

## How to Understand and Work with New Members



### Motivating New Members

As a leader, you must understand your own motivations as well as those of your group members. Are they participating in your organization to become more knowledgeable about a specific academic or professional field? Is their participation a recreational or entertainment outlet - a relief from the rigors of studying?

If you can determine the source of an individual's motivation, you can begin to unleash his or her energies and ideas and maximize that member's potential for both you and the organization.

Give your members an accurate view of the situation. Be honest. Listen and respond to the questions they raise. Most importantly, create an environment in which they feel free to raise questions.

As a leader, learn to look beyond a person's current abilities and identify any potential that needs developing. You can increase a person's motivation:

1. By increasing the rewards anticipated
2. By reducing anticipated time or cost

Give members an opportunity to use individual talents to benefit the organization.

Be positive. Be appreciative of suggestions made by committee members. If you seem indifferent to member's opinions, your committee may lose interest.

Start delegating small tasks to your members. As they are successful in carrying out these tasks, give them more responsibility. Encourage them to make their needs known to you.

The following methods of motivation tend to have "universal" application, too. Try these with all your members:

- Use people's **names** often.
- Build **prestige** into jobs by giving titles.
- Be **courteous** and **respectful**.
- Give **individual attention** and demonstrate that you **understand** members and **accept** their strengths and weaknesses.
- **Keep members informed** - what they're not up on, they're likely to be down on.
- **Listen** to others.
- Be **fair, honest, and consistent** - show no favoritism.
- Provide honest **feedback** - praise their successes publicly, and privately give constructive criticism to help them learn from their mistakes.
- **Involve** members in **goal setting** and decision making.
- **Clarify** your expectations of members and their expectations of you.
- Occasionally serve **food** at your meetings.
- Have **contests** and give small **prizes** to the person who designs the best program
- Use **team building activities** to re-energize the group and strengthen loyalty and commitment.

Motivation comes from **inner** needs, drives and goals. As a leader, your task in motivating others is to tap into these and supply a channel for their fulfillment. The individual members must do the rest.

### Questions New Members Often ask Themselves

- Will I be accepted or rejected here?
- How will this group be different from my daily interactions?
- What exactly will these sessions be like?
- What risks will I take in here?
- How am I like other people here? Different?
- Will I feel pressured and pushed to perform in some way?
- How important will I be?
- Who will be the real leaders here? What can be achieved here?

### Questions and Concerns of Members

- I'm afraid I'll look stupid.
- Will I tell too much about myself?
- Will others like me?
- What if I find out what I'm really like?
- What if everyone rejects me?
- What if the group attacks me?
- I'm afraid I'll be withdrawn and passive.
- What will happen if I really open up my feeling?
- Will I embarrass myself?
- What if I'm asked to do something I don't want to do?
- What if others can tell I'm afraid and nervous?
- What if I find out things about myself that I can't cope with?

## Characteristics of Initial Stage of Developing a Group

- Silence and awkwardness.
- High anxiety.
- Impatience to "get the ball rolling".
- Confusion about what everybody is supposed to be doing.
- Storytelling, a tendency to talk about others and focus on people and situations outside of the group.
- Central issue is trust vs. mistrust.
- Testing of each other and the leaders.
- Requests for greater leader involvement.
- Cocktail conversations, safe levels of conversation.
- Vying for informal leadership.

## Some Ways to Start a Group Session/Meeting

1. Go around the room and have each member state what he/she wants from the upcoming session.
2. As leaders, share your thoughts about where the group is at, how it is progressing, ways the group might be getting stuck, etc.
3. Ask members if they have any unresolved feelings or thoughts about the previous session: "Did anyone have any after thoughts or leftover feelings about last week's session?"
4. Ask, "How is each of you feeling about being here today?"
5. Have each member complete the sentence, "Today I'd like to get actively involved by"
6. Announce, "As a way of beginning tonight, let's have a brief go-around and have each of you say what you'd most like to be able to say by the end of this session."
7. Inquire of each member: "what were you thinking and feeling before coming to the group today?" or "Whom (or what) are you most aware of in this room right now, and why?"

## Some Ways to End a Group Session/Meeting

1. Ask members to tell the group briefly what they learned about themselves through their relationships with other members in that particular session.
2. Ask, "What was it like for you to be in this group tonight?"
3. Instruct, "Let's do a quick go-around and have everyone say a few words on how the group is progressing so far and make any suggestions for change."
4. Indicate, "Before we close tonight, I'd like to share with you some of my reactions and observations of this session."
5. Ask if anybody has any feedback that they would like to give another member or the leaders.
6. Determine if there are any issues that members would like to return to or explore in the next session.