

GAINING NEW RING MEMBERS

Rings are organized on a local basis and have a distinct personality based on historical magic activities, and the interests and talents of current members. However, common to all Rings is the fact that the lifeblood of the Ring is its members and having an active and committed membership is essential to its success.

New members are continually needed. It is a fact that some members will leave and others reduce their participation. Members move and are lost for a variety of reasons including job transfers and retirements. Others experience major changes in their lives, which affect their ability to continue to participate or magic may just no longer fit their interests. Members' deaths create losses too. Your Ring needs to have a steady stream of new members to replace those losses or eventually the group will shrink, stagnate and could ultimately deteriorate and fall apart.

Small Rings may need new members just to have sufficient members to qualify to be an active Ring. However, for both the small and large Rings new members usually bring an enthusiasm, energy and new approaches to the club that are extremely positive to the organization. A new superior performer or charismatic leader may be just that next member who the Ring finds that will take the Ring to a higher level.

Yes, locating, contacting and welcoming prospective Ring members are critically important tasks for every Ring. Each Ring needs to initiate a commitment and effort to find new members. It is an effort that is needed, not just once or twice a year, but one that is an ongoing process.

This brochure offers suggestions on approaches to source new members including information about some items that the I.B.M. supplies to assist in this. It discusses ideas that Rings have used successfully to be sure that prospective new members are made welcome and quickly become involved with the Ring.

Use this brochure as a guide to lead a discussion at your next meeting of the Ring or its Board to see what you can do to increase the number of new members. Develop a membership plan, name a membership coordinator and set some objectives and goals soon.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR GROWTH

Put Someone in Charge

Make increasing the Ring's membership a regular, and dynamically active club effort. Appoint a "New Member Coordinator" to manage a list, receive new names and arrange for frequent contacts with prospects. The Coordinator may be the Secretary, but in a large Ring the assignment could be to another person who can devote some extra effort to it. This Coordinator becomes the point of contact for all new member activities.

After reading and discussing this brochure, list some specific objectives or approaches that you wish implement in your membership plan. Then with careful thought, set realistic goals for membership growth for the year. Expect regular reports of progress from the New Member Coordinator at your Ring business meetings.

Use a Regular, Accessible Meeting Site

If possible settle on a single meeting site for members and prospects to meet, a location that is easily accessible by personal auto and public transportation where available. That site also should include facilities conducive to magic performance quiet, uninterrupted surroundings, and even a stage or platform if you can find it. Tables for close-up and/or clinics are a must. A television set and a video player would be a real bonus for showing performance and learning tapes.

If the Ring's meeting location remains the same every month, and time and date are standardized, members and prospects learn to expect this and easily remember where and when to attend Ring meetings. Changing meeting locations may be exciting. However, it can become confusing and frustrating for many

people and may lead to the eventual loss of promising prospective club members.

MeetingTime

Choose a meeting time that best fits your Ring member's life styles. Fixing a standard time and day of the week and staying with them will enhance attendance. Some things to consider are members' work schedules, both magic and other, Ring before and after meeting activities, and average members' commuting time.

DevelopaLeadList

Successful sales people use this approach with great success. Expect your Ring members to supply new names to the New Member Coordinator for follow-up. That lead list becomes a fluid, working document, and should include every prospective member's name, mailing address, telephone number, fax and e-mail contacts, too. You'll want to know where the contact originated (from whom or where) and the date you first identified this prospective member. If you keep this list manually, on cards or on paper, allow plenty of space to jot in actions taken and the results of various contacts. Use this list to track various efforts to bring this person into the Ring. Record on it the steps such as personal contacts, phone calls, and mailings of Ring-related materials. Your lead list keeps accurate records of who's invited and how many persons actually are joining the Ring. It can indicate how effective your efforts are.

KeepProspectsInformed

Getting prospects who are interested requires more than just a list of names. These prospective club members must know who you are, where and when the group meets, and feel welcomed. A regular Ring newsletter can serve this purpose. Also effective is a postcard reminder every month. A personal phone call assures that all potential members get a personal contact several days in advance. Each time they are called, tell them how important they are to the

Ring's continued success and invite them to attend your group's upcoming meeting.

