

THE AMATEUR CULTURE AND VOLUNTEERING GUIDE

is a set of folders containing advice on how to handle challenges typically faced by volunteer programs and amateur arts associations.

The brochures in PDF format are available for downloading at:
www.amatorkultur.no

THE RECRUITMENT GUIDE

is published by The Amateur Culture Board in Bergen with financial support from Bergen Municipality. The text is based on experiences and input from member organisations of The Amateur Culture Board.

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RECRUITMENT

*creating access,
growth and renewal*



BERGEN
KOMMUNE



Amatørkulturrådet i Bergen

«WE KNOW that recruitment is important, but where shall we start?»

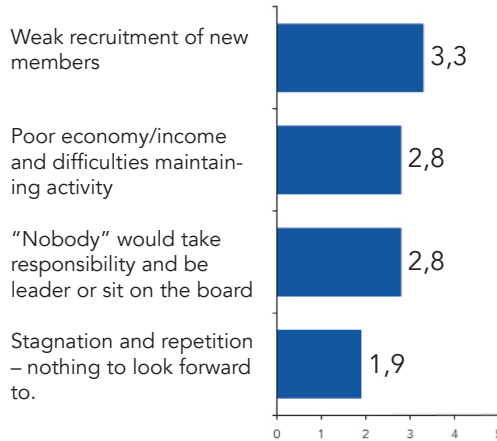
This guide is designed to help volunteer programmes, amateur arts associations, and other clubs and organisations recruit new members. Most organisations experience that recruitment is a major challenge. In fact, recruitment is often considered to be more difficult than securing financing and finding appropriate facilities.

«We started out as a mixed choir, but regrettably, we're on our way to turning into a women's choir...».

«We are struggling to find new members. Our members' average age is quite high....»

«Unfortunately, there are few of us left, and we hope for young enthusiasts to come and continue in our footsteps ...»

What are the biggest threats to your activity? Average values



«About halfway through choir practice, we serve supper: sandwiches, coffee and tea. Earlier, coffee and cookies were all that we had during the break, but the shared suppers make the practice so much more enjoyable. In fact, more people have been showing up. This way to socialise has brought us new members. There's a Norwegian saying, "No food and drink means no heroic deeds," which has proven itself to be true.»

«Given these experiences, we found out that the best way to recruit new members is the good old personal contact.»

Merely bringing up recruitment issues in board meetings will yield any result. In order to be successful, recruitment must remain an area of permanent focus, with room for regular adjustment and potential for renewal. However, creating a feasible recruitment plan is a formidable task.

This guide presents good recruitment as an activity based on the organisation's IDENTITY. A clear definition of identity is required before one can pick the right advertising and marketing methods.

Good recruitment starts at the point where we formulate what our organisation offers: Our message.

Once we have defined our identity and formulated our message, we proceed to the fine-tuning of our profile. What makes us different from everyone else? This is a reflection process resulting in a positive and credible statement. Further, capturing people's attention calls for communication and marketing skills.

Attracting new members is not only about numbers. A constant supply of fresh blood means a flow of new ideas and valuable experiences that will secure renewal and growth. Some members may be eager to serve on the board, thus breathing new life into your organisation.



«Be present on social media! Keep posting regular updates, so people know you're alive and active.»

«We have tried putting flyers in people's mailboxes with an invitation to a get-to-know-us evening, and the feedback has been positive.»

«We have started spending more time on Facebook, which we believe really works. We regularly post pictures from our performances, concert announcements, audio clips, and so on. Now it's just to sit tight and see if this works.»

How to kick off work on a recruitment plan?

The vast majority post on Facebook, targeting friends and acquaintances. Naturally, response rates and results vary. Very few have a recruitment plan in place, and even fewer have worked out a follow-up strategy. The mission statement lifted from your organisation's articles of association won't work.

Give the recruitment work a good start: Research the public image of your organisation. What do you look like to the outside world? How do the members' experiences relate to how your organisation is viewed by the general public?

Does our club project an image that prospected members would like to be associated with? If you answer YES, there is no need to worry about recruitment, and all you need to do is concentrate on increasing visibility.

