

Recruiting and Publicity
Quick Guide for Non-Profit Organizations

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1 Background

I am a member of several different types of organizations. For approximately 6 years, I served as Deputy Chief of Recruiting for STARFLEET, an international network of Star Trek themed fan clubs. I also served as the Regional Division Chief of Recruiting for Region 1, the largest region of STARFLEET. In 1993, I joined the USS IDIC, a chapter of STARFLEET, and in 1995, I became a founding member and president of USS Athena, the Northern Virginia chapter of STARFLEET. I have worked with various science fiction conventions in the Baltimore-Washington area since 1994 as either a volunteer, staff member, or committee head. I am also a member of the Association of Concert Bands, a national network of community symphonic bands and musicians. Since Summer 1993, I have been part of the City of Fairfax Band, which is a member organization of ACB and hosted its 2002 Annual Convention. Recently, I have helped a small group take a community fund set up to help an individual family with a critically ill child and create from it a memorial fund, incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia, recently received permission from the IRS to operate as a public charity under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS tax exempt code.

What do all these organizations have in common? They all need to do some form of recruiting and publicity. STARFLEET, its chapters, and ACB are all looking for members. Conventions and individual music organizations are trying to increase attendance at their events.

My real-life background includes working as a software engineer, project engineer/manager, network design engineer, and a manager of a team of engineers. My current responsibilities include expanding and maintaining part of the Internet backbone, establishing goals and job requirements for personnel, coaching and counseling, establishing and maintaining capital and expense budgets, and working with current and prospective customers to determine their requirements. In short, I have a real life and understand the pressures of the workplace and the impact it has on one's ability to spend time working for volunteer organizations.

For nearly 10 years, I have worked with many groups in a variety of capacities and learned a lot about recruiting and inexpensive publicity. ACB, the City of Fairfax Band, STARFLEET, and its chapters are all non-profits. Some have formal documentation under Section 501 of the IRS code (STARFLEET is 501(c)(7), ACB and CFB are 501(c)(3)), and others are non-incorporated non-profit entities. The purpose of this guide is to document my years of experience in a way that any non-profit could benefit from reading.

This document is not meant to be static. As times change, new technologies and publicity venues become available, and others suggest input, this document will change.

2 What is Recruiting?

Recruiting is about maintaining the lifeblood of an organization by bringing in new people (“new blood”). It is about attracting the people who find the organization fun and interesting so they will join the ranks. In turn, the diversification of ideas brought in by new people will help the organization to grow and thrive.

Recruiting is **not** about numbers. Playing the numbers game is dangerous at best. Going for numbers can lead to attracting people who will only be around for a short time without enriching the organization. That happens because the tendency is to sign anyone up without providing enough information about the organization. Once the recruit learns more, that person may find that the organization isn’t what he or she originally thought it was and end up leaving.

Recruiting is about being honest and open about your organization and what it has to offer. Be true to thine own self. That will improve the chances of growing the organization with quality people who will enrich the organization over the long haul.

Recruiting is a never-ending task. Always be vigilant and look for opportunities. Only recruiting once in awhile is almost as ineffective as not recruiting at all.

3 Who We Are and What We Do

When recruiting, make sure that all participants know what your organization does and why it exists. Knowing the history of the organization is also very useful. That information should be the basis for determining the selling points and how your group is different.

It is useful to create a “Who We Are and What We Do” document that summarizes your group’s reason for existence. It should be no longer than a page since it only serves as an introduction.

Here are some questions to ask yourself while creating the document:

- Is your group a fan association? If so, a fan of what?
- What are the demographics of your group? Is it family oriented? Adult oriented? What is the age range of the members? What are the backgrounds of the members?
- Does your group do community service? What type? What charities do you work with? Alternatively, has your group created a charity of its own? (For example, giving grants and scholarships)
- Is education part of what you do? How? Just within the group? Within the community?
- Are there any other activities to note?