A dynamic, up-to-date Website also strengthens your Ring's visibility, and helps keep both prospects and members informed. Also consider creating a 'New Member Packet,' containing the Ring's history, a list of annual events, a copy of the current Constitution and Bylaws, a membership list, and other information and material which explains what this club is all about.

Ongoing communication is a key. Multiple approaches to contacting prospects (personal, phone calls, mailing, newsletters, and e-mail) should be used on a regular basis. Ring 160 in New Zealand has had a lot of success using the telephone tree. It gets the message circulated very quickly, is inexpensive, takes little time, and spreads the workload by involving lots of members. All of these contacts and extra effort are important. They show that you really care and want new members.

FINDING AND RECRUITING PROSPECTS

Where do you find new members? The simple answer is "Everywhere!" So Ring members should always be ready to promote and give out information about the Ring. However, like the successful fisherman who always fishes in that part of the lake where the most fish are, Rings will also be most successful if they make a strong effort to find prospects where they are likely to be. That includes places linked to magic such as, magic shops, magic show audiences and magic classes.

However no matter where the prospects are located having attractive printed information about the club readily available for distribution will be very useful. Every member needs to have a supply of these brochures on hand, to distribute as the occasion arises whether it is to an individual who expresses an interest or to a

magic show audience or persons attending some other public magic function.

Brochures

The I.B.M. International Office offers color brochures that promote the I.B.M. and list the advantages of becoming a member. These can be personalized with the Ring's own information. That added information could be as simple as listing the New Member Coordinator with their name, address, phone and fax number and e-mail address. However, the Ring could go further and insert its own tri-fold flyer into the I.B.M.'s brochure.

This piece should list specific promotional information about the Ring. It should be a selling piece, telling about Ring meeting activities, lectures and should entice persons to join. It should also include when and where the Ring meets. It could include the pertinent contact addresses and list the Ring's Website if it has one. Get these brochures into locations that have regular contact with prospective Ring members and replenish supplies as needed.

PartnerWithMagicShops

Keep area magic shops aware of your interest in new members. Ask shop proprietors to pass along a brochure to customers who express even a little curiosity about your Ring. Houston's Ring 39 uses a "Take One" display in the shops, with a supply of Ring business cards, containing contact information, right on the counter. Dealers also can drop one of these business cards into each purchaser's bag at the store. Keep dealers supplied with brochures and cards, since these printed items can be a front line source of interested contacts.

In return for the dealer's help offer to hold dealer nights at a Ring meeting. Here the dealers can tell about their shops and demonstrate and sell their latest effects, books, videotapes, etc. This helps cement a positive relationship.

I.B.M. “Take One” display holders are now available for distribution to dealers. If your Ring has a magic shop in the area that does not have one of I.B.M.’s holders and is willing to place it in their store, request one from the International Headquarters. The display unit and a supply of pamphlets will be sent to your Ring so you can add your Ring information and deliver it to the magic shop.

Consider posting Ring information brochures in other areas that magicians and Ring prospective members might frequent. This might be as specific as shops and meeting places for allied variety arts groups or as broad as public libraries.

MagicClasses

If one or more of the Ring’s magicians and/or the local magic dealer is conducting magic classes have them or one of the Ring officers take a few minutes to promote the I.B.M. and hand out I.B.M. brochures and Ring and I.B.M. membership applications.

Many Rings have found that conducting periodic classes as a Ring activity is an excellent way of bringing in new members. Almost all graduates of magic classes are excellent member prospects.

AtPublicRingShows

When the Ring presents a show, promote your club from the stage and invite those interested to contact a named person for more information. Put an ad in the program too. Ring 41 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin announced its “Youth Workshop” from the stage during a community magic show. Young people were invited to participate in the workshop, and eventually, to join the Ring. As people respond, add their names to your “lead list” and continually follow up.

AtRingMember’sS hows

Ask club members to mention Ring activities during their own shows. Consider developing a simple announcement for members to say during their shows so they will have the correct information.

Also provide them with some copies of the Ring or the I.B.M. promotional pieces or at least the Ring business card that lists the contact persons and information about the what, where, and when of regular meeting dates.

