



**Membership Recruitment,
Retention and Renewal Handbook**

10-4-2014

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Where to Start	3
The Membership Chairperson	4
Where Do We Find New Members?	4
Choose a Theme for Your Recruitment Meeting – Six Ideas	5
How to Invite Prospects to Meetings/Projects	6
Some things to remember when inviting prospects:.....	7
Keep in Mind Why People Join	7
Timeline for Membership Drive – Recruitment Meeting	8
3 months Prior to Membership Meeting (During a Regular Club Meeting).....	9
Week of Membership Meeting	10
The Invitation to Membership	10
Communicate with Prospective Members	11
Action and Follow-Up.....	12
Member Retention: Why Members Stay.....	14
Key Reasons Why Members Stay Engaged:	14
Why Members Leave	14
Retaining Members.....	15
Encourage Leadership. Provide Opportunities for Growth and Change	16
Resources on the District Website.....	17
Club Membership Plan template.....	17

Introduction

This handbook is designed to give clubs guidelines, ideas and timelines on how to 1) conduct a successful Membership Drive or recruitment meeting, and 2) retain current members. Each year clubs experience the recruitment of new members, but also a loss of current and seasoned members, as well as some of the newer members. Therefore, the lifeline of all Zonta clubs is to continuously add new members and retain current members. Bringing new members into your club involves developing a well thought-out plan that goes beyond just getting people to come to a meeting or event. It includes integrating them into the group and keeping them involved in our mission.

Where to Start

Club officers need to develop a membership recruitment and retention plan that fits the needs of their club. Clubs add new members continuously throughout the year. However, at least once a year, a club should “roll out the red carpet” and give people the opportunity to join during a structured Membership Drive.

The club’s board can either select a regular meeting date designated as Membership Drive or plan a special recruitment event. The key to a successful Membership Drive is planning. The Membership Committee to develop a recruitment plan and submit to the Board who then recommends to the membership. There are four action steps the board should take when planning a Membership Drive/recruitment meeting.

Step One—Appoint a Membership Chairperson. The club president, with the board’s approval, appoints a Membership Chairperson who in turn selects individuals to the Membership Committee. The Membership Committee to develop a recruitment plan and submit to the Board who then recommends to the membership.

Step Two—Develop a Plan with Goal(s). The club board, along with the Membership Committee, establishes a membership plan of action. The board should evaluate the club’s current membership, anticipate resignations, and develop a goal for the number of new members the club wants to recruit. (See the Club Membership Plan link at the end of this handbook.)

Step Three—Allocate the Funds. Once the goal and dates for recruitment meetings are approved, the board also needs to budget funds to cover incidental costs, such as meeting locations, meals, snacks, prizes, promotions, postage, Zonta International and club information materials, etc.

Step Four–Promote and Announce. The Membership Chairperson announces to the club the new member goal and the date set for the Membership Drive. The principle behind promoting the goal is to give members a sense of ownership in the outcome. In turn, they are generally more involved in bringing prospects to the Membership Drive.

The Membership Chairperson

A key person to the success of a club's Membership Drive is the Membership Chairperson. This person must have a positive attitude, a desire for success, and a commitment to the goal. The chairperson is the coach, cheerleader, and score keeper who motivates other members to recruit prospects to join the club and to assist in reaching the club's new member goal. The Membership Chairperson has responsibility to see that each step of the recruitment process is carried out according to the approved recruitment plan of the club.

Where Do We Find New Members?

Decide who you want and need to recruit. Identify who is likely to join your club and who is missing that you would like to attract. Try to be as specific as possible. Does your club include young and seasoned/experienced members? Do you need members savvy in finance, social networking, or other skills? The Zonta International Marian de Forest Membership Manual will be of help in deciding www.zonta.org/resources/manual. Are you being intentional about creating an inclusive club? Names of prospective members can be obtained from:

- Contacts of and recommendations from current members
- Businesses and industries in the area
- The local Chamber of Commerce or similar organizations
- Civic and professional organizations

Club publicity through newspapers, radios, TV, and website informs the public about your club and is therefore a great awareness avenue. However, realize that not many people come knocking on your door even if the club has an open-door invitation at all meetings/projects/socials. It is important to give prospects the opportunity to visit, learn about, and join your club. To accomplish this you have to invite the prospects and most importantly ASK them to join!

Choose a Theme for Your Recruitment Meeting – Six Ideas

Bring Three You Know. This theme encourages members to list three (or more) people they feel would enjoy the Zonta experience and invite them to the recruitment meeting. The candidates are endless...friends, family members, work associates, business clients, neighbors, etc. The main idea is to encourage, motivate, lead, and reward members for their efforts. Also, always encourage members to bring prospects to any and all club meetings.