A negative answer means you are facing issues to be solved. There's no point in trying to convince potential candidates that the way we are on the inside is nothing like what we look like to those outside. Self-improvement is a much easier road to take.

«For the past few years, we haven't prioritised recruitment. The numbers have been relatively stable, with approximately 450 members at any given time for quite a while. Our work is threefold: we publish an annual report and organise two meetings a year, combined with a lecture. Our members appear satisfied...»

Egil Ertresvaag –
**Bergen Historic
Society**

- **Who are we?**
- **What do we do?**
- **Where are we located?**
- **How do we run our activities?**

Once you have defined your identity, you are on your way towards being a sustainable organisation, ready to welcome the right members.

Ask current members for help finding catch phrases that would characterise your organisations in a favourable way - for instance, concise statements answering questions like "Membership – what's in it for me?" Research what is being said about your organisation and encourage your members to suggest good strategies to convince potential new members to give it a try.

Another way to conduct research is interviews with a few potential new members (your target group) on how they see your organisation, and what would be a compelling reason for them to join. Schools offering courses in communication and marketing will most likely be happy to put you in touch with students who could be helpful in setting up a survey.

Armed with sufficient knowledge of your self-image and of how you are seen by the general public, you can now proceed to analysing these differences in perception.

«Indoor and outdoor concerts in the local community is how we make ourselves visible.»

«So far, our top recruitment strategy has been word-of-mouth and involving friends and acquaintances. Our relative obscurity in the music community is our weakness. We've been working to overcome this by organising joint concerts with other choirs and orchestras, and this is how several new members have found their way in.»

Your members need to pool their efforts to work out a strategy for bringing you “in tune” with the public.

A few examples of “who we are”-statements:

- **The majority of our members are in their sixties or seventies.**
- **No audition necessary. Everyone is welcome!**
- **We mostly sing traditional Norwegian folk music.**
- **Most of us used to dance in our childhood and our youth. Now that we are adults, we wish to hold on to the joy of dancing.**
- **Our school marching band unites students from 6 to 18 years old.**

Following up with a SWOT analysis might be useful.

A SWOT analysis employs key words to describe the organisation’s Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O) and Threats (T). Here is a sample result of a SWAT process:

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A 30-year-long historyWarm atmosphereSufficient fundingWell-known in the local community	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Few menAll members are 50 years or olderLack of new activities
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Merge with other organisationsCooperate with professional performersFind better premisesParticipate in more events!	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Members quitIncomes decrease“No-one” wants to serve on the board

«In the beginning, we spent a lot of time finding performers for our Knøsetopp Festival. However, in the past few years our list of contributors has practically been writing itself, and we keep receiving enquiries from many interested performers. We ascribe this partially to the festival’s growing popularity, but our “charming” identity definitely plays a role as well.»

Hilde V. Brynjulfsen
Knøsetopp festival

In most cases one realises that it is necessary to start working on improving the relationships between members internally. A better social climate leads to gradual change and helps to attract new members.

Some members, on the other hand, may find that these changes do not fit their individual preferences. Here, one must appeal to all members to prioritise the common long-term interests in favour of short-term interests and demands of individuals.

If member list shows no growth or renewal, a review of the existing traditions is in order, followed by decisions on what one should stick to and what must be replaced.

An open debate on whether the organisation should raise their ambition level and strive towards higher goals, is advisable. However, growing ambitions might get the organisation to lose about as many of "old" members as the number of the newly recruited. Higher ambitions also mean increasing costs, longer and more intense practice and rehearsals, not to mention higher demands on the individual members.

The time for asking questions on marketing strategy and the appropriate communication channels to connect to prospective members comes only after you have decided on measures to make the organisation more attractive, and whether one is willing to go ahead with the changes.

Recruitment work is about:

- * Defining the target group
- * Analysing the organisation's profile and identity, making adjustments where necessary
- * Choosing the right marketing channels
- * Keeping in mind that face-to-face communication works best!

«What should you say to people? Tell them about why you are in the choir, what you are rehearsing now, what your future plans are, and why you think this is just the right club for your conversation partner to join. Invite them to an open practice session.»

