

Building Meeting Attendance

Here are some ideas on how Posts can get more members to come to the meetings. Yes, I'm an expert on this. For some reason, when I join a club it isn't long before I'm elected president. And one of the prime responsibilities of a club president is to grow the membership. It's easy, once you get the hang of it.

The secret? Make the meetings more exciting. And that means you're not just the chairman of a group, you're an impresario in show business.

1. Business meetings are not fun, even if arguments get heated. So, what can you do about that? That's easy, appoint an executive council and relegate the business to that group. Then all they have to do is give a brief report on what they've done at the next club meeting.

2. It's fun to -learn things. This can be satisfied by inviting interesting speakers. Make the speaker the main attraction.

Having given talks to hundreds of clubs, I'm on familiar ground here. The rule is simple: keep the meeting as short as possible so the speaker can start speaking. I've watched meetings drone on, with arguments of the color the clubhouse should be painted, and then a coffee-doughnut break. By the time I'm introduced most of the members are dozing off, the sugar load overwhelming the caffeine jolt.

Look for controversial speakers. You want to get the members thinking. I have a long list of controversial subjects I enjoy talking about that I offer clubs to pick from - Like how anyone can cure any illness with no drugs. Or proof that the Moon landings were all faked. Or that college is a huge waste of time and money for any kid that would like to make any real money. Or how we've been lied to about the Oklahoma City bomb, Flight 800 and 911.

3. Another live spot in the meeting can be a review of a book that a Post member hopes to get everyone to read. Have 'em bring the book and give about a five-minute review. There are millions of books out there, of which a few hundred are really great reading. The trick is to find those. I've tried to help with my Secret Guide to Wisdom, which is a review of about a hundred books that will challenge almost everyone's beliefs.

4. Organize a welcoming committee to greet members and prospective members as they arrive. Have lapel stickers and a marking pen for names.

5. Give members a good strong hint on what's coming up at the next meeting that they won't want to miss. This can be via a newsletter or, these days, via email. And it doesn't hurt to have a Post Web site. You could even record the speakers and offer their talks for download.

When I was elected president of the Peterborough NH Chamber of Commerce the membership had dropped to less than a dozen. Well, all they had were business meetings. Yawn. So I set up an executive council for that and brought in speakers. I had the governor, presidents of a couple colleges, the heads of three local banks at the same meeting, to explain why we should be doing business with their bank. That was a meeting no one will ever forget. I had computer, demos on using personal computers for their businesses.

The first-in-the-nation New Hampshire primaries flooded us with politicians, so I had my choice of those as speakers. I had a bunch of hard-hitting questions for them, too.

These days I'd bring in a couple local farmers who are producing organic crops, meat and eggs. A year later the membership had grown to over 200 and the meetings were packed.

7. To help build membership I'd make sure that the Post marketing committee gets as much newspaper and local radio exposure as possible. Invite potential members to the meetings. It's easy to get newspaper space, once you know the ropes. I've produced a video on how to generate an extra \$ 1 million in sales just by using PR. Well, the same approach will work for attracting new members. Check www.waynegrreen.com for more information.

If you have any really interesting members, help them to get interviewed on local radio and TV shows. And don't forget community TV. I do a weekly community TV show in Manchester NH. It just won the Alliance for Community Media prize for the best science program. I'm kept busy giving talks to Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, Lions, Elks, veterans, groups, and so on...and I love it!

Clubs that are creative will grow and prosper. You just have to make meetings so much fun that no one will want to miss one.

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