

Recruiting New Members

A Club must "buy in" to membership increase and its importance. It isn't as hard as you think. You are the best spokesperson that Altrusa could have. You know what your club has done for your community and for its members. Be willing to share it.

Have you ever asked the question...."How long 16 seconds is?" Sixteen seconds is the average time one spends riding in an elevator. It is also the amount of time you need to tell a friend or co-worker about the benefits of Altrusa Membership. Have your "elevator speech" ready. Below is a sample speech:

Altrusa is an international network of local grassroots clubs devoted to promoting better communities through service by an international network of people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. By empowering our more than 8,000 volunteer members worldwide, last year we strengthened our communities by contributing 1 million volunteer hours to local programs and services to help hundreds of thousands of people, especially in the areas of literacy, HIV/AIDS healthcare, and the environment.

What's your speech? Think of what Altrusa means to you and be ready to share it with others.

Where do we find New Members? They are everywhere you are - churches, utility companies, newspapers, homeowners' associations, senior centers, schools, banks, doctors' offices, libraries, beauty salons, fitness centers, etc. Don't forget to include former members. They already know what your club does for the community. The obligations that caused them to drop out may be gone. In the Membership Tool Kit there is an example of one brainstorming activity that will help find 40 members in 4 minutes. Divide your club into teams for this exercise. Incentives provide a fun and competitive way to increase membership. While personal contacts usually are the most productive way when recruiting new members, don't be afraid to branch out. We can all use more friends.

Now that you have a list of prospective new members, what's next?

FOLLOW THROUGH WITH PERSONAL CONTACT. Say that again, **FOLLOW THROUGH WITH PERSONAL CONTACT.** It is important to visit face-to-face with each and every prospect on your lists. If you do a mass mailing, it is imperative to follow up with a phone call, an email, or even better with a face-to-face meeting. It is easier to throw away a piece of paper or delete an email than it is to ignore someone on the phone and if you are standing next to him/her, chances are they'll finally hear what you are saying.

ENTHUSIASM is the most important element of persuasion. If you relay your love of Altrusa and what it means to you, chances are very good the prospect will listen and be interested in what you have to say. If he/she is interested, invite him/her to your club function or lunch. If Altrusa doesn't appeal to him/her right now, be sure he/she knows how to contact you or the club later. Many times the prospect is not in a position to become an Altrusan when he/she is first approached, but later he/she may be. If they aren't interested right away, invite them to participate in a service project, so they may see what Altrusa does firsthand in the community.

Club members should evaluate their prospects. A good way to do this is to invite the prospect to lunch with another Altrusan to discuss all aspects of Altrusa membership. This would include dues, responsibilities, committees, club projects, meetings, conference, convention, history, etc. It is best to be very open about the time and service expected. Tell them they will be expected to participate so if they are looking for a club to list on a resume, Altrusa is not for them. We are a working organization; however we do have flexible volunteer hours.

Now is the time to provide interested individuals with written materials about Altrusa. There is a general Altrusa International brochure in the Altrusa International Store (**Keyword** = Brochure). You can also go to the Marketing Toolkit where there are Altrusa business cards and a rack card intended to be inserted into the brochure and set up to be customized with your local club information. (**Keyword** = Marketing Toolkit)

Using these materials promotes a uniform message and image for all clubs. Refer them to websites for more information about Altrusa. If you aren't able to do the personal contact one-on-one, plan a membership drive event. Invite members from nearby clubs within your District to increase your numbers. Use the professionally developed Altrusa PSA targeting prospective members and recruitment letters for warm and cold leads. (**Keyword** = Marketing Toolkit) Check with your District to see what financial support is available for revitalization efforts.

Steps for the New Member Recruitment Event

1. Determine a theme and have FUN with the theme!
2. Determine the program – should inform prospective members about Altrusa (International, District and Local)
 - a. Use local members to discuss Service Projects, Fundraisers, meetings, dues, committees, etc.
 - b. Use District Officers
3. Determine date, time and location – regular meeting time or special time
4. Address invitations and request RSVPs
5. Determine if and how technology can be used to invite younger members (Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, Evites, etc. – if you don't have the expertise in your club to do this, ask for help from your District Communication Committee, ASTRA club, your teenage children/grandchildren, or local college.)
6. Follow up with those who haven't responded.
7. Prior to the event, assign prospects to each member.
8. During the event, each member talks to their assigned prospects in order to introduce and share an interesting fact about them. Sample questions – Career details, spouses employment, family members names, something nobody knows about you, what would you consider your ideal career, if you weren't doing what you do now, who (living or dead) would you invite to your dinner party, where would you go on the perfect trip?

9. Provide them with a booklet that includes the following:
 - a. Logo, Brand Drivers and Tagline
 - b. Club Meeting Dates
 - c. Dues
 - d. Obligations of Membership
 - e. Principles of Altrusa
 - f. Project Budget
 - g. List of Membership
10. After the event, follow up with all who attended and with those who weren't able to attend, inviting them to attend a regular club meeting .
11. If the prospect expresses interest, complete the Membership Recommendation Form and start the process for approval and eventual initiation.
12. Immediately after the new member is initiated, assign them to a committee.
13. Once they are members, continue to make them feel welcome and needed. Assign them a Mentor who will guide them through their first year of membership.
14. Schedule orientations to give new and existing members more in-depth information about all things Altrusa.

Recruiting new members is not a one-time event. Altrusa's competition isn't Rotary or Kiwanis. **The competition is for time.** With the complexity of life today, we must appeal to prospects for their slices of time. You need to be constantly looking for prospective members. Invite prospects to a meeting with a dynamic speaker or hands-on project, so that they can see your club in action. Life happens. Members are going to move, to have temporary job setbacks, to become ill as well as family obligations. Altrusa must be flexible and creative as we face the competition for time but most of all we must emphasize to prospects and members alike that we only expect from them what they can do and nothing more.