Honor Professionals Day. Conducting an Honor Professionals Day is a great way to introduce Zonta to these people. The Membership Chairperson along with a team of leaders/members should canvass the area businesses once a year to invite people to a special information meeting designed for them. Four keys to successfully accomplishing this type of recruitment meeting are...

- **Locate.** List the businesses in the community not currently represented in your club.
- **Meet/Invite.** Visit these businesses inviting them to your Honor Professionals Day.
- **Communicate.** Follow up with an official letter/email of invitation before the Professionals Day. Plus, have one member make a friendly reminder phone prior to the meeting.
- **Follow-up!** This is a critical step, following the meeting. Thank all prospects for attending, offer additional information, invite them to join, or pending membership rules, work towards joining.

Homecoming/Bring Them Back Meeting. Occasionally conduct a Homecoming Meeting with the goal to invite past members to a special meeting with an invitation to join. Consider asking the former members to tell a one-minute memory of a project/event they experienced in the past as a Zontian. Making time for this during the program is a great way to rekindle their interest in reinstating their club membership.

Information Banquet for Groups/People the Club Supports. Invite individuals associated with the groups your club supports to a special meeting informing them who you are and why the club supports their groups/associations. During the presentation extend the opportunity to have a representative join your club. It is a great way to offer active membership to the groups you support. An executive administrator of a major local organization is perhaps one example of someone who would consider becoming a Member. You may want to use this theme once every three years since an annual meeting of this type may be redundant.

Information Reception for Younger People. This theme gives members the opportunity to contact young people they know. The challenge is for members to invite people below a

certain age group such as those under forty...or in some cases under 50. The list would include members' sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, fellow employees, church members, business associates, neighbors. This approach places the emphasis on recruiting a younger age group. The concept to this theme is to invite and attract a cluster of younger prospects to join as members, and it usually has a better retention rate. Keep in mind, if you want to attract younger members, you will need a more social aspect to meetings, and to be open to communicating through social media.

Z-Club Youth/Parents Meeting. This theme works best for clubs that sponsor a Z-Club or Golden Z-Club. Host a night when your club recognizes youth, such as graduating students from the Golden Z- Club, honor players from the sports team you sponsor, or outstanding students from the school. The function should include the parents. During the evening conduct a special presentation about the club and invite the parents to join. This age group may be more conducive to Zonta membership, as their children are now 'aging out' and they are more likely to have time to devote to service and advocacy.

Another idea, especially if you are a small club, is to include your service and advocacy partners. It increases the size of your gathering, and gives potential members a better sense of your mission.

How to Invite Prospects to Meetings/Projects

It is simple . . . you ASK! The best system for recruiting is to tell people the heartwarming ways Zonta affects you. People react to positive influences in their lives. When you talk about one of the projects your club does, people may ask questions. This gives you the opportunity to share what you have gained through Zonta and the ways it has influenced your life. Your explanation should be short but include some personal aspects and be followed by a personal invitation to join. Zonta International has a membership brochure titled *Advancing the Status of Women Worldwide* which is available to use when approaching someone about Zonta. It can be downloaded from the Zonta website. Club service projects, area and district meetings are a great hook to get members to join in addition to the dinner meetings

[Membership Brochure](#)

Some things to remember when inviting prospects:

Listen: Instead of just talking, take time to ask them about their interests and really listen to them. This will give you a better sense of who they are and will allow you to tell them about the aspects of your club that will most interest them.

Personalize: It's important to make a real, personal connection. The more newcomers feel you are truly interested in them, and the more they get to know you, the more comfortable they will feel being a part of your club. Share some of your own experiences. Instead of saying the exact same thing to everyone, gear your conversation to the individual. Try to convey why their participation is important, what they can contribute that might be special or unique, and what they will gain.

Tell them that you need them: Clubs that need to recruit the most need to be honest with new recruits that they will really need their skills. It's OK, people like to be needed!

Ask: Don't wait for them to take the initiative and volunteer. Instead, ask them to participate in a very specific way. Often we feel as if we are being too pushy when we ask people to join or participate, but many times they are waiting for us to invite them. Don't assume they are too busy or won't be interested. Be enthusiastic. This will happen naturally if you are recruiting them to an exciting event or activity.

Record: Keep track of what people say when you talk to them so you can follow up with them later.

