

Reviving Members

Practice these leader-approved remedies

By Rebecca Alexis

With a stethoscope around your neck and a lab coat hanging on the door, you jot down remedies for what you've diagnosed as a condition of dwindling involvement in your group. From acute apatheticitis to infectious inconsistency, here are a few tips to help you resuscitate member involvement.

The Symptom: Students only join the organization to build their resumes.

The Cure: Cater to resume-builders by inviting them to take on leadership roles to further pad their experience. Create new committees while you delegate your e-board's responsibilities such as making flyers or typing donation proposals to businesses. "Members will participate when given a title or a role within the club," says Diana Bien-Aime, director of the Black Female Extravaganza at the University of Florida.

The Symptom: Members no longer see the point of the organization.

The Cure: Remind veterans what's in it for them by promoting membership benefits, or design scholarships based on involvement. At the University of Central Florida, Golden Key inductees know their dedication pays off. "If the advisor sees someone more involved, she'll give him a nicer letter of recommendation," says Andrea Almeida, 99-00 president.

The Symptom: Members are spreading themselves too thin.

The Cure: At Rollins College, Outdoor Club Advisor Colleen Gray speaks directly to students to ensure their involvement. "I ask what if they were in five organizations and they had to drop to three, which two would they drop," Gray says. "It's a self-actualization of priorities, time management, and lifestyle."

The Symptom: Your assembly room feels like another social hotspot.

The Cure: It's OK for associates to hang out with their buddies. But if socializing becomes the main attraction, some members will think the club's a waste of time. To refocus, allocate time after meetings for conversations and fun, then get back to your agenda. "The fewer meetings you have, the more people will take you seriously, because you'll have more issues to discuss," says Judi Mann, Student Government Association president at Florida Southern College.

The Symptom: Cliques are forming.

The Cure: Help members get out of their circle and mingle with others by kicking off with an icebreaker or using place cards at meetings. Also, plan activities for teams such as sporting events or scavenger hunts. As holidays near, launch a secret pals

program for students to randomly draw the name of a member to whom they anonymously give gifts.

The Symptom: Career-minded collegians seek networking opportunities elsewhere.

The Cure: As an incentive, Melissa Gonzalez at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University builds partnerships with local business leaders to entice Pre-Law Society members to remain active. "We're getting on good terms with all the local law firms, so our students can gain experience by helping busy law offices," says Gonzalez, an active society member. "Students want to be involved when they're getting information about law school admission."



The Symptom: Newbies are frustrated, because they aren't in positions of power.

The Cure: Nurture upcoming leaders by starting a shadowing program for future officers to learn from current club officials. Invite eager recruits to serve on committees, attend conferences, or sit in on planning retreats. Introduce those following in your footsteps to key administrators to help them establish future working relationships. Acknowledge your protégés' work publicly to reinforce their commitment to continuing your legacy.

The Symptom: Members fall asleep at meetings, and attendance is dwindling.

The Cure: Create a crowd with edible incentives. "We get subs, chicken wings, and pizza donated by the local businesses and have our meetings during lunchtime, so the atmosphere is very casual," says Michael Veingrad, parliamentarian for Phi Beta Lambda at Broward Community College.

In addition, pack a room by adding

excitement to your get-togethers. Instead of orally explaining your project proposal, use a PowerPoint presentation, or deliver the details about an upcoming international day by using cultural adaptations to perform a skit.

The Symptom: Members shy away from offering up original ideas.

The Cure: Actively solicit constituents' proposals, and show you value their input by following up faithfully. At Florida International University, Indian Student Association Secretary Pranisha Devchand keeps students posted on the status of their suggestions for events. "When students give their opinions, we write and present it at the executive meetings where we discuss whether it's feasible," Devchand says. "One of us will e-mail or call the member to let him know whether we decided to do the idea."

The Symptom: Your most talented troops are taking their gifts to other clubs.

The Cure: Combine awesome aptitudes with appropriate assignments. From artists

using their creative flair to design banners, to computer gurus creating your team's web site, find members' motivations and match them to your needs. At Jacksonville University, Circle K President Ingrid Rackebrandt keeps volunteers' interests in mind to make their projects a success. "We bring in at-risk kids in our community to our campus to a 'Youth Field Day,'" Rackebrandt says. "Athletic members play sports with the kids."

The Symptom: Reliable members stop lending a hand.

The Cure: Be sure to thank your right-hand man or woman. Hard-working contributors want to know you appreciate their extra efforts. "Recognition varies between projects," says Sarah Baskin, president of Students in Free Enterprise at Flagler College. "We may have the president of the college write a letter to the individual, or invite her to his breakfast where she's recognized for what she has done." 🐾