

100 Ideas for Building Probus Club Membership and Retention

Adapted by Rob Neary, Highfields Probus Club

1. Develop a Club member handbook and send it out to all members who have been joined within the last month. Include educational materials such as Probus and Club structure, constitution and By-Laws as well as an up-to-date calendar and incentives to become involved (except for the calendar, the same correspondence can be used each year).
2. Develop a Member Mentor Program and have a New Member Designated Contact group.
3. Give a special incentive to Club members who introduce new members (Pins, clothing, certificates etc.).
4. Contact top Club new membership achievers from the previous year. Thank them and ask them for continued involvement with the new member. Ask them to continue with new member recruitment.
5. Plan a Guest Morning, Afternoon or Night for potential members.
6. Create a new member section on your website.
7. Get members involved in focus groups by email or blogs (new members may prefer this type of involvement.)
8. Develop a list of your (most wanted) delinquent or dropped new members and ask club officers to make personal appeals to reconsider their membership. Consider calling their original proposer to assist. Make a time line to get the results to the Club President.
9. Do a member survey of your least active members. Let those who respond know that you are listening to them by telling them that you will try to do what they suggested on the survey.
10. Identify your most at-risk members and target them for additional contact.
11. Send a "How Are We Doing?" survey to new members six months after they have joined. If they don't return them, give them a call.
12. Send out a monthly email newsletter that is sent out simultaneously with the mailed publication.
13. On the day when a new member's is elected, have them meet with the other Club members after the meeting to be congratulated.
14. Be inclusive with new members, don't let them feel left out. Communication and welcoming is the key to keeping them and attracting more members.
15. Create a "thank you" list which includes the names and contributions of active members. Place this list in your newsletter, on your website, and read it out at an open club meeting.
16. Ask individual Past Club Presidents to be liaisons with other Probus organizations and to regularly report their activities in open club.
17. Assign new members to make detailed notes on potential Guest Speakers, community activities, and social events. Save those notes in a computer file to be used for future planning references.
18. To promote attendance at a future meeting, publish an interview and/or biography with the featured speaker in the newsletter and/or on your website.
19. Designate one officer to closely monitor Club members who are living alone or who are hospitalized.

20. Announce a membership goal of getting one new member for every twenty-five (25) members each year.
21. Make a file of those members who have dropped their membership in years past and send them a "We Want You Back" letter. Include the reasons they have dropped in the file.
22. Send a special communication and possibly a small token gift to each member who lives out of suburb/town thanking them for their continued participation and loyalty to your Club. Make up Club pens, vehicle decals, cups or maybe key chains as gifts.
23. Publish a summary of important highlights from the Probus session and Area Conferences on the club's website and newsletter.
24. Find out what ideas are working for other organizations and discuss them at Club officers' meetings.
25. Never have Club Management Committee (CMC) officers' meetings before a regular stated meeting but, instead, direct your CMC members to socialize with all of the Club attendees.
26. The Club President should meet occasionally with the Sr. and Jr. Vice Presidents alone to discuss club issues to be sure they are all on the same page.
27. Appoint a communications chair and direct him/her to make and submit news releases to the local press with photographs immediately following installations, community projects, and unique club activities. He/she should also submit articles concerning upcoming Club Outings.
28. Hold a "Member's Friends Night" (Perhaps in conjunction with other Clubs).
29. Ask CMC officers and active members to relate their most valued Probus experiences or benefits and use those statements as quotes for recruitment and retention purposes.
30. Place a downloadable petition on your Club web site.
31. Keep an eye on Probus publications. Look for up-coming dates and successful ideas from other clubs.
32. Ask your District Representative to report on successful events at other Clubs.
33. Send hand-written notes to the Club social events organizers thanking them for their service.
34. Assign the task of taking an inventory of promotional Probus brochures and other publications. Make note when supplies are low and have them replenished when appropriate.
35. Get new members nametags ASAP so that they can be recognized at a glance. Make sure the name is in large print and correctly spelled.
36. Assign new members to minor management and planning positions as soon as possible and identify one person (or persons) they can call for advice and help.
37. Hold a "town meeting" for the general membership to show that the leadership really cares about their concerns and ideas.
38. Make an annual safety inspection of the club building and ensure that problem areas are repaired. Consider installing a first-aid kit and possibly a defibrillator. Ask the new members to help you.
39. Insist that name tags are worn at meetings and events such as dinners so members get to know other members' names and that of their spouses.
40. Select a group of less active members as a focus group and give the group a specific task.
41. Check the answering service on the club phone regularly for calls from potential members.

