

## **50 Membership-Building Ideas for Your Club**

/ John Gunnell

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Attracting new members is the lifeblood of a club. No matter how good your club is, you'll be doing well if 60-70 percent of the members renew year to year. Any higher rate of retention is way above average. This means that if you have 100 members today and want a larger membership next year, you have a goal of attracting at least 41 new members just to count on adding *one* person to the membership list. That's a shocker, isn't it?

Listed here are 50 membership-building ideas that have been used effectively by other car clubs. While they won't all apply to your club's situation, we're sure that some can be used to make your group grow.

- 1.** Ask a member from another collector car club to do a talk or a tech session at one of your club meetings. Inform the local newspaper and see if they will place a news item about the speaker. Invite interested community members to attend.
- 2.** Do an "antique car road show." Schedule your next meeting in a different location like a community center, library or bookstore. Ask the meeting place to publicize the special meeting and invite people in the "new" area to attend.
- 3.** Design a colorful new club brochure and distribute it to prospective members. Make sure it contains a fill-in-the-blank membership form.
- 4.** Ask your Chamber of Commerce to list your meetings in their newsletter or on their website.
- 5.** Add an online membership form to your club website.
- 6.** If your club is affiliated with a larger national club, check if they provide audio-visual materials to spice up your next meeting (with a PG rating of course).
- 7.** Have a sign-in book for guests attending your meetings. Later, send each guest a "thank you" card to invite them back to another meeting.
- 8.** Offer to have members pick up guests and drive them to the next meeting.
- 9.** Match up meeting guests with club members who have the same type of cars and have the members tell the guests how the club helps them.
- 10.** Have lots of extra membership applications at every meeting.
- 11.** Plan a club membership-building contest.

- 12.** Have fun meetings! Keep business to a minimum or skip over it sometimes.
- 13.** Send out an advance press release when a meeting is coming up.
- 14.** Hand out club business cards listing meeting date, time, location and phone.
- 15.** The membership secretary should follow up on new-member leads.
- 16.** Offer members a club decal or grille badge to display on their cars.
- 17.** Give members a club logo name badge to be worn whenever possible.
- 18.** Get feedback from guests after meetings and use it to make improvements.
- 19.** If you meet in a public location with a sign or placard out front, ask the facility to promote your club's meetings on it.
- 20.** When traveling, look for collector car clubs in the area you're visiting. Contact the club. See if you can meet with them to see how they attract new members.
- 21.** When attendance drops off, consider a new meeting place. People enjoy a "change of scenery" and a new location may be closer for some members.
- 22.** Leaflet car shows with club brochures. Post one near the restrooms.
- 23.** Provide special recognition for members who sign up new members.
- 24.** Have a formal new-member induction ceremony. It makes them feel more important and it may also impress guests who are thinking of joining the club.
- 25.** If your local high school has a career day, see if the club can have a booth. Collector car clubs can feed a young person's interest in a career in auto repair or sales. Some of the students may be interested in becoming a club member.
- 26.** Does your club meet all summer? It should. Attendance at summer meetings drop, but it's better than stopping and then trying start all over again.
- 27.** Do not cancel a meeting due to poor attendance. A small core group that meets consistently can often turn things around by spreading its enthusiasm.
- 28.** List the best things about your club. These are the "features and benefits" that you should be promoting in your membership brochures.
- 29.** Start your meetings right on time, but end them as early as possible. People will sit still and pay attention for just a certain amount of time and no longer.

- 30.** At dues renewal time, promptly send reminder notices to unpaid members. Tell them it's important to keep their dues current even if they miss a meeting.
- 31.** Encourage club members to wear club hats, shirts and jackets as often as they can both at car events and when out in public. By the same token, make sure club garments have a pleasing design that people will want to wear.
- 32.** Develop a list of potential members who have e-mail. Send them an invitation to join, but don't "spam" them. Limit e-mails to people that you've had contact with and be prepared to remove email addresses from your list if asked to.
- 33.** Award prizes for new members. Use a point system that recognizes high numbers are hard to hit: 1 point for 10 members, 5 points for 25 and 20 points for 50 members. Give nice prizes that a collector car enthusiast would like. –
- 34.** Have "Guest Night" meetings where each member brings a guest.
- 35.** People who had enough interest to join the club once are hot prospects for joining again. Use past-member lists to reach them. In some cases, you may have to show them that things they did not like have been changed.
- 36.** Build morale at every meeting. Recognize members for their efforts or for achieving special goals. Remember, honey attracts more flies than sticky paper.
- 37.** Read your club newsletter from cover to cover. If you were a potential joiner, would the newsletter make you sign up? If not, it probably needs some work.
- 38.** Require members to wear their club name badges at all meetings and provide blank name tags for guests. The names should be in large print.
- 39.** Your meeting place should be convenient, accessible and user friendly.
- 40.** Take comments from guests at the end of the meeting. This may provide an opening to ask the guest to join the club. It may also lead to improvements.
- 41.** Print enough club newsletters each month to send out extra copies to local newspapers, radio stations, recent dropouts and potential new members.
- 42.** Have a prize drawing each month for members who bring a guest to meetings. Give a duplicate prize to the guest if he or she joins the club.
- 43.** Contact local car dealers, repair shops and auto-parts businesses to see if they will allow your club to have a counter display in their store.

- 44.** Consider manning a club booth at non-automotive events such as craft shows and trade fairs. Collector car owners have a variety of interests.
- 45.** Look for ways to get an ad, interview or article in newsletters of schools, hospitals, community organizations and businesses in your area.
- 46.** List the club in the *Yellow Pages* of the local telephone book.
- 47.** Have club members practice how to fill out a membership form before they attend events to promote the club.
- 48.** Set monthly new-member goals. If you miss, you can increase a later goal.
- 49.** Be timely in sending out dues renewal statements. Encourage members to pay their dues early. Don't allow non-paying members to attend club functions.
- 50.** Follow Wal-Mart's example and have a "greeter" stationed at the entrance to your meetings to make sure everyone gets a warm, friendly "Thanks for coming."

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