year

- A) Utilize STEP II & III
- B) Get members active in projects
- C) Encourage meeting attendance
- D) Promote officer or LPM positions
- E) Attend district, state and national meetings
- F) Hold membership socials
- G) Use newsletters
- H) Create calling committees for meetings and events
- I) Have chapter president or board members send out notes to members
- J) Use awards, incentives and recognition
- K) Hold renewal ceremonies

Retention Ideas

Make membership everybody's business by utilizing your chapter board or by developing a membership team to help find this information out in your chapter:

- **Find out why they left.** Call members who have not renewed. Ask for details about why they left, and do not get defensive when they tell you. Record answers and compare them with others making similar calls.
- **Ask the former member for a second chance.** Apologize and offer to correct a problem. Make some type of peace offering (i.e., membership discount).
- **Build a plan to routinely check on membership turnover.** Work to understand why people leave and then put plans into place to remove things that drive people away.
- **Change tasks to meet needs.** If time commitment is the issue for the member, find new and innovative ways to involve them on a short term or periodic basis, so they stay on as members. If members want to participate on one project a year, then let them do that without back-lashing them for not fully participating.
- **Take the time to get to know your volunteers.** You inspire your group one individual at a time. Take an active interest in learning about your people, and you will learn what motivates them.
- **Be sure your volunteers know exactly what you expect** – the outcomes, not the how-to's. Then get out of the way and let them perform.
- **At your board meetings have an attitude report.** At a designated meeting the board member reports on the individual members they are assigned.
- **Rotate having board members being assigned to new members.** Have a quick overview at your board meeting about the new members – who they are, where they work, why they joined, etc.
- **Review members whose dues are due next quarter.** Talk about them – what is their level of activity? What can be done to ensure these members will renew?

Some Thoughts on Recruitment and Retention⁶

Everyone is in charge. It is the collective efforts of members that will run projects and organizations. No one person will be in charge, but several people who have a general interest in the general outcome of the project.

Broader is better. The more people affected by decisions the more they want to be consulted. The more consultation and participation in the decision making process, the more likely decisions will work.

Information sharing. Information is shared widely and broadly. In the new environment one never knows which person can take information and turn it to the advantage of the organization. Therefore, it is essential that data gathered be widely shared, not just with those with a “need to know

Know Your Membership Vital Signs

You can't begin to know how to retain members if you don't know who they are. Use the following checklist to help your board become familiar with the health of your chapter:

- Average age of members
- Average length of membership
- Where members are concentrated geographically
- Average dues dollars per member – what out of pocket expenses are there?
- Best month for signing new members
- Best quarter for membership renewals

Once you've reviewed these items work as a team to establish some realistic goals. Develop a timetable for holding your m-nights around the best months for signing members. Look at how long members are staying in – does your chapter need to improve this? What other changes can be implemented from the information you've derived? Some other things to consider:

- Carefully review your chapter projects one at a time – how many members are needed for these to be successful? Do you have that many members?
- Do you allow members a break?
- Are you doing so many projects that members have to constantly work on a project?
- What do you offer in return?
- Does your chapter offer a balance of internal and external programs? Don't get caught doing fundraiser after fundraiser, it leads to burnout. Offer enrichment nights, and speakers to keep their attention.
- Does the chapter offer projects that members are interested in or are the projects ones your chapter is getting tired of doing over and over again?
- Be sure you know what projects your members like, and that you're offering a variety to meet the needs of all your members.

Note: The Marketing Team hosts expos in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Anoka, Rochester and St. Cloud each year. If your chapter lies within the vicinity of these cities and you receive a letter from the MMC, please follow up with the prospective members. We will tell them to be expecting a call from you. Remember - these people have had the opportunity to speak to someone at the booth and they will want more information! Please keep your district director and the MMC informed of your progress.

⁶ *Coming Soon: The Nobody-in Charge Society* by Harlan Cleveland