«Previously, we used to spend a good deal of resources on recruiting campaigns involving printed posters and newspaper ads, with satisfactory results. In the past few years the same tactic has yielded zero response.»

«The effectiveness of communication channels is changing so fast. Facebook posts receive fewer likes, and fewer users click the "interested" button under event announcements.»

Choosing the right marketing channels:

Your Facebook page must be open to everyone, not “members only.” Keep posting pictures, videos, mission statements, meeting schedules, invitations to events, contact information, updates on membership dues and so on. Members should share event invitations with their Facebook friends, and encourage them to share the posts further.

Make sure that The Amateur Culture Board, the Culture Office, and the regional and national associations have access to up-to-date information on your organisation. People who have just moved to the area or those at a “beginner” level often search online for cultural activities they would like to engage in.

Probably, the best recruitment opportunity is securing wide exposure to the general public. Prospective members are easy to find at festivals, fairs, in shopping centres and public spaces.

In youth and children’s organisations, the adult leaders should enlist the help of the older children who have been there for a few years, in recruitment work. Instead of using big words like “identity,” “profile” and “target group,” ask the children to suggest ways to become even “more cool,” and how to impress other children who do not know about your organisation yet.

When performing before an audience, be aware of the overall presentation and how one comes across (your profile). Prospective members need to see something they can identify with.

At events, printed programmes or information flyers come in handy. Typically, they will contain a summary of your profile, your identity, and a welcoming message to all prospective members.

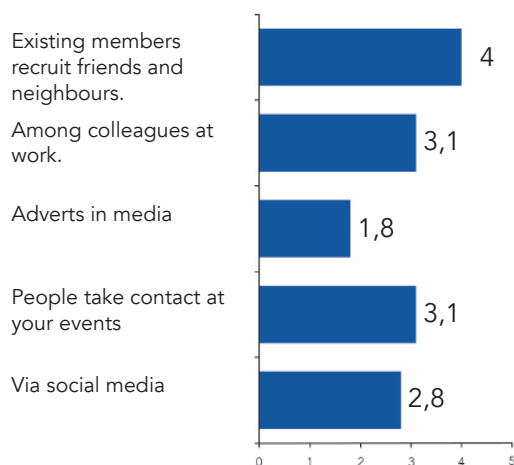
If a certain category, such as, for example, young men, is under-represented in your organisation, the few members in this category should receive as much positive exposure as possible.

«We are a relatively small choir and high turnover makes us vulnerable. Find out what kind of singers the choir needs most and start searching. Now is not the time to be shy. The task calls for leaving your comfort zone of family and friends, and reaching out.»

«Who can you contact? Do you have a colleague who used to sing in a choir? A music enthusiast of a neighbour? Does the conductor know any former members who might appreciate an invitation? Let your imagination run wild!»

How do you recruit new members?

Average values



- Organisations with an aging membership base should use every single opportunity for exposure for the youngest participants.
- When “googling,” or searching online, put “recruitment” and the relevant search word in quotation marks, as in “recruitment choir,” “theatre recruitment.” Scroll past the ads for recruitment services and training programs in the private sector, and you will discover articles and posts from organisations that have successfully recruited new members.
- What kind of education and background do your members have? Does anyone work in marketing, communications, HR or change management in the private sector? Work on identity, profiles and marketing is much easier when one has a chance to ask a professional.
- Your regional or national association may also have a collection of recruitment advice. The Norwegian Marching Band Association has put in a lot of work into recruiting children and teenagers. Show up at a meeting of The Amateur Culture Board or on the municipal level. Chances are you may hear good advice and engage in networking.

«People-to-people interaction is the common denominator for all organisations planning for a long life and continuous development. It is all based on mutual trust and respect, on shared interests and knowledge. Do you know someone who is good at accounting? Someone who could help write meeting minutes, grant applications and reports? A capable problem solver? Get in touch, invite people to your organisation and show what you do. Your local community is home to more potential contributors than you can imagine. Some tasks require a day's work, others might stretch over a slightly longer period of time, and someone might be interested on being elected to serve on a board or a committee.»

Ada Freng - **Memoir**