Keep in Mind Why People Join

Participating in an organization or club takes time, money, and energy. Many of us are busy and over-committed, and while it seems people are less inclined to join organizations, people will and do get involved in things that are important and enriching to them. You can recruit more effectively by finding out people's interests and tapping into them. Zonta International is a woman's service organization whose mission is to advance the status of women through advocacy and service. What truly separates us from other women's organizations is our emphasis on "service" This is the primary reason why we want women to join. Now, some of the fruits of joining Zonta may be improved social networking, new friendships, professional development but these are not the primary reason why women join. It is a honor and a privilege to serve the mission first and foremost. The following are some common motivations for people to become active and suggestions on how to appeal to each of those interests:

Social Motivation - Some people become involved to meet people with similar values and interests, make new friends, get out of the house, find a community away from home or simply have fun. To make your club more appealing to outsiders, plan varied activities, operate in an informal atmosphere, and provide opportunities for members to get to know each other.

Professional Motivation - Many people want to develop new skills or leadership qualities or have valuable experiences that will help them test out possible career tracks. Make it clear that involvement can provide them with invaluable experience. To be connected with a high quality organization: Suggest they visit the ZI website, tell them ZI is the only organization with the mission to improve the lives of women, that has a permanent seat on the UN. Do not forgot to talk about the Service aspect of what we do.

To help your club prepare for one-on-ones with prospects, have members answer these questions:

- What interested you initially in this club?
- Why did you join?
- Why have you remained engaged in the club?
- What do you get out of being a part of this club?

Timeline for Membership Drive

Following each step in this timeline is the best practice. However, one can jump in at any point on the timeline, quickly catch-up the process, and still conduct a successful drive.

Order Supplies – Tools to Inform

Before the President announces the date of the Membership Drive, the Membership Chairperson should review the available membership tools. Also, we highly encourage the development of a club brochure and a club website to inform prospects about your club. It is also recommended that officers of the club have business cards. Since people join because of what your local club offers them, these are important recruiting tools.

Secure Zonta Speaker and/or Program

The Membership Chairperson with the assistance of the club President needs to secure an “outside” keynote speaker. You need a Zonta leader who can present a Zonta program which includes information about your club. The most logical choice would be your Area Director; however, the district has many current and past leaders who, when given enough advance notice, would be honored to speak at this special meeting.

Newsletter Announcement

Be sure the club newsletter editor publishes information about the Membership Drive in each issue leading up to the meeting date. The President or Membership Chairperson should write an article to assist with the promotion.

3 Months Prior to Membership Drive (During a Regular Club Meeting)

President: Announces the date, the numerical goal, and their commitment with a name of a prospect. The President then calls on Membership Chairperson to discuss the details.

Membership Chairperson: Makes a brief presentation about the drive including the following:

- Announce theme of meeting, if one.
- Announce incentives or prizes, if any.
- Display prospect sheet. Then follow-up by announcing the name of one or more prospects he or she personally plans to invite and bring to the meeting. Pass around this list to the fellow members so all can add their prospects to the list. The idea is to create enthusiasm that motivates members to get involved in the recruiting efforts.
- Challenge members to “bring three” to this special meeting.
- Hand out Zonta information brochures and club brochure.

Week of Membership Meeting

Membership Chairperson:

- Contact all members requesting that they phone their prospects about attendance at the Membership Drive.
- Confirm keynote speaker. Ask for a short introduction and discuss process he/she plans to use for asking prospects to join.
- Prepare agenda for the meeting and review it with the President. Phone those listed on the agenda to confirm their attendance and participation in the program.
- Arrive early to set up meeting room with name badges, display table, etc.

The Invitation to Membership

During the Membership Drive - Asking Potential Members to Join

Number One Reason People Join Zonta – They Are Asked!

The most common question officers ask is whether or not to formally ask prospects to join their club during a Membership Drive. The answer is absolutely YES, so develop a system that works best for your club. Studies show that over 95% of our members joined a club because they were invited and ASKED to join! It is important to remember that if a guest walks through the doors of your club's meeting...membership is on his/her mind! Following are two suggestions for approaching prospects to ask them to join during a Membership Meeting.

Keynote Speaker's Approach. The most popular and successful method of asking prospects to join as members of Zonta is to have the keynote speaker invite them at the end of his/her presentation. Since the keynote speaker is not a member of your club, he/she is in a neutral position and can ASK the prospect to join in a professional manner. The keynote speaker should have a prepared approach that is not only professional but also has a flare of excitement.

Sponsoring Member Approach. Another approach is to let the sponsoring member ask the prospect(s) to join at the end of the Keynote Speaker's presentation. As the keynote speaker finishes his/her presentation he/she gives an invitation to membership. The president then returns to the lectern, thanks the speaker, and asks, "Sponsors, do we have any new members signing on today?" The President recognizes and welcomes all new members who join that day.

