

Ways to recruit men

Many people, when they hear parent involvement and PTA, automatically think of mothers. Women are vital to fulfilling PTA's Mission, but male involvement in PTA is just as important. A strong, vibrant PTA needs the support of moms and dads!

How can we get more men involved? PTA surveyed nearly 2,700 men in fall 2004 to find out. The findings from that survey have been used to develop the following 10 strategies a local PTA can use to break down barriers to male involvement and increase male PTA membership.

1. Make the membership pitch relevant to males. The No. 1 reason survey respondents joined PTA was "to work to improve the school for the benefit of my child/children." Therefore, your recruitment materials and your membership pitch should explain how men's involvement in PTA would benefit their children and their children's schools. A dad's involvement in PTA:

- Shows added interest in his child's education and school activities;
- Shows greater support for his child's teachers and school; and
- Improves relationships between parents and school personnel.

2. Use specific messaging and advertising aimed at men.

When asked what would encourage men to join PTA, men most frequently answered male oriented advertising. Most – 87 percent – of the of the men surveyed believe that PTA values men, but 67 percent don't believe PTA does a good job of promoting male involvement. The message that dads are welcome and encouraged to join should be brought out in advertising, as well as in newsletter articles, public events, speaking engagements, and other communications about PTA. Be sure to mention men's involvement in your PTA in your communications to members and potential members.

3. Just ask them. Nearly half of the men who responded to the survey said men don't join PTA because they aren't asked to. How you ask men to join must be powerful, personal, and meaningful. Doing this could pay big dividends in membership recruitment for your PTA!

4. Ask the women in your PTA to invite the men in their children's lives to join PTA.

Research reveals that women can influence men to join PTA. More than 90 percent of the male PTA members who responded to the survey indicated that their spouses, who were already members, significantly influenced their decision to get involved in PTA. Yet, both mom and dad



are PTA members in less than 50 percent of families with children in school. Moms can (and should) influence dads to join PTA!

5. Create more volunteer opportunities and special events for dads. When survey respondents were asked what would motivate fathers to be involved in PTA, the No. 2 response was activities or events aimed specifically at dads. Men stated a preference for hands-on projects and suggested events such as “dads only” events, school carnivals, sports activities, father daughter and father - son activities, and back-to-school fests. Events aimed at fathers can raise awareness that other fathers are actively involved. When men see that other men are involved, they are more likely to join.

6. Emphasize that becoming a PTA member does not have to involve a large time commitment. Seventy one percent of the men surveyed indicated that lack of time to volunteer is a barrier to men’s involvement in PTA. While PTA cannot operate without volunteers, it also cannot operate without the support of membership dues. Assure new members that membership is not synonymous with volunteering. Keep this in mind: If they join, they may eventually become volunteers; but if they never become members, they’ll never become volunteers.

7. Give it to them straight. Almost half of the men surveyed indicated that they want volunteer roles and expectations clearly defined. Telling them the what, when, where, why, and how of volunteer opportunities would make them more likely to join and to volunteer. Survey respondents also indicated that they are results-oriented and want to work on projects that use their skills.

8. Communicate with men the way they want to be reached. Surveys have indicated that men want fewer meetings, and they want the meetings PTAs do have to be at convenient times for them, such as after work. In addition, men want meetings to have a clear agenda and be results - oriented, rather than exploratory sessions on an issue or topic. Men prefer to receive PTA communications in bullet lists, as summary points, in e-mails, or as quick bits of information in newsletters. Brief communications tend to make men pay more attention to the message and tend to encourage men to participate.

9. Seek out male members in the community. Instead of waiting for men to come to your PTA, take your PTA to where men often meet. Present the PTA message at local service clubs that have high levels of male participation, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions clubs. If men see that other club members support PTA’s work, they might be more likely to join. Invite these groups to help with a service project for the school. Their participation will give them a better understanding of what your PTA contributes, a sense of responsibility toward the school, and more incentive to join PTA. Sending information to houses of worship, community centers, and municipalities also can make a wider circle of community residents aware of your PTA, what you are doing, and why they should become members.

10. Recognize and celebrate members. When you start getting more men involved in your PTA, let the community know. Publicize your successes. Success begets success. Reinforcing men’s contributions, while being mindful of what all members do for PTA, creates a positive atmosphere. People want to be associated with vibrant, successful groups. Recognize members, thank them often, and celebrate your PTA’s accomplishments and success!

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