

## Membership Message - Workshop Wednesdays - March 10, 2021

Last week we discussed ideas on how we can keep our membership as strong as possible during the remainder of this pandemic.

Today we're going to concentrate on the health of our clubs and how to welcome those prospective members that come through our doors, providing the proper environment so they just HAVE to become members. Remember - Everyone wants to be part of a winning team! And you, as leaders, are responsible for making your club shine!

Have you ever walked into a room where you know no one and no one even acknowledged you? I've had this happen and it made me just want to slip out the door when no one was looking and never come back.

Why do people visit a garden club? They come with someone they know, they come because they heard about this organization and they are curious, or they come for a special program or community gathering. No matter the size of your club, you need to have a welcoming committee - it can be one person, that's all you need! It's that person's responsibility to greet a guest and make them feel welcome! They need to find out a little about them - why they came, who they might have come with, how did they hear about you? Find out enough so that they can be introduced to the club at the beginning of the meeting. If the member they came with is new themselves, or if they came alone, assign them a mentor right then to sit by them and answer any questions they might have during the meeting.

Hand them a guest packet. It doesn't need to be anything fancy. It should include a list of your current and maybe some of your past projects of which you are proud, upcoming programs, a membership application and how to apply, and contact information in case they have questions.

Ask them to sign in your guest logbook. That is a very easy way to make sure you get their phone number and email address.

Provide an agenda, if possible, for your meetings. Send this out a few days early and you'll be assured of more involvement from your membership since they will have had time to think about items that will be covered in the meeting.

Have program handouts available, but give them out at the end of the meeting. You don't want your members reading and not paying attention to the speaker.

Make sure you have a good educational program at each meeting, and good refreshments, too. Why do we take the time to come to meetings? We come to learn, to eat, and to have fun - and maybe conduct a little bit of business if we have time!

Keep your business meetings to a manageable length of time to keep your members engaged. You don't want Mary Lou nodding off and falling out of her chair! If your business meetings tend to take too much time, try having your Executive Committee meet before the meeting and bring recommendations to the membership on more complicated issues that might take a lot of debate.

Have fun! Break up the seriousness of the meeting by having fun games or a contest. Break up into smaller groups, preferably with those members that don't know each other as well. Give away a prize or award.

Call on your members - ask for their comments and let them know this is THEIR club and you want to hear what they have to say. Of course, if you're a large club you can't call on everyone, but you can select a few different people at each meeting. Ask specific chairmen to report on your ongoing projects.

Make sure you call on your guest to say a few words about how they liked the meeting and what interested them. Let them know you care about them.

Have a contingency plan in place to deal with agitated members. Of course, you want to hear opinions from your members, but no one wants to listen to someone who is out of control or behaving impolitely. Everyone should share respect for each other, and it's up to the club's leaders to enforce that. Robin has shared ideas with you - there are quite a few ways this can be handled. Your leaders should learn a bit of Robert's Rules of Order to help maintain control when needed. It's best to be ready and know how you're going to deal with any potential problems before they occur.

During social time, make sure the mentor personally introduces your guest to other members that they think might have something in common with them.

Ask them if they have any questions. Let them know you'd like to have them come back. Call them right before your next meeting or function and personally invite them.

Now hopefully you have a few ideas on how to treat your guests that you hadn't thought of. Show that same concern and respect for your new members and your existing members, and you will be sure to have a strong, growing club. Remember, everyone wants to be a member of a winning team, and that's just what your club will be!

Next week we'll focus on how to find those new potential members that haven't yet walked through your doors.

If I can help you any further, please let me know.

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