Pre-arranged Joiners. It might be helpful for Membership Meeting that one or two prospects have agreed beforehand to join. When the opportunity to join occurs during the program, these prospects should be asked first. This positive momentum motivates other prospects to join. Be sure to reconfirm these commitments prior to the start of the Membership Meeting and give names to the Keynote Speaker.

Handout Applications before Adjournment. Regardless of which approach your club uses, every prospect should receive a membership application. Having the application typed as completely as possible including the prospect's name, address, phone, etc., gives the prospect a strong feeling of being wanted. Provide the sponsor with the application before the start of the meeting or prior to adjournment. Applications and checks should be given to the Membership Chairperson, President, or Secretary/Treasurer. All new members should be congratulated and welcomed personally before leaving.

Communicate with Prospective Members

Some prospective members will not attend the Membership Meeting. It is very important to continue communication with these prospects.

Prospects Who Attend Regular Meetings. When a prospect attends his/her first meeting, the club secretary should send by mail a follow-up letter from the club President. This letter should be mailed the day after the meeting. If the follow-up letter is emailed, it should be sent directly from the club president's email address. Make every event (especially if you have guests) a meeting with membership information. A handout may include history of Zonta International along with information of your club, club brochures, a calendar of events, a copy of your latest newsletter, contact information as well as a information questionnaire for them to leave with your Membership Chair.

Newsletter. Sending the club's newsletter to prospects who visited your club keeps the door open for membership. Be sure to list in the newsletter the names of all guests that visited the club. More importantly after the membership meeting or anytime a new member joins, list the names of all new members that join in the newsletter.

Written Invitation. One week prior to the Membership Drive the club president should send all prospects a formal invitation to join your Zonta club.

Invitation for Members. Some members are uncomfortable recruiting friends, family, or business associates. However, the club President can open that door with an invitation letter in the name of the member. This technique eases the member's comfort level for discussing Zonta with his/her prospect(s).

Congratulatory Letter. Once a prospect joins your club he/she should receive a congratulatory letter from the president. This letter should be sent immediately following the membership meeting or any meeting when a new member joins. Normally, the club secretary would handle this, however if it is sent by email it should come from the president's email address.

Letter to Prospects Who Visited but Did Not Join. Each prospect who attends a Membership Drive, but declines to join the club, also should receive a letter from the president. It should thank him/her for attending and invite him/her back to future meetings.

Action and Follow-Up

Involve and Incorporate Newcomers into the Club Right Away. Identify tasks for new people and specifically ask them to get involved at their first meeting or event. Consider what you want people's first impression of the club to be and what kind of event or meeting you should invite new people to attend. Will it be interesting and exciting? Will they see how they can get involved?

If business meetings are your club's only activity, this may contribute to dwindling membership. No matter the reason for wanting to join an organization, people are more likely to do so if they perceive the club as action-oriented, effective, and fun. Therefore, always have an activity planned in which people can actively participate. Make sure that general meetings always have an action component such as planning an event.

Club's Responsibilities. So, your club has new members, now what? Hope they come back? The success of your Membership Drive can be spoiled if you neglect the new members during their first months in the club. New members need to become a productive part of your club. Following are some suggestions for involving new members:

New Member Orientation Session. New members need to know about the organization and especially about your club—what is expected of them and how they can participate in areas that interest them. Your club should arrange a special welcome social for new members to meet with club officers to learn about Zonta and their club. It is important for new prospective members have a one on one interview with seasoned members so they know exactly what is expected of them and they in turn can ask questions pertaining to their interest.

New Member Installation Ceremony. All new members should be installed into your club as soon as possible. We suggest conducting the installation ceremony at the very next meeting following a Membership Drive. Invite the district Governor or other district officer to present a formal installation ceremony. Installing the new members quickly is important because it officially welcomes them as a part of the club and shows them that their commitment is appreciated. Be sure each new member receives a new member information kit, member lapel pin, and most importantly a warm welcome.

Mentoring. Each new member should be assigned a mentor who makes sure the new member is informed about participation in meetings, projects, and social events.

The New Member Review. After your new members have been on-board for one year host a New Member Review. Invite the new members as well as their sponsors. Ask the new

members to rate their first year. The venue should be a member's home with dinner so that they will be comfortable enough to be open.

