

Getting Started: Why Recruit New Members?

MTNA promotes high standards of excellence in teaching. We work together to educate the public about the importance of choosing a qualified music teacher, and provide opportunities for continuing education, so our members can achieve the level of professionalism they seek.

Every music teacher in America owes it to herself or himself to consider joining the national association that represents their profession—both to join forces in promoting music study and professionalism in music teaching, and to take advantage of the many benefits of membership available to them.

When MTNA grows, we all benefit. Of course the increase in dues revenue is great. But even better is the addition of energy and expertise. When veteran teachers join MTNA through your local or state MTA, they contribute their experience and wisdom to your group. When younger teachers join, they help to ensure the future prosperity of our organization.

Whom Should We Recruit?

MTNA enjoys a diverse membership comprised of:

- Independent and collegiate teachers of all instruments, voice, composition and more
- Teachers devoted to *pedagogy*, helping teachers explore the art and science of teaching
- Teachers with a special interest in chamber music and collaborative artistry
- College-level music students
- Patrons of music who do not teach but support the work of music teachers
- Representatives from the music industry who support MTNA through corporate membership
- Music schools, colleges and universities who support MTNA through institutional membership
- Persons in related music fields, such as music therapists and piano technicians

The best people to recruit are those who have something to offer MTNA and have something to gain from being a member, regardless of their area of specialization.

Do you know someone you think might be a prospective member? Does your local or state MTA offer programs that might be of interest to this person? Would you offer opportunities for their students? Does this person have good ideas to share with the group? Would this person volunteer and participate in your programs?

As an association, develop a **prospect list** if you don't already have one. You might start with those teachers and interested parties your members know personally. Include any former members who haven't renewed their membership in the last year or two. Add the name, e-mail address and phone number of anyone who asks about membership. Ask your local music dealer(s) if you can obtain their mailing list of customers who are music teachers. If the retailer offers workshops for music teachers, ask if you can get a list of everyone who attended. (If you can't get their list, ask if they will distribute fliers or membership applications at the workshop.)

If you're near a college or university, ask for a list of the music faculty and music students. If the school won't give out those names, ask if they will distribute a flier for you. Or, ask if they would at least allow you to post fliers in a few conspicuous locations (bulletin boards in lounge areas, for example). You can also check at your local library for a directory published by the National Association of Schools of Music that lists all the music schools accredited by the NASM—it lists the schools' faculty and areas of specialization.

Make it a priority to continually update and add to your prospect list. Recruitment needs to be an ongoing commitment, so plan as an association to budget time and money for it.

Make A Plan

First assess your current situation. Think about the make-up of your group and its strengths and weaknesses. Who are your MTA's current members? What professional areas do they represent? What are their immediate needs and wants? What are your members' perceptions and professional biases? What do they enjoy about their membership? What are their individual contributions to your association?

Once you have an accurate picture of who you are as a group, think about who you would like to be. What are your goals for the future? How can you build on the strengths your group already possesses, and improve areas of weakness? How much do you want to increase what you are already doing well, and how much do you want to change and grow?

Now think about your prospects. Who can you realistically reach? For example, if you really wanted to go all out, you could contact national music associations and periodicals and ask to purchase their mailing list of members and readers in your area. But can you afford to buy the names and mail something to each of them? If not, then clearly this should not be part of your recruitment plan for now. What other recruitment opportunities can you take advantage of instead? (Read on!)

Consider, too, what you really have to offer prospective members. For example, if none of your current members is a percussion teacher (or voice, guitar, organ and so forth), would your MTA feel that adding these teachers would strengthen your group? Would a percussion teacher be able to build camaraderie with your members? Are there issues facing all music teachers that you can work on together? Could percussion students be included in performance opportunities? Could you initiate collaborative artist efforts among students? In other words, would it benefit your association to diversify, or would a percussion teacher be a bad fit? If it would be a bad fit this year, think of ways you can expand your programming and be more inclusive in the future. MTNA members include teachers of *all* instruments.

As you develop your plan, think about why your current members joined. If you don't know, ask them! Many say the reason was because someone they admired invited them to join and others say to become a better teacher. How would you present to a prospect the reasons they should become involved and ways in which your local or state MTA can help him become a better teacher? Other answers include, "To network with colleagues at the local level" and "To enter students into local competitions and noncompetitive events." You can certainly capitalize on that!

As you prepare to contact prospects and invite them to join your group, think about their unique situation and needs. Are they former members who have let their membership lapse? Are they teachers who are new to the area? Consider their age, background and the location of their studio. What are their interests and professional biases? How ready to join are they? (Do they seem genuinely interested, or are they teachers who have never joined even having been asked several times?)

This research and careful consideration will help you develop recruitment strategies.

Get Ready

Plan what your “pitch” will be for each type of prospective member you identify. What do you have to offer to independent teachers? Collegiate? People who live in remote areas who may not be able to attend many meetings? A corporate member or patron?

