

Pulling Power - attracting and holding on to your most vital asset. People.

A) Introduction

This sheet outlines some tools which could help you to identify:

- who you want in your group
- where you might find them
- how you can reach them
- how you can welcome them
- how you can get them involved in your group.

You will probably find that, for your group, some parts of this approach will seem more relevant than others and that you'll want to focus on those parts; use it as you see fit but try to **think a bit about all of the elements**.

Provocation: groups are often a model of unsustainable practice... A tree without the roots

To maintain a core of active people you need to have a recruitment strategy that keeps bringing people in and maintains the capacity of your group. This is rarely the case for groups...

Recruitment requires **time** to look at the challenge and actually do something about it. Recruitment is a very valid use of your group's time so don't feel guilty about spending it on something which is not direct campaigning.

A sustainable group needs nurturing and care to maintain. Here's a way you could approach this...

B) The Stages of Recruitment

Three stages (not necessarily in sequence and may overlap):

Stage 1: Awareness Building \$ **Stage 2: Encourage** \$ **Stage 3: Welcome / engage**

Stage 1: Awareness Building

There is a sequence which can help us identify what we have to try and do. This is the **awareness chain**:

I know the group exists \$ **I know what the group does** \$ **I think they're great!** \$ **I want to help**

To get to the righthand side of the chain may require **targeted communication**.

Targeting means making information available and accessible to specific audiences. Targeting allows you to use the resources you have to the most effective ends. It can help you to avoid wasting time and effort trying to communicate with groups which are less likely to respond to you.

Here are some of the audiences, identified in the workshops, as possible targets for your group:

Students (particularly environment courses); ethnic minorities; sympathetic organisations; retired; unemployed; young parents; white middle classes; single issue campaign groups; past members of other local Friends of the Earth groups; teachers; eccentrics; consumer groups; professions (to fulfil particular skill-based roles): council officers / councillors, health profession, engineers / consultants, solicitors, IT specialists.

Here are some of the places, identified in the workshops, for reaching these targets:

Street stalls; actions; events (schools, cycling, walks); local media; voluntary sector mailings (CSV and CVS); libraries; doctors' surgeries; churches; shops; religious institutions; railway stations; bus stops; colleges / schools / student unions; careers offices / jobcentres; community centres; cycle shops; pubs / bars / cafes; workplaces – local govt offices.

Here are some of the ways and styles, identified in workshops, for communicating with these targets:

Forms of Communication	Style of Communication
Newsletters / newsheets	Friendly / informal Balanced with professionalism: accurate, honest, concise, respectful, clean image. Keep it short and simple (unless they ask otherwise) Positive Plain English Use mix of visual and auditory: pictures, film, speech, music etc.
Conferences / exhibitions	
Newspapers	
Posters / displays	
Free local papers	
Local cable TV channels	
Talks to other local groups	
Website	
Powerpoint (e.g. the Introduction to Friends of the Earth, available on Community)	
Email	

Once newcomers are aware of you and interested, your group may still need to encourage their approach...

Stage 2: Encourage

Re-visiting your own motivations for joining a group

To get you thinking about why newcomers might be motivated to find you and get involved, it might help you to look through some of these motivations, raised by you and others in similar workshops. These are the sorts of things driving newcomers to your door, so keep them in mind.

Wanting to DO something; to work together; more than just giving money; a specific campaign interest/concern; circumstances change (more time, looking for new friends in new area etc); general interest in the environment; desire to meet like-minded people; desire to learn more about issues; felt inspired by a Friends of the Earth campaign; more autonomous than some other local networks; personal development.

Question: What do your prospective newcomers need to have found out in order to make the decision to come and find out more? How do you provoke their curiosity whilst also allaying their fears? The answer to this question will obviously depend on their motivation, which as illustrated by the brainstorm could be almost anything, so **be open minded**.

Here are some reasons that you and others came up with for **why you might be put off** from contacting a group, together with some ways that would **encourage you to turn up**.

What would put you off?	What would encourage you?
Venue too far away	Does your group cover a catchment of more than 10 mile radius? If so, may need to alternate meetings in different locations.
Poor accessibility to venue / Private venue / Unknown venue / no disabled facilities	Central, accessible, comfortable, clean, quiet, well known public venue.
No one to go with / Shy / Fear of not 'fitting in' Unclear expectations	Buddying system, newcomers welcomer, friendly tone with phone enquiries. Social events & public debates.
Inconvenient time of day / week	Rotate meeting days. Re run meetings (if very big group).
Afraid of going out at night	Organise to collect new members

Fear of getting over-involved / Daunted by scale of issues / I don't know enough, action isn't my sort of thing	Keep initial communications clear and simple, introduce members gradually to issues. Provide a range of ways for people to get involved
Sounds boring	Make communication as light and simple as possible - do not get into detail on <u>publicity material</u> , or <u>over phone</u> , unless requested.
Couldn't find out enough information / don't know what they do	Make generic info on group widely available in different forms (membership form, newsletter, website, posters, meeting invitation card, phone and email contacts).