Websites

The I.B.M. Website receives over 2000 requests per year for membership information. The I.B.M. Headquarters Office handles these. However, Rings have an opportunity to have some of these requests go directly to their new member contact by having an e-mail address or Ring Website listed under your Ring's section of the I.B.M.'s site. Contact the Website at: <http://www.magician.org> and click on the tab "Local Groups, Rings" for further instruction. If your Ring is already listed, double-check to see that the contact information is current.

Many Rings do have their own Websites. As computers are used more commonly at home and in the workplace they can not only keep the Ring's own members updated, but they will also keep prospective members informed of meeting information. Check examples of other Rings' web pages by linking to them through I.B.M. home page. Note, if your Website is to be really effective to source members link it to other magic Websites, and your local community activity Website as well as Internet search programs.

CommunityEvents

Ring 117, West Palm Beach, Florida, decided to get involved in the area's "Adopt -a-Highway" Program. Four times a year, members clean up a 2-mile stretch of a local highway. But all year long, a sign is prominently posted along that road naming I.B.M. Ring 117 as the group responsible for its care.

Many Rings also help with or hold charity events. Often this affords the Ring an opportunity to promote itself and inform the

public if they are really interested in magic to contact the Ring for further information.

Put announcements for open meetings in neighborhood and regional newspapers too. Many smaller community papers have a section with free listing of dates and times of local club meetings.

Several Rings use Magic Week in October to their advantage. They put on special magic displays at a library or other public places to promote magic and in turn the Ring by placing their promotional material with the display. Others put on shows or magic demonstrations and get proclamations about "Magic Week" from the local government and use this as a promotional item to get known and find prospective members through the local press.

PressReleases

When your Ring receives an award or individual members are recognized for their achievements and accomplishments, submit a story to the local press. If the Ring is involved with activities, like the Healing of Magic program, publicize this in local papers. Always include member contact information in each story. Editors of community papers always welcome well-written releases and stories of genuine public interest. Again, remember when publicizing member accomplishments and Ring events include that contact information.

I.B.M. YouthProgram

The I.B.M. has placed renewed emphasis on its youth program. It has added many features to its programs designed specifically to be of value to young magicians.

Through its program Magic Youth International, there are now special forums at the International Convention and columns in *The Linking Ring*. There also is a new magazine, *Top Hat*, just for Junior members.

While some Rings have always had an excellent youth program, actively recruiting young magicians, others have just recently instigated special emphasis and new approaches within their Rings. While details of the I.B.M. Youth Program can be found elsewhere, any Ring seriously interested in gaining new members must consider that having a strong youth program ultimately pays off in a stronger and larger adult program.

MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Make a Good First Impression

Remember in making a good first impression it's those first few minutes that count the most. If prospects attend your Ring meeting for the first time and discover no planning, constant bickering and arguing, topped by drawn-out, dull business meetings, they'll be turned off.

Meetings must be well planned and paced, with less time spent on business and more time and energy spent talking, learning, doing and seeing the magic. Many Rings, including Ring 90 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, develop themes for every meeting at the start of each year. By doing this members and prospects alike know what is going to happen and all are prepared to participate in the magic. Isn't that what your magic club really is all about?

Each Member To Greet Every Prospective Member

Put the cliques and exclusiveness aside. Provide time for each and every Ring member attending to personally welcome all the newcomers. Muncie, Indiana's Ring 310 has had lots of success using name badges to help break the ice. Have every member, at some time during the meeting time, shake hands and introduce himself/herself to the prospect. Urge them to focus and listen to what the prospect says about magic, and their area(s) of special interests. This will make that initial and future conversations much easier.

Make People Feel Comfortable

Because a magic club shares secrets, it is naturally exclusive. When any new person shows up, there is some psychology at work. It's a matter of trust. So, when a stranger tries to join any unknown group of people, it can be a daunting task. Put these new people at ease. Make an effort to relax that tension and invite prospective Ring members to join in during the meeting, give opinions, suggest an approach, and apply their skills and talents to an upcoming club task.

Involve Every Prospective Member

Encourage prospective members to perform; invite them onto your work force or committee for a forthcoming meeting or public event. As persons new to your club, they can bring a refreshing, outsider's perspective to events and activities that other Ring members take for granted.