Your most important recruiting tool will be a **packet of materials** you send out to recruit new members or fulfill requests for information about your MTA. You should always include a cover letter, customized to address the unique interests of each type of prospect. Along with the letter, your packet should include some of the following items:

- MTNA national membership brochure (quantities provided free of charge to affiliated associations)
- State and local MTA brochures or fliers you develop
- Sample newsletters, syllabi, competition rules and so forth
- Your MTA member directory
- Your association’s constitution and bylaws
- A questionnaire for the prospect to return, asking them about their interests and which association programs they might like to volunteer for (Encourage them to respond and prepare to get involved!)

You could also print up some fact sheets describing specific programs to show prospective members that your association is doing something tangible that would help them. Has your MTA resolved a zoning problem? Has your association originated an important community program? Are your members involved in promoting music education in your community? Use fact sheets to help communicate what your association and members are doing-to show that MTA membership is valuable. But be careful not to *over-promise* the benefits of membership. Stick to the facts.

Your packet should have a professional appearance. Always print your cover letter on association letterhead, and include a name and number to contact for more information. Always thank a prospect for their interest if they contacted you first and follow up with a phone call after materials have been sent.

Implement Your Plan

As you implement your recruitment plan, monitor your efforts. Write down when a contact was made, what recruitment method was used, what the likelihood is of the prospect becoming a member, what questions or objections the prospect raised, next steps to take and when, and so on. Develop a system for tracking:

- Which method of recruiting worked best? Which was least effective?
- What is the rate of return on your association's recruitment campaign?
- When is the best time to recruit new members?
- Why did members join your association? Why did some prospects decide not to join?
- What do your new members have in common with your existing members? How are they different? How could you reach more of each audience?
- What should you repeat again next year? What parts of your approach will you modify? What new things could you try?

You are in a perfect position to recruit new members. No one knows more about the value of membership, understands the issues of potential members in a certain area, or can make a more credible pitch than a current member. In addition, you can help the national office by sharing which recruitment methods work best, which types of prospects responded best to your offer,

why some prospects joined and others didn't, and other pertinent information.

The very best way to recruit new members is through personal contact. An endorsement from a current member is more appealing—and credible—than anything in print could ever be. Past MTNA surveys revealed *90 percent of MTNA members joined because someone asked them to.*

You don't have to be on a membership committee to recruit new members. Recruitment should be a priority for every member of MTNA because we all benefit when our association grows and prospers.

What To Say

It's not so hard to promote something when you truly believe it's a good thing. Think about what *you* like about being a member of MTNA. Would this prospect enjoy those same benefits of membership? Or are there other aspects of membership that would be more appealing?

The most effective recruitment is an approach that is tailored to meet the specific needs of the prospect. A college faculty member might have different interests than an independent teacher; a voice teacher might have different concerns than a piano teacher. A local music dealer might be interested in interacting with the members of your group and might not even realize that corporate membership is available to him. It's up to us to figure out what each prospect might want out of membership, and customize our "pitch" to touch on those interests.

It's not enough to describe generally what MTNA does. We have to be specific about what MTNA *can do for the prospect*. There's also a bit of "packaging" involved. Rather than list a bunch of "stuff" of uncertain value ("MTNA membership benefits include a magazine, national and state newsletters, national and state conventions, competitions, certification, insurance and credit card, programs you could get involved in..."), describe the *benefit* of the programs and services. Here is a stronger pitch for an independent teacher prospect:

MTNA offers valuable information and opportunities for continuing education that music teachers *cannot get anywhere else* through our professional journals, newsletters and outstanding state and national conferences. We offer opportunities for professional development, such as our certification program, and opportunities for your students, including national competitions and state festivals. In addition to valuable financial services that help you run your business, MTNA offers ways for music teachers to work together and serve their community through the MTNA Foundation Fund. While music teachers can sometimes feel isolated, these collaborative projects bring us together as professionals and develop our leadership skills at the same time.

Overcoming Common Objections

1. "Membership costs too much." Even though MTNA membership dues are lower than many professional associations, we shouldn't argue if a prospect feels that membership is expensive. Focus on the *value* of membership. Acknowledge that membership in a professional association is an expense, but it's an investment in their career and it's worth it. "You're right; the dues are a lot of money—if you don't get your money's worth. But I think you'll find that MTNA membership provides ..."
2. "I don't have time to get involved, so why join?" Have two lists of benefits: One list of all the things the prospect will enjoy if she attends meetings and participates in events, and one list of all the things she'll have access to whether she comes to meetings or not.
3. "There's no benefit in membership for me." Ask about the prospect's needs. "If you were going to start a music teachers association today, what are the things you'd want it to do?" As

the person describes what they want, you can probably think of ways your association is already doing it. “Oh, maybe I didn’t mention it before (or explain it very well) but that’s exactly what our program does ...”

Mark Levin, author of *Membership Development: 101 Ways to Get and Keep Your Members*, suggests members can use three little words to overcome prospects’ objections: feel, felt, found. “I know exactly how you *feel* about ___ (money, time and the like). I *felt* the same way. But you know what I *found*? Joining MTNA was the best decision I ever made because ...”