Social Programs. Many members will look for the social aspect in the club (especially the younger age group). Some suggestions:

- Allot 30 minutes prior to meetings for a social time.
- Implement a Secret Friend program. Participating members will know the name of the person they give gifts to but will not know the name of the person giving them gifts.
- Treasured Member program will also allow members to engage with each other. The more we know about each other the stronger we all are. Every three months you are given a set of questions and a new name of a Zonta member. This is a face-to-face treasure hunt. Usually the Membership Chair will distribute the names to each member.

Member Retention: Why Members Stay

Employing the recruitment principles and methods detailed above, you should have no problem attracting new members. Your challenge, then, will be to keep them involved. To do so, consider why people stay involved in clubs, and plan activities in a way that keeps them coming back! Members have different needs and motives. If their needs are met, they are more likely to stay.

Key Reasons Why Members Stay Engaged:

- They feel appreciated.
- They can see that their presence makes a difference to Zonta's mission.
- There is opportunity for personal growth.
- They receive public and private recognition.
- They feel capable of handling the tasks offered.
- There is a sense of belonging and teamwork.
- They are involved in the process.
- Making a positive contribution to the community

Why Members Leave

The following "pitfalls" can lead to membership loss:

Burn-Out: People often leave organizations because they are asked to do too much too quickly. To avoid burn-out, try to offer members a series of slowly increasing responsibilities.

Cool Out: The opposite of asking people to do too much too fast is not asking them to do anything at all. "No one invited me." "No one told me they needed me." Don't be hesitant about asking people to do things for the club. People want to be useful. Don't lose track of people.

Keep Out: Veterans inevitably will gravitate towards one another at meetings. But it is important that newcomers also feel included. Allow some time at the beginning of each meeting for club discussions that include new and old members. Incorporate a social component into your meetings. An example would be to have a theme for regular meetings that would mix up where members sit.

No Growth: Volunteer work should be interesting and should offer variety and a chance for personal growth. There is boring work to be done of course, but try to distribute it evenly, and mix in as much fun as you can. Encourage members to take on more challenging tasks and projects as they learn more about your club.

No Appreciation: Members don't just enjoy being appreciated; they need and deserve it. Without it, they tend to lose faith in the value of what they're doing. There are three primary elements of showing your appreciation. First, show them that you are grateful for the work they have done. Second, don't take it for granted that they will continue doing work for the club. Third, show general respect for their opinions and their work by returning phone calls, answering notes, passing along information, etc.

No Fun: Your club should be creative and enjoyable for members. If people have no connection with each other and feel like attending meetings is a chore, you're not likely to recruit many members.

No Substance: Balancing between the social and the substance is tricky. You won't attract people interested in culture and the arts if your club is solely known for "Kabob night" or jewelry parties. Make sure to take into account the various interests of your members – if someone is interested in literature, have them organize a reading workshop or a panel, if they're interested in games, have them organize a backgammon competition or game day.

Retaining Members

Keeping in mind the reasons people leave and the reasons people stay, there are several safeguards that you can establish in your club's operations in order to retain members. These methods will help you spot problems before it is too late.

Involve new members in activities or projects that make them feel useful. Never hesitate to give a newcomer a job of importance such as staffing a table or helping to plan for an event. Be sure to describe to the new members what is expected of them, and how they can develop and grow by joining your club. Provide the guidance they need to complete new tasks and projects.

Give and Receive Constructive Criticism. In order to make the most of your resources and actions, club leaders must be able to give and receive constructive criticism. Your criticism should always be of the task, not the individual. Don't be personal. Always deliver criticism in private and praise in public. Recognize your club's performance at the end of an event.

Match Jobs with Skills. Give new members the opportunity to indicate relevant experience, as well as interests. By carefully matching people with jobs they are interested in and able to do, you increase the members' motivation and the chances of success for a project.

Evaluate Your Club. Periodically it might be useful to present an opportunity for your members to express why they belong to your club. Ask people to evaluate their experiences and expectations, and then work on ideas for things you might do to make the club more satisfying to most members.

Encourage Leadership. Provide Opportunities for Growth and Change

Being deliberate about leadership and development will keep your new and old members active and growing over a long period of time. Think about ways each member can develop over time within the club. Think about the various roles members can play within your club. Then decide what skills are needed for each role and how you can help members develop those skills over time.

Bringing new people into your club and allowing them to develop as leaders can change the way the club operates and is sometimes a difficult process. Tensions can arise as new people challenge the way the club functions. It is important to first assess whether your club is willing to make changes necessary to incorporate new people. How often do you want leadership roles to change to keep your club healthy? Consider the impact of cultural and other differences.

Resources on the District Website

Membership Plan Ideas

Club Membership Plan