Attracting members and recruiting them should be an ongoing activity throughout the year.

People join associations for different reasons. This has to be understood. Your appeal has to meet a specific, unfulfilled need. Member needs vary and can be based on such factors as:

- Length of time in the profession
- Demographics (age, background, etc.)
- Participation levels
- Special interests

Each of these different groups or segments may have different reasons for joining and different expectations of the association that will affect recruitment and retention.

The following may offer some insights into the behavior and the psyche of potential members, or prospects.

**THE PSYCHE OF “MEMBERSHIP”**

Many theories abound that describe the type of people who tend to join, or not join, organizations. The following offer some background.

**General Reasons Members Join and Stay Loyal to your Association**

- **Mailboxer** - someone who wants primarily a mail or computer relationship
- **Relevant Participant** - someone who will participate primarily through meetings
- **Shaper** - Someone who wants to influence the association’s policies
- **CompShopper** - someone who is sampling membership
- **Cognoscenti** - someone who wants to gain specialized information
- **Status Conscious** - someone who uses the association for his or her status
- **Altruistic** - someone who wants to support the goals of the association
- **Doubter** - someone who resists change
- **Non-Relevant** - someone who no longer finds the association to be relevant
Three Prospect Types

Here is an example of three types of prospects as identified by Philip Kotler in Marketing for Non Profit Organizations:

- **Resisters: People who dislike the organization.**
  They may disagree with the organization’s principles or feel the organization doesn’t do any good. If these views are unfounded and the association can refute the negative impressions through well-founded evidence, you may be able to recruit some of these individuals. But if these views are well-founded, then the organization will gain little by pursuing this group.

- **Indifferents: Prospects who don't see much benefit to joining the organization.**
  The typical response you hear from this group is: “The dues are too high relative to the benefits I would receive,” or “I can get that benefit from other associations or organizations.” This group includes free riders—people who feel they can get the benefits of membership without joining. The best approach to indifference is to demonstrate that the organization’s value is high in relation to the cost.

- **Uninforms: Prospects who have little information on which to base a judgment.**
  They are the ones who say: “I really don’t know what you do,” or “I have no idea of the dues, but I think they are high.” The best way to approach these individuals is to send them information to increase their knowledge of your association.

READY TO RECRUIT? BE PREPARED IF YOU’RE GOING TO DO THE “ASK.”

If you are conducting a recruitment campaign, or simply encouraging a property, property owner, property management company or business partner to join your local affiliate / NAA, keep some of these things in mind:

- Know your association.
- Know your prospect. Research prior to “getting to know” your prospect, which includes company leadership, number of units, NAA affiliation in other markets.
- Know the unique benefits offered by your local affiliate, the state association, as well as NAA.
- What’s your approach?
- Do you have an application on hand?
- Be ready for questions, or know where to get the answers. Then get back to your prospect.

**TIP:** While personal contact is more impressive than just a telephone call, use the initial phone call to set up a personal visit or to invite them to a
local meeting or political event / meeting regarding the apartment industry. Find out as much as you can about the prospect’s interests and practice setting.

LISTEN CAREFULLY! It’s not your job to do all the talking. The conversation may offer you important clues as to the best way to proceed with the membership approach. Be direct and honest. Let your prospect know why you want to get together and that you intend to talk about membership.

WHAT ARE SOME REASONS TO JOIN YOUR LOCAL AFFILIATE / NAA?

“I believe that it is my duty to support my profession, my industry.”

“Why did I join? Simple: lobbying, lobbying, lobbying.”

“To maintain my good standing with Click & Lease, the best lease in our industry.”

“My friend is a member.”

“I enjoy getting (insert affiliate name here) publications in my email.”

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

• How membership in the association will benefit your colleague. Be specific. This is where your listening skills come in. Shape your discussion of benefits to fulfill any needs that have been identified. Example: Don’t focus on association events or education if the prospect is interested in legislative activity.

• Tell your prospect how membership has been helpful to your current members. Be specific and provide examples.

• Benefits should be personalized. The recruiter should be able to talk about not only the service or activity of the association, but more importantly, how the prospect directly benefits from the services. Be specific.
  
  o Do not dictate that it is “their duty as an employee of the industry,” or that it is “their obligation” to become a member (even if you think so) because they may not feel this way.
  o Remember, not all members are alike. One member may have joined for a very different reason than yours. The appeal of member benefits is subjective.

• Don’t memorize an approach. People recognize when a speech is “canned.” Take a list of key benefits with you and focus on those areas in which your colleague indicates his / her interest or need.
• Be courteous of your colleague’s time and schedule. Stay within your appointed time.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH:
Ways to approach a colleague about joining.

• **A benefits approach**
  “As an association member, you will receive ... that will help you to ...”

• **A conditional invitation approach**
  “Come to the meeting with me next Thursday and see for yourself ...”

• **A single-issue approach, based on a known interest**
  “I know how interested you are in getting involved with the golf tournament or government affairs. Our association needs another person on their committee to coordinate ...” or “{(insert affiliate name) is currently developing}”

• **A problem-oriented solution approach**
  “We’ve all been working to eliminate Rent Control in California. Even though SB1234 passed, there is still more work to do. If we could unite our efforts ...”

• **Networking approach**
  “As a new property owner in California, this meeting will give you an opportunity to meet ...” or “find out about ...”

• **Old buddy/new buddy approach**
  “I’d like to meet you for coffee early and then we can go to the meeting together.”

• **Become involved approach**
  “I know that you are concerned about ... would you be interested in serving on this committee / task force that’s working on the issue?”

• **An appeal to opportunities for leadership**
  “{(insert affiliate name) needs input from concerned members like you. Leadership positions come from members who take active roles in the association}.”

