

Prospect Points: The Making of a Prospect List

Prospecting is the foundation for building a database, especially a database that will be used to disseminate information or, in our case, reach prospective club members.

Prospect lists can be bought from sources in almost any industry, but remember: No mailing list is perfect! Lists that Kiwanis International has secured for clubs to use in new-club building and membership growth campaigns have taught us a number of very important points. First, at a cost of around 10 cents per name, they are expensive in relationship to results. Second, the contact information is generally not up to date on a purchased list. And last, and maybe most important, acquiring a list gives a sense of approval to stop visiting prospective members and just send out a blind letter of invitation to a future meeting. This, as we all know, never receives a favorable response and, therefore, the project grinds to a halt with the starting of the negative spiral down to the inevitable, "We tried it and it can't be done."

Prospecting by personal visitation:

Since most people are at their place of work during the day, this is where we need to contact them, in most cases. So the base of a good list is best formed from chamber of commerce memberships, trade associations or city directories. Make sure to have the physical street address, not just a Post Office Box, and a Postal Code. Use a contact name as well—blind letters are never well received.

Have your sponsoring club and other clubs close to the new club site review the list for people they know. Get their approval to use their name as a referral, if they know a prospect. You will immediately gain the prospect's respect when referred. Better yet, have the referrer make the call with you. Beware of holding companies and blind corporations. Contact the local Rotary, Lions, etc. and have them remove from your prospect list the names of people who are members of their organization. It will prevent wasting time calling on them and it is a professional courtesy.

Of course the best prospect list is made up of the people you and your team members know. Starting with your own contact list and that of other friends is best. If the new club site is unfamiliar to you, then here are some suggestions that might aid in building a strong set of prospective members.

1. Local chamber of commerce
2. Dignitaries you met on the site survey
3. City, township, county government officials
4. Water hook-up listings
5. Business license applicants and new business listings
6. Other public information lists
7. Trade membership lists
8. PTAs and PTOs of area schools
9. Churches and other cooperative non-profits
10. Directories (build your prospect list organized by job classification)

Special focus prospecting:

Clubs with a special focus need some varied approaches to building a group of prospects. If your focus is the senior population, you might spend more time on lists from churches, senior activity centers or communities with age restrictions over 55. However, don't rule out the more traditional methods mentioned above.

Young Professional market prospects may come from a Key Club or Circle K International arena, and using colleges as part of your prospecting is very important. Using sites like My Space, Facebook or Twitters are a great avenue to build prospect contact for a younger demographic.

Try these methods of reaching this group:

Build a Web site: BlogSpot and others will let you build a Web site or blog for free. This is the place to send prospects to learn more about the club you are proposing and to communicate with you and others. Check out the use of RSS—it could save you time.

Network: By spreading your message you will find new friends that can help you attain your goal.

Try something new: What was hot last Christmas is old by tax refund time.

Using the prospect list: Managing the list is very important as well. Envelopes, prospecting cards, etc. will make your personal visitation job much more enjoyable and productive so make sure you have a team member who is familiar with database management.

Create a database with your prospect list and mail-merge it with your recruiting letter, making each letter personalized with the prospect's name and address. A blind lead on a letter (i.e., Dear Chamber member) is not very effective.

Produce a master list to record recruiting information (i.e., which recruiting team was assigned to which name, when to call back). It is a must with any kind of prospecting method.

Produce a set of address labels to create the actual prospect cards. Place these labels on 3x5 cards so detailed notes can be made about each prospect when contacted. Comments like "Not in, call back later." "Not interested." "Left application. Pick up check and app. Tuesday." will help the team leader reassign prospects for follow-up or remove them from the master list.

Using these simple steps will produce a fun and successful project.