New people must be welcomed and encouraged. Use them, or lose them! If you don't use these people now, expect to lose them quickly! They will feel unwanted. However, equally important is to thank them for their assistance, performance and other efforts. Positive feedback is important to all members but exceptionally so to new ones.

Make Meetings Fun

What makes a magic meeting fun? First, it's the magic itself! So emphasize the prime reason people attend these meetings: seeing, doing, learning, and talking about magic. Whatever the officers can do to provide more of that activity helps. Sometimes simple competitions among performers can do it. Sometimes, planning lots to do and pacing it helps.

Second, it's situations in which participants enjoy themselves and each other. Remember that the prospective Ring member attending your meeting for the first time tends to judge the whole group by what goes on during that first encounter. They are likely to come

back if the experience is a memorable and positive one. If they see it as anything else, you've lost them.

BeBriefOnBusiness

Promise prospective members that the business portion of every meeting will be kept brief. Then, keep that promise. However, be sure to announce to all members what the next meetings are about.

Keep personal clashes and bickering outside of the meeting. Remember that this first experience has to be fun.

Teach,Learn,ShowandTalkMagic

Magic clubs continue to exist and grow because they bring together persons who like seeing magic, doing magic, learning magic, and talking magic. Plan each regular Ring meeting to include opportunities for everyone attending to experience some of each. Too many clubs forget that Rings exist for members to see, do and learn magic.

Plan every meeting with structured activities offering each of these opportunities. "Everyone performs" makes a good meeting motto and helps the interaction of and the dynamics of the group. Assure that everyone who attends presents something whether it's a new effect or routine, a discussion of a piece of old apparatus, a move they are working on, or a review of a magic related book or video they have just finished.

"Everyone performs" meetings applies to every prospective member, too. Invite them and expect them to participate in some way. If not, they quickly become just onlookers, or silent observers, and not the active involved participants your Ring needs. When prospects perform, provide them with positive reinforcement on their presentations. Include constructive ideas and suggestions for improvement. Honest criticism usually is always welcomed.

If your Ring is one of those really big ones, you still need to involve prospective members in some way. Otherwise, they can easily get lost in the crowd and forgotten. Consider a “buddy” approach, which links the prospect with another member who is handling some specific responsibility at that meeting. The “extra hand” should be welcomed by everyone, and the prospective member gets something important to do besides just sitting and watching.

Before and After Meetings

Do your Ring members and prospective members have fun before a meeting starts? If the answer is yes, you’ve have introduced a vital element leading toward more successful, and enjoyable meetings. Look for pre-meeting activities to stimulate enthusiasm, excitement and enjoyment. Lots of ways exist to do this: drawings, demonstrations, showing a new videotape, or even simple games and devices that force people to meet and talk to each other. Meeting planners call these “ice breakers,” and they can be used to establish an atmosphere of heightened excitement for the planned meeting.

And what happens after this meeting concludes? Is there time for simple, face-to-face chatting about the meeting itself? Do you provide opportunities just for one-on-one socialization? Do members and prospects stay around to talk among themselves? Do they go out together to a restaurant? All these after-meeting activities can add to the overall fun and enjoyment.

THE FOLLOW-UP

Follow Up and Answer Questions

What happens later on, after the meeting is over, should be planned, also. Consider appointing an individual “member mentor” to follow-up with each prospective member. Urge them to contact the prospect a day or two after the meeting for a “skull session” on

the meeting itself. “Did you enjoy it?” “What did you like best?”
What should we do to make it better next time?”

The prime purpose of a follow-up contact is to further demonstrate that this Ring and its members really are interested in the prospect. The intent is also to resolve any negative issues that have come to mind during and immediately following that first meeting.

Explain the Benefits of Membership

Potential members must realize what they can get from being in the Ring. Remind them that they not only are joining a local group, but as a member of the I.B.M. they become part of the largest magic organization in the world. That means access to ideas, to *The Linking Ring* magazine, the annual convention, and thousands of other people throughout the world sharing a common interest in magic.

Active membership in a local Ring also carries benefits. These are activities, friendships and learning opportunities. Regular meeting attendance serves as a stimulus, a motivation to do more, to learn more, and to become a more effective member of both the Ring and the International Brotherhood of Magicians.

Make Them Feel Wanted

Convince every prospective member that they are wanted. Show them that you and the officers want their input, need their insight and ideas, and relish their presence and participation at Ring meetings. Be sincere!