42. Ask one Past Club President per month to write an article about his experiences for the newsletter.
43. Get on the mailing list of other clubs in your area.
44. Develop a "Congratulations" message you can send to members who have taken positions in other Probus organizations or have been promoted in their personal life.
45. Interview new members and ask them why they joined. Use this information as an insight for future recruitment programs.
46. Copy newspaper or other publication articles that mention your club in a favourable way and include them in your newsletter.
47. Invite members to speak at a meeting on non-Probus topics such as their life, profession or past occupation, or any topic that might be of general interest such as a hobby or craft.
48. Ask the Club Secretary to create and send out a "Thanks for Renewing Your Membership" letter or card to each current member when they pay their dues.
49. Have the Club Secretary send "welcome and thank you for joining" letter or card to new members.
50. Send the candidate registration form to the Club Secretary when received. Include their mailing information as well as their club new-member mentor contact information.
51. Read any and all communications from the Probus Membership and Leadership committees at each CMC officers' meeting.
52. Report updates of membership goals on the website, in the newsletter and in club.
53. Play Probus Membership presentations at club meetings two or three times a year and discuss them.
54. Supply each newly joined Probus member with past copies of The Probian and/or Probus' Active Retirees.
55. Develop a working relationship with your local media – newspaper, specialist newspaper, community radio, etc. - and the local council library for promoting your Club.
56. Attend Club Presidents and Vice Presidents meetings to find out what other clubs are doing for membership retention and recruitment activities.
57. When someone is ill or has to miss a Club meeting, give him/her a call, write a note or send an e-mail.
58. Have the Club President's send a letter of welcome to the potential member's spouse, if they are not joining, offering to answer any questions about the Probus.
59. Increase your publicity through the local media, council library notices, information posted on community boards in shopping centres and churches.
60. Make sure that every new member has SOMETHING TO DO AND SOMETHING TO LEARN.
61. Remember to invite all potential members to any meetings or outings.
62. Make sure that your Club and CMC meetings are professional at all times and run on time.
63. Make a list of former active members who have not attended within the last year and develop a process to encourage them to attend in the future.
64. Construct a bulletin board containing photos and information on new members and have it placed as you enter the club so that all members can identify and greet them properly.

65. Provide an occasional questionnaire to get feedback from members. If problems or dissatisfactions are detected, take steps to fix it.
66. Involve all members in setting realistic and creative membership goals. People who participate in setting some of the objectives are more committed to reaching the goal.
67. Keep in touch with inactive and former members through invitations to social events and a yearly update on Club news and events.
68. Have a social gathering for all members who have joined your Club within the past 3 months. It's an opportunity for newer members to ask questions, share experiences, and get to know each other on a more personal basis.
69. Find the most capable, most enthusiastic and dynamic person you can for your Membership Chairman and treat him/her well.
70. Make it a big deal when a member has qualified for a special membership anniversary such as 1-year, 3-year, 5-year, etc.. Give them some type of award.
71. Encourage periodic spouse activities to help insure support at home.
72. Adopt a sister Club in another geographic region. Ask a new member to correspond with that Club and make report to your Club.
73. Recognition helps retain members. Create some goofy awards, i.e. "best funny story award".
74. Send a news release about a member's Probus accomplishments to the local newspaper. If a member has been mentioned in the media, ensure that they're mentioned in the Club newsletter.
75. Develop a range of other activities within your club to make it vibrant, dynamic and appealing to members.
76. Be committed to Club excellence.
77. Keep a positive attitude; it increases energy and each member's self-esteem.
78. Become more community minded. Become actively involved with another local community group, such as Rotary, and make it an annual event such as a dinner.
79. Give members worthwhile jobs and then let them do them. Involve lots of members to avoid burning out the members who always volunteer to carry the load.
80. Find unique ways to give more individual recognition to those members who deserve it.
81. Encourage members to give periodic testimonials about what membership means to them.
82. Encourage attendance at Area Conferences and the Probus Annual Training Days. Find creative ways to provide financial support for members who attend.
83. Call absent members, letting them know they're missed without making them feel guilty.
84. Keep an updated Club directory in the hands of all members with current phone numbers, addresses and e-mail addresses.
85. Provide a yearly calendar to all members and have it ready before your Annual Installation.
86. Send cards and flowers to those who are ill, have had a recent death in the family, or have something to celebrate, such as marriage, a new grandchild, or some other special occasion. Have some appropriate cards on hand for such occasions.
87. Allow a Club member to drop his membership without making him/her feel guilty.
88. Have members talk about the Club; what it does, for whom and what they get out of it.

89. Do something every year for Seniors Week in your area – a display, a shopping centre stall, a library display or even a booth manned by Club members.
90. Have members send in names and addresses of family members who they wish would join. Send an encouraging letter and promotional material to those potential Members.
91. Make personal contact with those members who did not complete their degree work.
92. Keep your Club building clean, attractive and well maintained and have the Members help.
93. At least twice per year make a special effort to pick up older members for Club meetings
94. Consider buying matching Probus shirts, caps or ties. (It's a group thing)
95. Take a part of each meeting to openly discuss what purpose the members want to fulfil as a Club and how they want to proceed in accomplishing their goals
96. Share your Club information with other Non-Profit organizations in the community and invite those organizations to your club's meetings and outings.
97. Invite other Probus organizations to give presentations at your Club.
98. Have one formal meeting each year and make another one a "special activity" meeting.
99. Use uncollected copies of The Probian to promote your Club. Apply a sticker announcing where the Club meets and when and then place the copies in doctors, dentists and other health services locations.
100. (This space reserved for your idea.)

This article was adapted from a similar article produced for the Masonic Lodge in the USA.