

# MOTIVATING YOUR MEMBERS

Student Organization Development Center

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To the extent that you give others what they want, they will give you what you want. The secret lies in giving others what they want first. But what do the members of your organization want? Chances are, there is no single answer to this question. In fact, there may be as many answers as there are members. However, these answers are not difficult to ascertain. Each person's reason for joining the organization gives you the key to what s/he wants to gain from involvement in the group.

Some students may have joined to meet people and make new friends. You might motivate them by involving them in tasks that require them to work closely with others, by assigning them to the social committee, etc.

Other students may have joined your group because they have strong beliefs in the cause your organization represents. These people could be motivated by the opportunity to voice those beliefs--ask their opinions often, invite them to give a talk at a meeting, ask them to help recruit new members, etc.

Students sometimes join groups to learn or explore something new. To motivate these members, try planning programs and events that appeal to their curiosity (or better yet, ask them to help plan such activities).

A group often attracts members because it relates to their major or future career. You might motivate these members by giving them a chance to practice developed skills and the opportunity to gain new skills.

Finally, students may have joined your organization to have a place where they "belong"--where they feel satisfied and needed. Providing opportunities for these people to make contributions to the organization is an especially important means of motivation. Acknowledge their accomplishments frequently and publicly. Let them know that they are important! Of course, this applies to all members, no matter why they joined the group. The following methods of motivation tend to have "universal" application, too. Try these with all your members:

- Use people's names often--a person's own name is the sweetest sound in the world.
- Build prestige into jobs by giving titles.

- Be courteous and respectful.
- Give individual attention and demonstrate that you understand members and accept their strength 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 or have some kind of treat at your meetings.
- Have a contest and give a small prize to the person who designs the best program, etc.
- Use teambuilding activities to re-energize the group and strengthen loyalty and commitment. ( People will work harder for other people than for an impersonal entity called an organization).

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

**THANK YOU** for your interest in Motivation. If you have questions on this or any other leadership and organizational topics, contact the **STUDENT ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT CENTER (SODC)**. We have staff available on a walk-in basis (1310 Michigan Union), or call for an appointment (763--5900).