

GETTING TO YES OR HOW TO ASK FOR MEMBERSHIP

3-STEP FORMULA

1. Know your local League
2. Learn something about your prospective member
3. Ask for the membership

Step 1

In order to sell the League you have to know a few things about your local League. You should know your League's particular strengths and unique qualities. Here are some things that are important.

1. What are your League successes and how do they benefit your community or state?
2. Know your League history, financial standing, officers, and policies.
3. Talk to your fellow members. 'Why did they join? What do they personally get out of their League membership?
4. What personal benefits do you get from membership?

Why is this information important? It helps you speak confidently about your League. It helps you answer questions easily. It helps to gain the confidence of your prospective member.

Step 2

Learning as much as you can about your prospective member helps you relate what the League has to offer to the interests and needs of your prospective member.

The best way to get information is to ask for it. Let your prospective member talk and you listen.

Here's what you need to know:

1. What community, region or state interests does s/he have?
2. What other organizations does s/he belong to?
3. Does s/he have time to get involved or become active?
4. What are his/her hobbies? What kind of job does s/he have? What are his/her special skills?

These are the kinds of things you need to know in order to evaluate whether or not s/he might be receptive to membership. Some of the things we learned from the survey of a members and non-members can be compared to your prospective member. Remember the main reasons members joined:

1. To get information and/or learn about the community. Has your prospective member expressed interest in knowing more about the community? Or has s/he expressed concern about some aspect of the community in which the League might get involved?
2. To be involved in voter education, voter registration or the democratic process. Has your prospective member expressed interest in any of these areas?

Does your prospective member belong to any other policy oriented, multi-issue organizations; such as Common Cause, NOW, or People for the American Way?

Does your prospective member have any time to volunteer?

Step 3

Relate the League's activities directly to the interests of your prospective members. In other words, tell them what's in it for them. What is your League doing that would be of interest to your prospective member? Tell how League membership can benefit her/him. Concentrate on the prospect not on you or your League. You may also want to back up your information about the League with printed materials, articles from the newspaper and similar materials.

The next step is to ask for the membership. Approach every prospect from his or her interest. There is no good reason why prospective members should join just because you want them to. There is a much greater likelihood of them joining if they see a personal benefit in doing so.

Sometimes your prospective member will throw up a protective armor of resistances. Meet these resistance head-on, showing respect for each one. Just because s/he offers objections—even criticisms—doesn't mean s/he will not join. When this occurs, don't rush to answer. Spend a very short time answering a resistance, such as 30 seconds for each one. Then focus your prospective member's attention back on the positive reason for joining.

All these steps take time and don't necessarily have to be completed in the same conversation. Just remember the three steps:

1. Know your League
2. Learn about your prospective member
3. Ask for the membership

NOW GO GET 'EM!!

(Adapted from Cuyahoga County ILO Membership Handbook)