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NC Conservation Network Tip Sheet #6: Increasing Your Membership

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Increasing Your Membership

One ingredient for a successful organization is a strong membership base. Without a sizable membership base, you can't effectively and sustainably achieve your goals. For instance, you won't be able to turn folks out to your event, you won't have members to call on to send postcards into your legislators, you won't have a group of folks that you can legitimately speak on behalf of, and you won't have a base to begin raising funds.

Imagine your organization representing the combined interests of 100 people, or 1,000 people, or even 10,000 people. This is where the power of grassroots organizations is realized – through the numbers of individuals who support our work and will put their money and energy where their mouth is. So, start building!

Tips for increasing your membership

Tip #1: Identify your target audience. Is it students, mothers, low-income communities, individuals living in Winston-Salem? You first need to identify who it is you're trying to reach (your audience or base).

Tip #2: Know your resources and limitations. What resources do you have to expend on building your membership? Do you have a few dedicated Board members and volunteers? Do you have money for flyers and ads? Do you have a paid canvas that can knock on doors? Knowing how much time/energy you can devote to finding new members will help you be more effective in your efforts.

Tip #3: Set a goal. Organizations work well and have a way to measure their success when they have a goal. Do you want to have 50 paid members by the end of the year? Or do you want to have 1,000 individuals signed up for your e-newsletters? Determine your goal before you get to work.

Tip #4: Make a plan. Where are you going to find these new members? Remember who your base is and think about the best places to reach out to them. Is it at annual festivals and tabling events where you can meet folks one-on-one? Is it by calling through a list of individuals (friends or a phone book)? What about online avenues – through Facebook, Myspace, forums, etc? Creating a plan will help focus where and how you spend your time looking for new members.

Tip #5: Have a pitch. What are you going to say to a stranger to get them interested in what you have to say about your organization? What's your short, one line pitch if you are working a table at an event. Or, if you have more time to convince someone – what is your message?

Tip #6: Have something to do, whether it's an interactive display at your booth; a postcard to sign; or an event to attend where an

interested individual can get to know your organization more. Make sure you have something for new members to do before you introduce them to the group.

Tip #7: **Just do it.** Get out there and do it. At some point, you've planned long enough and it's time to get outside of the office or from behind the computer screen and start recruiting. Put on a friendly face, a warm handshake, and just do it.

Tip #8: **Write down contact information.** Without contact information, that person's name isn't much good to you. Always, ask for an email address, and/or phone number. If you're really prepared you'll have a form ready to take down an email address, phone number, physical address, and how they'd like to get involved.

Tip #9: **Follow up.** Make sure to follow-up with individuals you made contact with. There's no 3-day rule here. The sooner you can follow-up with an individual, the more likely they are to remember the interaction you shared and why they were excited about your organization. In addition, they'll be more likely to stay involved and take action with your organization in the future.

Tip #10: **Make them feel welcome.** When your new members come to their first event or volunteer for the first time, make sure they feel welcome. Introduce them to folks and take some time to catch up with them. Building relationships is key to keeping your members coming back.

Remember that we're not here just to build activists for an issue or members for an organization; we're here to build a strong environmental movement to create change.

Other resources:

From The Community Toolbox:

[Methods of Contacting Potential Participants.](#)

[Making Personal Contact with Potential Participants.](#)

From the Citizens Handbook:

[Getting People.](#)

If you have any ideas for future Tip Sheets, please [email](#) Nicole Stewart, NC Conservation Network.