

Guidance on Opportunities: A Culture that Welcomes New Engagers

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Individuals – our members and supporters -- are the life-blood of the League of Women Voters! All of us started out as brand new members, looking in from the outside on an unfamiliar and sometimes intimidating organization. With so many new individuals coming to the League now, it seemed like a good time to reflect on how we are welcoming new individuals into the League and to share some best practices.

Borrowing from the Canadian Society of Association Executives website, here are some simple reminders, including some very basic best practices:

1. Greet new members.

This is fairly basic, but many Leagues don't provide any kind of personalized welcome. There are many ways to welcome new members: connecting with a welcome phone call, email or hand-written note, giving a shout-out in your newsletter, or inviting them to participate in a mentorship program and/or a special reception/orientation.

2. Introduce them.

Invite new members to be profiled in the newsletter, introduce them at in-person events, and connect them with another member who could help them with a need they have identified in the welcome call.

3. Educate new members on the value of membership.

Often people join a group for a particular program or service, not realizing how many other opportunities are afforded by membership. A session providing an overview of the League's programs and volunteer opportunities can be invaluable to newcomers - both in engaging them and helping them maximize the value of their membership investment.

4. Engage through diverse volunteer opportunities.

Volunteering is a great way to get to know other members, and it is of great value to the League. Members learn a lot about the League by volunteering, and as understanding grows so does commitment and engagement. The more varied the opportunities – in terms of skill sets, time required and location – the more members will get involved. Does your League have a volunteer opportunities page on their website?

5. Ask newcomers for help.

Some members will actively seek out opportunities to get involved, but there are many others who will help if asked. When speaking to new members, always ask them to volunteer. This is a great opportunity to retool your "elevator speech." Can you talk about some of the League's recent accomplishments and pivot to ask them to help with the League's next goal?

6. Be strategic in including new members in events.

Make sure there are attendees who will keep an eye out for first time attendees and make them feel welcome. It can be very hard for a newcomer to connect with peers or meet specific people in a crowd; having a buddy system or registration list in advance can help. Members are more likely to return if they get what they want the first time. Some people are more comfortable attending an event as a newcomer if they have a structured role at least part of the time, so

encourage new members to volunteer as well.

7. Be strategic about welcoming new members.

Ask new members what they want. What were their goals in coming to a League event? Help them achieve these goals by directing them to the correct programs, introducing them to the contacts they need and providing opportunities they seek. Measure your success through conversations, surveys and new member participation rates.

8. Ensure inclusivity.

Newcomers should be able to get involved in all programs and services and be recognized from the start. New members have expertise too! Help them to understand the League jargon and culture. Tips on [ways](#) to engage them are available on www.lwv.org.

9. Make it easy.

Send reminders about meetings and events. Make it easy to volunteer or register with online sign-up sheets. Be flexible!

League Spotlight: LWV of the Fairfax Area, Virginia

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area has experienced a big growth in membership in the past few months. They are making their League welcoming by:

1. Maximizing their newsletter, with information, volunteer opportunities and acknowledgement of new members;
2. Sending hand-written notes to new members and getting them connected with leaders in their part of the county;
3. Hosting new member orientations and training opportunities;
4. Posting volunteer sign-ups online and providing a range of volunteer opportunities; and
5. Sending weekly email communications to all members and having active social media channels.



Source: www.facebook.com/lwvfairfax

**Bulleted list based on [9 Ideas for Welcoming New Members into Your association](#)