WHAT IF THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER SAYS “NO” TO JOINING?

• That’s okay. Qualify the turn-down.

• Ask why and remember to listen. Inquire why the prospect chose not to join (this may help you in the future to fine-tune your approaches). “I can understand that you may not want to join right now ...”
“Would you mind sharing the reasons why?”

Don’t push. There will be other opportunities to re-approach membership in the future and to reinforce benefits that meet his/her needs.

Say “thank you.” Always thank the prospect for his/her time and attention: at the end of the meeting, at the end of a phone call, follow-up with a note. Always be professional.

IF YOUR PROSPECT SAYS “YES” TO MEMBERSHIP:

- Encourage your colleague to complete the membership application right there. Make sure you get a signature and payment information.
- Offer to mail it or bring to the local affiliates office for him / her.
- If your colleague wants to fill it out “later” try to set a specific time to get it back.
- Say “thank you.” Always thank the prospect for his / her time. Thank them, but also remember to stay in touch with them.

YOU’VE RECRUITED A NEW MEMBER. WHAT NOW?
WELCOME THE NEW MEMBER AND GET THEM INVOLVED!

“The more a member participates or uses member benefits, the more likely that member is to retain membership. When members perceive they are getting value, they retain membership. The more benefits used by a member the closer to the association he or she will be.”


ANSWERS TO THE RESISTANT PROSPECTIVE MEMBER

Below is material offered by the National Apartment Association regarding recruitment and answers to questions asked by prospective members.

There are numerous benefits listed available through membership in your local affiliate, state association and NAA. When presenting benefits to a prospective member, you may occasionally face resistance. Here are some of the most common objections to membership, and some suggestions for responding to these concerns:
“I’m a busy person. I don’t want to join if I can’t be active.”
We also want you to be an active member. But if you don’t have time at this point in your professional career, that’s all the more reason to help in the only other way possible – your interest, support and your dues investment. In representation of the profession, numbers count. By being a member and contributing to the local, state, and national organizations that are working for you every day, you’ll be helping to support the very associations that are protecting and advancing your profession. The associations need your support in representing the profession to the legislative bodies. And, when the time comes that you’re ready to take a more active role, we’ll be there for you.

“I don’t always agree with your association’s beliefs or goals.”
That’s understandable. Freedom to disagree is guaranteed in a democracy, and our industry acts through the democratic process. Its decision are the majority view and every member can come to meetings, air opinions, be elected to office and work to change what he or she thinks is wrong.

“Your association can’t benefit me.”
You may think you don’t receive immediate and direct benefits from (insert affiliate name here) and NAA, but NAA and its affiliated associations are continually working for you. (insert affiliate name) and NAA represent multifamily housing and its benefits to the legislature, protecting your rights to the full extent so you can conduct business in a professional manner while keeping our industry viable. (insert affiliate name) and NAA provides education, (list other services here), and legislative updates to help you in all of your multifamily business concerns, so you can do what you do best in the industry … run your business.

In a personal sense, as well, joining your local affiliate and NAA enables you to meet and make new friends within your peer group which broadens your interests. You can gain a great deal through this network. Try it and see for yourself.

“There’s too many organizations already doing what you do.”
What do you mean by duplication? It’s true there are local, state and national organizations, and membership in on means membership in all. But each association serves a specific purpose, this is your opportunity to be a part of a local, state and national network of multifamily advocates who can speak to your specific state legislative needs and concerns and the national association that responds to federal agency and legislative concerns.

“Why join NAA and (insert your affiliate name here) in preference to other associations?”
Each association has specific goals and the goal of our association is to serve the
multifamily industry in its entirety -- protecting you and advancing our industry for decades to come. You are the ultimate winner each time the multifamily industry makes advances.

Give examples of like size and regional companies that are involved within your local association as well as NAA.

“Membership in your (insert affiliate name here) is too expensive.”
It’s true that membership is a significant investment, but you can receive a return on your investment through the many benefits of membership.

(list your benefits here)

OR LIST NAA BENEFITS (can be used as a guide)

NAA members offer a diverse landscape that includes property owners of all sizes, builders, developers, and management companies from different sectors of the multifamily housing industry. The breadth and reach of NAA membership provides an important platform for advocacy, information sharing, networking and business growth.

Membership benefits encompass:

**NAA Government Affairs**
Through local, state and national advocacy initiatives and grassroots mobilization, the Government Affairs Department works to shape policies and ideas that protect your business and our industry.

**NAA Click & Lease**
A web-based online leasing program, NAA Click & Lease helps you maximize your profit and mitigate risk while giving the support and stability for leasing success.

**NAA Education Institute**
The National Apartment Association Education Institute’s mission is to provide broad-based education, training and recruitment programs that are sure to maximize your company’s NOI.

**Industry Resources**
Available to NAA members are an array of NAA products that include units Magazine, industry newsletters, website and social media designed to inform, challenge and inspire success.

**Meetings & Expositions**
Throughout the year, NAA hosts numerous events that provide unparalleled networking opportunities, quality speakers, knowledge–sharing and high-level engagement, including the annual NAA Education Conference & Exposition, the largest gathering of apartment professionals in the country.
**NAA Open Door Program**
With the purchasing power of 67,000 NAA members buying as one, NAA Open Door is the most rewarding cost-saving purchasing program in the apartment industry.

Take advantage of the exceptional benefits that NAA membership brings and support an organization that represents the interests of the apartment industry. For more information on membership or how to join, please contact your local state affiliate. Once you join an affiliate, you receive automatic membership to NAA. We hope you’ll join us in making NAA even stronger.

Considering what your membership does for you, your business and your profession, it’s quite a bargain.