

2012/13



A Guide to Membership



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DEMOLAY INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that the key to maintaining a healthy DeMolay chapter is membership recruitment. A strong chapter is one that is continuously initiating members. Many chapters fall into the trap of assuming they are strong because they recently initiated 1 or 2 new members and then fail to continue to recruit. While the importance of small victories should not be minimized, it is vital that chapters recognize the value of establishing lasting membership growth.

An effective membership program includes a plan for recruiting new members, educating them about DeMolay, and keeping them active after they are initiated. While these can be treated as separate programs (and many chapters do) the clear relationship among these three areas means that each must be closely coordinated with the other. This coordination can be done by establishing a chapter office of "Membership Chairman" and assign the membership effort to this officer. Working with a membership committee, the Membership Chairman will be able to plan an effective and aggressive program that will result in growth.

An alternative approach is to segment duties between a Membership Chairman and an Activities Chairman. No manual can provide a total recipe for a successful membership program. You must carefully analyze your chapter and its programs and then decide on a plan. However, the purpose of this guide is to provide some basic guidelines. This guide is intended as a starting point, for building your program.

It is recommended that during your term you work on creating a supplement to this handbook to assist the future Membership Chairmen of your chapter. This would include some of the following information:

1. Chapter Bylaws

2. Contact information for the current Advisor appointed to Membership, and the current Advisor on the State Level appointed to Membership.

3. Last year's Annual Active Membership Form

4. Calendar of Membership Recruitment activities from the past year.

5. Schedule of general events throughout the DeMolay year.

RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

A young man's decision of whether or not to join DeMolay is based largely on whether he believes that the organization will meet a personal need. A prospective member must feel that joining offers him something he wants, whether it is friendship, the opportunity for service, or for leadership development.

This means that to recruit, your chapter must have an effective service program and must be able to promote it throughout the community in which you reside. No one will join a group that they have never heard of or that does not appear to do anything. At the same time, you do not want to develop an image of doing nothing but work. You must also let people know that you enjoy what you do and have fun doing it.

The committee must select techniques that will allow you to make as much personal contact as possible. This will allow you to "sell" DeMolay directly to the prospective members and to answer their questions. Prospective members must have the feeling that they are wanted by the chapter and will belong in it. Among

the approaches you should consider are information booths in town activities, open service projects to which the town is invited, and so on. The possibilities are endless. You can supplement these personal contact methods with mailings, posters, flyers in orientation packets, etc.

Once you have developed a plan, analyze it carefully. Would you be attracted to DeMolay?

Another consideration is whether the chapter has the resources to carry out the plan. Once the plan is agreed to, everyone in the chapter must understand it and be able to follow it. You should explain it fully at a chapter meeting and demonstrate it to the chapter. This should include a "sales pitch" developed by the committee which must also be explained to the chapter.

After this session, you may want to select your best sales people and have them carry the load in terms of personal recruiting. You will also need to equip them with the best supporting materials available. (Use a mixture of DeMolay's existing publications and your own creations.) Finally, emphasize that recruiting is a leadership development process and that everyone in the Chapter is responsible.

Your program should be structured so that you are constantly developing a list of prospective members and building contacts with them.

EXPLAINING DEMOLAY

How to Train Your Chapter in explaining DeMolay

Step 1: Plan a training session – Pick a date

This can be done after a meeting or as its own event, but in order for it to work; the members need to be there. Try having something else at the session like a Pizza party or video games when it is finished.

Step 2: Introduce the concept of Features and Benefits –

Feature: Something specifically offered to DeMolay members

Benefit: How that feature impacts the DeMolay

Step 3: Use an example of Feature and Benefit

Feature: Ritual

Benefit: Public speaking skills

Memorization skills

Confidence

Better understanding of DeMolay

Competition

Step 4: Create a Feature list specific to your chapter

Include all events that are unique to your chapter in the feature category. The chapter members should be brainstorming for this feature list, you are merely the moderator.

Step 5: Create flash cards

Each member creates 5 flash cards on five different features/benefits

Step 6: Study the flash cards

Here the members pass their completed cards around and share their features/benefits. This will expand their ability and knowledge on different aspects of DeMolay.

Step 7: Practice on non-members

After training session, hold an Open House

Options:

Give tools to those who participate

Give incentives to those who have new members join

ROLE PLAYING EXERCISE

Select one or two people from your committee to act as the recruiter. Tell them they will be expected to use the “sales pitch” developed by the committee to persuade a prospective member to join.

Then, select three other people to act as the prospective members. Ask one to act totally uninterested in joining, the second to be very interested, and the third to be curious but not excited. Have each discussion take place in front of the chapter. Then ask for suggestions on how to improve the approach. Keep in mind that your purpose is both to polish the approach and to explain it to the rest of the chapter.

BRANDING

When crafting your membership program, it is important to think about branding. What is the image of DeMolay we want to convey to prospective

members and their families? The following are a couple of suggestions on branding when it comes to your chapter.

While the term "Prospect Party" is one familiar to most of us associated with DeMolay, it is not familiar to those outside of the organization. It may make more sense to use the term "Open House" instead. Open House better articulates the concept of the event. It is an opportunity to invite prospective members to experience a "piece" of DeMolay, to meet current members, to explore the inside of a Masonic building, to see the relationship between members and their advisors, and understand a little more of what DeMolay is all about.

In speaking about where DeMolay meets, please remember to call it a "Masonic building" and refrain from the dated and potentially confusing term: "Masonic Temple." In this day and age, we need not confuse the public with terms that do not clearly define the role and goals of DeMolay. We are not a religion or a cult. The term "Temple," while still descriptive as far as Masons are concerned, confuses prospective members and more importantly their families unnecessarily.

