

Boosting Bar Membership

Many bar association leaders are so busy serving current members that they consciously avoid the stimulating challenges of new membership promotions. We all need new members not only for the revenue they generate, although that is a legitimate benefit. New members bring fresh ideas and original approaches to solving problems.

Without new members, our associations will wither and ultimately die especially when so many young lawyers are entering the profession. There are many ways to begin a membership promotion campaign. Some associations have delegated membership promotion to a committee of volunteers, which often works but occasionally bogs down because so much concentrated effort is required.

One easy thing to do is find out who are your non-members. To do this, contact the State Bar of Texas Membership department at 800/204-2222, ext. 6033 and request an alpha printout on labels for attorneys in your county. (NOTE: The list can be generated by zip code, county, etc.) You would then compare your current membership list to the alpha list received from the State Bar. You can use the labels to mail an invitation to join your organization to those non-members.

There are seven simple steps that can help bar leaders produce an effective, ongoing membership drive.

1. *Why join?* Determine the essential quality of membership in your bar association. Do lawyers join for social benefits? For continuing education?

2. *Set a price.* Determine what a new member actually costs your association in publications, additional services, discounts, etc. Then add up what you are likely to receive in first year revenue, including dues, meeting registrations, book sales etc. This simple arithmetic can help you determine what you can afford to spend for a new member.

3. *Target your prospects.* You can obtain labels from the State Bar of Texas based upon any number of demographic criteria such as: zip code, city, county, legal specialization, etc. Nonmember lawyers are not all the same. Select one characteristic of nonmembers that can be determined easily, especially if that characteristic is already stored in a computer or otherwise easily accessible. Concentrate on one geographical area, one age group.

4. *Try one good idea.* Don't use every wonderful approach in your first campaign. Select one good idea and use it this time.

5. *Simplify, simplify, simplify.* A single theme or slogan can crystallize the benefits of membership. Base the appeal on the specific needs of the group of nonmembers you are addressing.

Don't send huge packages of letters, service brochures, reply cards and booklets that will bury that crucial membership application. The "dotted Line" for response is critical. Don't hide it. Even your application should be simplified.

6. *Measure results.* By determining how successful this effort is, you can measure future approaches against a base figure.

7. *Try, try again.* If at first you don't succeed, try a new approach, new theme, new materials. Remember that few of us act on something the first time we hear it.