

Great Ideas for Finding New Members & Retaining Current Members

Compiled by Rob Neary

Anyone who has been in business will tell you that it costs more to get a new client than to keep a client. The same goes for your Probus club.

Club leaders need to recognise that different people are turned on by different activities, so we need to provide opportunities for all members to find satisfaction for their participation needs within the club and plan activities that can meet those needs. Club leaders also need to consider the cost of participation in their club as well as the benefits. Some costs include:

- Transportation costs
- Dues, contributions, outing costs
- Less time available for other voluntary activities
- Less leisure time available for other activities
- Demands made by family and
- Social cost – the risk of embarrassment or failure as a result of participation.

Poor membership involvement may also indicate:

- The benefits of participation are not considered valuable
- The meetings are poorly organised, drawn out or boring
- The general membership doesn't have the opportunity to play an active part
- The membership thinks that the same clique runs the group from year after year
- The members feel that their participation wouldn't have much influence anyway
- The goals of the group are unclear or not valued by the members and
- The member's individual needs are unmet in participation.

If we want members to increase member involvement, we have to be prepared to provide members with opportunities for meaningful participation. This can be done by ensuring that members are involved in setting group goals using a variety of techniques. We can also carefully plan meetings, though a well-conceived agenda, to ensure that meetings move along quickly and that responsibility for different aspects of the meeting is shared.

These ideas for finding and retaining members are not in any particular order. Take a moment to think about each one, and chose those that you think will work with your club, adapting them to your membership needs. The hope is that your club will grow and become strong.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have a table at trade type shows – U3A, Retirement Village Open days, etc.• Probus minute on local or community radio.• Interaction with local senior citizen's groups – Australian Seniors, state seniors card group.• Hold meetings in other venues – local library, retirement village, etc.• Have New Member's kits.• Hand out flyers and brochures about your club – Vistaprint, Officeworks, local printer.• Have a host for each guest.• Hand out Invitation Cards – Probus produce these.• Members constantly raving about and promoting Probus and your club.• Meet at a good location.• Explain the structure of Probus – world, Australia, associations, etc.• Make prospective members feel important.• Have enjoyable programs for meetings.• Make some meetings social events.• Have a club web page.• Use email regularly to communicate club events and activities.• Put posters about joining your club in stores. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask corporations and local businesses to sponsor or subsidize your club and membership.• Have a reward program for those who bring in new members.• Create more fun at meetings and outings.• Have a variety of snacks at meetings.• Invite the media to your meetings.• Use word of mouth to promote your club.• Network with friends, family members and local seniors' group members.• Follow-up on guests to meetings - Send a Thank You note with a reminder of the next meeting.• Have educational meetings sometimes.• Have friendly meetings.• Lead by example at meetings.• Have incentives for those who join your club or committee/s.• Provide guests with free morning tea.• Ask local parliamentary member to sponsor your club brochure – production costs.• Display any complimentary correspondence about your club.• Club sponsor a deserving, needy individual.• Ask your district Rotary club to meetings. |
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- Hold joint meetings with non-Probos groups – Garden Club, Senior Citizens, U3A, etc.
- Share your Probus experience with other groups.
- Ask your guests to join.
- Get a 2-meeting commitment from guests – visit at least 2 meetings.
- Advertise in church bulletins and other groups newsletters.
- Tell everyone the benefits of Probus.
- Have information meetings.
- Wear your Probus pin or committee badge.
- Develop and produce a bumper sticker.
- Smile when you talk about Probus.
- Attract a wide age spectrum.
- Give testimonials.
- Elect a dedicated VP for membership – JVP role.
- Hold smooth meetings.
- Get experienced Probus members to join as dual members.
- Repeatedly invite prospective members – until definitive 'no'.
- Have a 30 second sales pitch for Probus for medical waiting rooms.
- Make it look easy.
- Promote humour in meetings.
- Make meetings more interactive.
- Send thank you notes to guests.
- Ask someone to join – ask everyone.
- Bring a guest.
- Promote humour in speeches.
- Advertise in newspapers
- Advertise on community radio, community TV spots, talk-back radio.
- Write letters, not email, about Probus or personal contact with local businesses.
- Contact with local or regional Chamber of Commerce.
- Develop and distribute bookmarks in local libraries and library books.
- Public displays in local malls, outdoor events, etc.
- Booths at local malls, fairs, festivals, etc.
- Pamphlets in local doctors', dentists' and other medical offices.
- Host an 'open house' meeting.
- Contact past members.
- Hold membership drives and contests.
- Warm greeting to all attending meeting.
- Guest information package.
- Guest introductions at meetings.
- Ask for comments at the conclusion of a meeting.
- Clearly marked meeting room or area.
- Club business cards.
- Distribute extra magazines to waiting rooms, cafes, etc.

- Hold 'open house' meetings for high-profile speakers.
- Advertise at local schools, colleges, TAFEs and Universities.
- Have a guest speaker.
- Have a club speaker.
- Have a special guest day.
- Have a program for non-members, non-active members.
- Participate in community events.
- Write letters to community groups.
- Be seen at local Chamber of Commerce meetings.
- Be seen at Rotary, Lions, Apex, and other community service group meetings.
- Publicize club successes, elections, activities in local media.
- Have a club newsletter that is informative.
- Have a club brochure.
- Never cancel a meeting.
- Members should be prepared.
- Have a planned agenda.
- Encourage interclub visits.
- Form a Speakers' Bureau for local clubs.
- Mention Probus at meetings of other organizations during announcements.
- Send club newsletter to guests.
- Visitor Day – each member sends out 5 invitations.
- Talk up Probus to those who express problems with getting to know people locally.
- Make it FUN.
- Have a clear membership policy.
- Tell your club story in community newspapers and on local radio and TV.
- Strive to recruit ethnic diversity in your club.
- Hold recruiting events with other Probus clubs in the area for more impact.
- Advertise Probus advantages to the seniors in the community.
- Consider flexibility with your dues structure if recruiting new members.
- Do a monthly prospect roundup – ask every member to submit names.
- Keep in touch with members who have resigned.
- Suggest clubs to join for members moving out of the area and pave the way.
- Conduct a membership satisfaction survey.
- Establish a Member Retention Plan for the club – is every member engaged in activities.
- Ask family members to advertise Probus in their business or profession.
- Include a section 'Why I'm a Probian' in your newsletter.
- Advertise what your club does to the community.
- Display a Probus sticker on your car.