Another important form of branding is appearance. The importance of DeMolay polo shirts cannot be stressed enough. When holding an open house, or

otherwise promoting DeMolay, members of the chapter should be dressed to reflect favorably on the organization. In most cases a polo shirt and khakis are usually sufficient. Chapters should consider investing in a standard polo shirt for members.

THE OPEN HOUSE

Many chapters find that an Open House is the best method for member recruitment. This is an opportunity to bring prospective members to the chapter's meeting place and educate them about the organization. If done well, this can be an extraordinarily successful way of bringing in new members.

The key to any open house is picking the right event. The chapters that have had the most success have used an open house format. In this format, the event happens at the Masonic building. Some fun activity is used as the main draw for the kids. The event needs to be fun and appealing to prospective members. At the same time, it needs to be structured around providing information on DeMolay that will be of interest to kids and their parents.

The best place to start for ideas on the event is with your current members as they are close in age to who you are trying to attract. It is important that the event provide for interaction between prospects and active members. The whole idea of the event should be to give possible new members an opportunity to meet people who have already joined DeMolay.

The most popular, and probably the most, event is a video game party. If this is the route that your chapter decides to go, there are several important factors to consider. First, there needs to be a plan of where games and systems will come from. One option is to bring in a gaming company or a games van. Another more cost effective option is to use games from members and advisors. The downside is a possible lack of variety and dealing with possible logistical issues. Other chapters will usually be happy to help if given proper notice. It is also important to remember that there needs to be other options of things to do besides video games. The video games party is just one of many possible options for a successful event. Chapters should try to be creative in their ideas while staying within the open house format.

Proper publicity is of utmost importance. Chapters should use any and all resources available to them. Opportunities to promote the open house include: local newspapers, handing out fliers to church youth groups and in front of supermarkets, using lodge mailing lists. If a chapter can get fliers handed out at the schools, this can be fantastic, but it is important to start the process for approval early. The most important resource is current members. You should encourage them to bring their friends and family.

Your presentation to the boys and their families has to be the most important part of the open house. Every other part of your event can be perfect, but it is meaningless if you don't sell them on DeMolay. The presentation should include an explanation of DeMolay, a brief history, and examples of activities. However, the focus of the presentation has to be on the benefits provided by membership in DeMolay (i.e. brotherhood, opportunities for service, fun). Keep in mind the presentation is not just for the prospective members but their families as well.

At the time of the open house, your chapter should have degrees already scheduled. While new members should not feel pressured into joining right away, the opportunity to join quickly should be there. This will prevent too much time from passing during which prospective new members can lose interest.

MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

Once a prospective member has decided that DeMolay might be something they want to join, it is our responsibility to offer them a program that provides the opportunity to develop a thorough understanding of DeMolay and the Chapter. It is during this period that they learn how the Chapter functions and the skills needed to do that. This is where the Initiate Trainer steps in and takes over. It is your responsibility throughout the New Initiate's Education to assist the Initiate Trainer in any way possible. Your role as Membership Chairman is to oversee this process. If you have any concerns with the activities of the Initiate Trainer or other Brothers involved, you must take action to ensure that no Initiates are treated unfairly.

Have you ever stopped to consider why Brothers leave the Chapter? If you have, you'll realize that usually it is because the reason they joined is no longer there. We no longer meet their "needs".

A program to retain Brothers as “actives” begins with a strong membership program. To this must be added the opportunity for every Brother to participate in the Chapter’s operation. The leadership positions must be open to all. The Brothers must also enjoy what they are doing, at least most of the time. In short, Brothers will remain active as long as they can “feel good” about being part of the Chapter.

The Membership Committee has the responsibility to monitor membership and keep an eye on all phases of the Chapter program to insure that all Brothers are active. This may mean that the committee must seek to add leadership development opportunities or to increase service projects. The Membership Chairman’s role as a member of the Executive Committee now becomes crucial. He must be able to sell the other officers and the Chapter on the need for the changes proposed.

Of course, friendship is the “glue” which holds any group of people together. You will want to have a number of social events that build friendship (lunch after projects, theme parties/dinners, Friday night bowling, etc.) and add to the experience of DeMolay.

Chapter meetings should be enlivened by a fellowship activity at the end. Use your imagination to make what would otherwise be a “dull” project into a fun and interesting one. Encourage participation in other Chapter activities as well as State activities.

These are not only valuable for the information shared but tend to greatly strengthen a participant’s emotional ties to DeMolay and your Chapter. All of these elements are important, but perhaps the most effective retention device is to know each of your Brothers well. Then, you will be able to find out what each Brother is seeking from his membership and develop ways to provide it.

If you see that someone is becoming less active, assign a member of the committee, (whoever knows him best) to speak privately with this Brother and determine if something can be done.

All of this can be simply stated: if the Chapter program invites and encourages participation, your membership retention level will be high. If it does not, you will be driving people away.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of a membership program is to enable the Chapter to maintain the highest level of activity possible without overburdening each Brother. It is designed to make being part of DeMolay both worthwhile and enjoyable.

A balanced blend of service with fellowship will both encourage Brothers to stay active and prospective members to join. If you tend too much in either direction, you will find your Chapter losing membership, either because you are asking too much of each Brother or are not providing the opportunity for service that your Brothers are seeking.

The approach outlined in this handbook should enable you to develop a plan that will enhance the DeMolay experience for everyone in your Chapter.

Additional Resources:

Planning and executing a membership program is a team effort. Don't be afraid to ask for help or to divide the task among several people.

For more information please contact:

- Your Chapter Advisor
- Your State Officers
- The Jurisdictional Membership Director
- The Executive Officer
- www.demolay.org