Ask what they want to do as a member. Are they interested in performing, or can they better serve backstage? Can they develop or provide a simple pre-meeting workshop or clinic? During the next meeting, can they talk about a book they’re reading, or demonstrate an effect or move that’s causing them trouble?

The purpose of this portion of the follow-up is to obtain a commitment to participate during the next meeting. This approach should convince them that their presence is important; they have something important to offer. Also, it commits the prospective member to attending your Ring's next meeting.

Some Rings Use Incentives

Some Rings offer some extra incentives to new members. For example, Milwaukee's Ring 41 used an attractive offer to sign up new members. I.B.M. members who join the Ring in the year's fourth quarter do so at very special dues rate. Membership then runs to the end of this year and through the following year a total of 15 months. The Ring gains a new member right away, and that member joins and participates immediately.

Albany, Oregon's Ring 238 underwrites part of the Ring and National dues for junior members. This way, young people otherwise not able to get involved, may join both the Ring and I.B.M., and actively participate.

Add Them to Regular Contact Lists

Whatever methods you normally use to inform members about the club's next meeting (newsletter, postcard or phone) add each prospective member's name to that list and include him or her as if they are members already. Treat them as regular Ring members plus that personal follow-up by your "mentor member" assigned to that member candidate.

This "member mentor" should call as the next meeting date approaches. The purpose is to continue affirming your Ring's interest in this prospective member, and to remind them about the forthcoming meeting's date, time and location. Be sure the potential member has a way to get to the meeting. Offer to drive them with you, if you think this would be helpful.

Following these steps continues to show a potential member that you and the Ring truly are interested in their continued participation in the club. This approach also tries to address any reasons or “excuses” that might interrupt continued and regular involvement in the Ring and its activities.

Help Then Qualify for Membership

Many Rings have a requirement that potential members qualify for regular membership through a performance and/or regular attendance. So far, these notes address only the attendance portion of this membership expectation.

Members of Ring 2 in Youngstown, Ohio invite prospective members to begin their initiation process after attending three meetings. A sponsor is named to help each applicant along the way; a mentor is identified for each of them to help prepare for the performance portion of this process.

It’s never easy to stand before peers to make a presentation. That experience may be the most difficult kind of performance. Recognizing this built-in hurdle, the prospect’s “member mentor” can be helpful in dispelling these fears. They should explain the performance requirements in detail, and coach the prospective member as they prepare for this presentation. Emphasize the basic purpose of this requirement, and the length of performance expected.

Help your prospective member to do well, and to have a good time while making their presentation. Help to put them at ease and aid in making them feel comfortable during this entire process. Then acknowledge their achievement and provide positive reinforcement when they complete their presentation.

Remember that magicians are people too! And often the friendships developed helping those new magicians will be special ones that will last a lifetime and will be cherished by the giver and the receiver.

Appendix

The I.B.M. offers the items listed to assist Rings in recruiting new members. These are available from the I.B.M. Headquarters Office. Write, phone, fax or e-mail your requests to: International Brotherhood of Magicians, 11155 South Towne Square, Suite C, St. Louis, MO 63123-7823; Phone 314-845-9200; Fax 314-847-9220 or via e-mail at, office.magician.org.

- Tri-fold membership applications. These can be used as a stand-alone item or used with a “Take One” display holder.
- Color brochures promoting the I.B.M. These can be used as a stand-alone item or used with a “Take One” display holder.
- “Take One” display holders to place in magic shops and other very high traffic areas for potential magicians.
- A companion brochure to this one, *Retaining Your Ring Members*, that focuses on specific issues of meeting members’ expectations from your Ring and maintaining their involvement in Ring activities.
- Additional Brochures that help Rings conduct interesting meetings and stay in contact with current and prospective members include:
 - *Ideas & Activities For Ring Meetings*
 - *Ring Newsletters Tips and Guidelines*
 - *Ring Scribes’ Guidelines for The Linking Ring*
- The I.B.M. Website provides Rings the opportunity to list a key contact person for and information about their Ring including a hyperlink to their Ring homepage if they have one. Contact <http://www.magician.org> and click on the tab “Local Groups, Rings” to see examples.