Once your prospective newcomers feel welcome enough to come and find you, you'll now need to try to understand them and find something for them to do...

Stage 3: Welcome and engage

You may feel that getting people to meetings is not the problem, it's just that they never actually do anything! You may want to refer again here to the Why did You Join? Brainstorm as it is as relevant to welcoming and engaging members as it is to encouraging them to turn up in the first place.

First impressions count. Meetings are likely to leave a big impression on your newcomers. A handout is available on how to run good meetings.

Here are some key actions to take for newcomers although, as with the main stages of recruitment, you won't necessarily want to treat these as isolated stages in a sequence.

Welcome and Pace

Make sure a member of the group actually meets and greets all newcomers, perhaps a designated 'newcomers' person in the group does this. A good meeting room and meeting structure can be very important for people to relax and settle – worrying about a long complicated agenda whilst sitting in a cold echoey hall is not likely to make a good impression! Refreshments at the beginning or at some point also adds to the welcome. Although you need to welcome them, try to strike a balance here – don't overwhelm them with too much information or immediate requests on their time unless they specifically ask.

Register

Get a contact for them so that you can stay in touch / mail them a newsletter. This way, even if they don't come to the next meeting, they can still stay in touch with you. One good way of doing this is to have a book especially for this with clear columns for name, address, email, phone number etc; it's very important though to make it clear that this information will be kept secure and confidential.

Sign up

One good way of giving newcomers a starting point is to have a membership leaflet available with some basic information on on it and a subscription form. Even if they don't wish to join immediately, at least they then have the choice and it is clear you would value their support.

To find out more about the standard membership template see the details at the end of this worksheet.

Understand and utilise

As with all of the above, how to do this will depend on the type of person but a good starting point is to make sure you have some idea of their motivation for being there (see again the brainstorm Why did you join?) – what do they want out of being here? This may then lead on to their interests, aptitudes and capacities although it's important not to assume that just because they have skills and resources, they necessarily want to use them in this context – they may want a break! You could find out this sort of information through a combination of your newcomer talking with them and / or going through a short questionnaire designed to gather this sort of information.

One of the most common reasons for members not staying with a group is because they are not offered a way in which they are comfortable to contribute. Friends of the Earth is presently doing a lot of work on this but in the meantime you may also want to think for yourselves about how to offer a range of different ways for people to contribute to your group ranging from actions, to fundraising, to researching, to strategising, to public speaking, to design work, to letter writing, to just paying a monthly subscription; and don't forget they may want to do something outside of your monthly meetings.

If the group has a good structure and organisation it will be a lot easier to make a good impression. One thing which can help this is work planning, some tools for this are described in depth in *How to win: a guide to*

successful community campaigning and a summary sheet *How to campaign strategise*. Both documents are available on the Community site. <http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/> and as hard copies from Claudia Sartori on 020 7490 1555. You may find that the best way to ease a newcomer into the group is through having a designated 'newcomers person' in your group to guide them through this process and help them feel welcome, valued and paced with the group's work. In addition, to help you further, Friends of the Earth has designed a welcome pack for newcomers that provides some of these things in a paper form.

C) Conclusions

These are just tools for approaching the problem in an organised way. They are not a magic, universal solution: some may work for some groups, others may work for other groups. You may already have been able to identify a particular stage of the process that is letting you down more than the others, if not have a think about it – this might be a useful diagnostic tool.

The most important thing to realise is that, if you want to get an influx of newcomers, you will almost definitely need to **spend time** and **energy** looking at how you can do it, and then doing it. This is an excellent example of **sustainability**: by taking time and resources **now** to recruit continually to your group, you are investing in your group to make sure that others can enjoy campaigning in a healthy active group in the **future**.

Questions:

Here are a few questions you can use both as prompts in tackling your recruitment strategy and also as indicators of success in the months ahead. If you have other questions regarding recruitment please contact Claudia Sartori: lgresources@foe.co.uk, 020 7490 1555

How many new enquiries have you had to the group in the last year?

How many newcomers have you had in the last year?

How many newcomers have stayed in the last year?

How many of you think the main problem for your group is in stage 1, 2 or 3 (3 separate questions)

How many of you have meetings in public?

What sort of numbers do you have at your meeting: more than 3, more than 7, more than 10?

How long are your meetings: 1.5hrs, 2hrs?

Do you know about the Local Publicity Group materials? (website on this below)

What is the age range of your group (roughly)?

What sort of backgrounds do your active members have?

Is that profile intentional?

Useful materials for recruitment:

The materials referred to in this worksheet such as the membership leaflets, starter pack and posters are available through the Friends of the Earth Community website at the following internet address:

http://community.foe.co.uk/local_groups/running_your_own/resource/