

10 Tips to Increase Membership

Every Unit should have a good mix of membership strategies for retention and to increase growth. The start of a new year is a good time to evaluate your membership plan. Try some of these helpful tips:

1. Exude a warm and welcoming attitude

A warm and welcoming member can translate into a warm and welcoming Unit. Your Unit President needs to take a pro-active approach in meeting and greeting potential new members. The President should stand at the door and shake the hands of members and guests as they come into the monthly meeting. It can be hard for people to walk into a room full of individuals they don't know. Introduce yourself, take an interest in them and introduce them to other members.

2. Make everything you do a "media event"

Now that digital cameras are so easy to use, take a picture at all your events or a picture of your keynote speaker at the monthly Unit meeting, your new member initiations, when you meet with your local politicians--and send it to your local newspapers. Newspapers, especially weekly publications, are always looking for items of local interest.

3. Want to get the media more interested in what you are doing?

Invite a local journalist to speak at your Unit meeting. Invite the assistant managing editor of the local newspaper, have him/her speak about her life in the media and give tips for ways to get better media coverage.

4. Get to know your members

Make sure your Unit President, including the Membership Chairman and her committee, makes a special effort to get to know each member by name. This can be a challenge in larger Units, but it is essential. A member needs to feel that she is a valued part of the Unit, regardless of how much service or volunteer hours are contributed.

5. Set up a Unit website

Members are increasingly expecting an organization to have a website. Online search has become the most common and easiest way to research an organization for more information. You want to be sure that you are not missing out on valuable exposure online. Setting up a Unit website is also a valuable resource to your members, who need to find timely Unit and committee information quickly and easily.

6. Get new members involved on committees and special projects

Ensure that members are aware of what your committees are, and encourage them to get involved. A wide variety of skills and talents are needed to run a successful Unit, and everyone's contribution is needed. Use your Unit website to feature all the committees and what they do.

7. Have a membership contest!!

Any member who brings in a new member during the year has their name put into a hat. Hold a drawing in April, and the winner gets their membership dues for the coming year reduced by half!! There can be variations on this-maybe the member who brings in the most members during the year gets a FREE membership the following year. The key issue is that your membership grows as a result of a collaborative effort.

8. Send postcards to local businesses

Use postcards as a promotional tool. If you see an article in your local newspaper about a new business or about a person who has a special appointment or achievement, send them a postcard with congratulations and invite them to come to a meeting and share the details of their success story. If they are eligible, invite them to join the Unit. Impress upon them that the Unit is exclusive and it is a great honor to be eligible to join.

9. Challenge every member to bring a friend to at least one meeting per year

Ask the guest to provide a short comment toward the end of the meeting about what they thought about the meeting. This will give you a good indication whether they are a potential member. Sometimes they will convince themselves to join right in the middle of their comments! Just make sure to tell the guest at the beginning of the meeting that these comments will be requested at the end so they are not caught off-guard.

10. Make use of other organizations in your community to "spread the word" about your Unit

Service clubs, networking organizations and professional associations are always looking for speakers. Most municipal councils/town boards are open to presentations by local non-profit organizations. Economic development organizations often organize conferences and one-day seminars where you might have an opportunity to speak to others about the American Legion Auxiliary.