The last bullet point, “Are there any other activities to note,” is an important one to keep in mind for the long-haul. Music organizations may play certain types of music and have a specific set of outreach activities to note. Fan clubs may have movie nights, trivia games, sporting events, going to the theater, etc. A group of crafters may specialize in certain areas such as wreath-making or basket weaving. It really comes down to what your group does that has not already been discussed.

Just remember, be true to yourself. If your group gets dressed up in funny costumes for the benefit of the public or just to have fun, so be it. Some people think sci-fi groups are weird, and some sci-fi groups look at sports fans who run about without shirts in freezing weather wearing body paint and waving a foam-rubber hand saying “we’re #1” as weird. As long as you’re serious about what you do, it isn’t illegal, and it doesn’t hurt anybody, it’s OK.

4 Potential Pitfalls and How to Overcome Them

When forming an organization, there are various pitfalls to avoid.

4.1 “Build it and they will come”

The Telecommunications industry did that in 1999-mid-2001 and saw a massive implosion in late 2001/early 2002 that will probably take over to 2 years to resolve. Many dot-coms became dot-bombs in the same period. People believed that just building and opening the doors was enough.

While your non-profit may not entirely fit the mold of these capital enterprise failures, it doesn’t mean that there aren’t lessons to be learned. One lesson is to keep your accounting clean, but that’s beyond the scope of this document (although it does fit in with keeping a clean image). The other lesson is that getting set up and opening the doors are not sufficient for success. People won’t beat down the doors. It is necessary to get out there, promote the group, and encourage people to come.

There are many small non-profits out there, and chances are that there are similar groups in your local area. Figure out what makes your group different, and capitalize on it. A word of warning: do **not** try to raise your group up by putting others down. That will hurt your organization in the long run. In addition, given the litigation-happy society we live in, it could open your group up for a lawsuit.

4.2 Being Taken Seriously

This section is directed more towards science fiction related fan clubs and hobby organizations.

Organizations created to have fun, even those that have community service as a large part of what they do, tend not to be taken seriously. As pointed out in the “Who We Are and What We Do” section, weirdness is in the eye of the beholder. Don’t be afraid of it.

The way to be taken seriously is to treat what you do as serious by showing pride in your organization and treating it as legitimate. Your organization has just as much right to exist as any other, if what you do is legal and doesn’t hurt anyone. One caveat: don’t get so serious that you can’t take a joke. Have a sense of humor and don’t take things personally. It can do wonders to break down barriers.

As a manager (in real life), one of my requirements is taking a course on “Diversity.” One example of how having a sense of humor and letting comments roll off can diffuse a tense situation was shown in a movie clip about a paraplegic starting a new job. Let’s call him “Joe.” Just before Joe shows up on the scene, his new co-workers were asking questions like “Do we have to help him go to the bathroom?” “What’s a quadriplegic?” “How can he do this job?” etc. At this point, Joe rolls onto the scene and starts by saying “Hi! I’m Joe! To answer your questions...” (stunned silence) and he good-naturedly answers all their questions and adds, “Now, if you want a good friend, I’m your man.” At that point, he shakes hands with his co-workers, who are now extremely relieved that Joe didn’t take things personally. Joe could have come onto the scene absolutely furious, and things could have become quite ugly. Don’t let things get ugly... it only serves to reinforce the bad stereotypes that are out there already.

Also, consider joining forces with other established organizations. It does wonders for joint PR. For example: My science fiction group regularly advertises concerts for a local symphonic band. When that band hosted a convention, they helped, and we got some advertising space. When the band had a sci-fi concert, they allowed us to come in and decorate the auditorium and advertise our group.

4.3 Coaching Opportunities

So, you’re out there advertising your organization and someone comes up to the recruiting table and says “get a life!” or some put-down of similar ilk, or the person that you’re trying to recruit says “sorry, I don’t have the time.”

This is a coaching opportunity. After getting through this, you might have a future in management (if you aren’t a manager already).

Do’s and Don’ts:

1. **Never** say that the person is wrong. People hate being told that they’re wrong, especially the self-righteous type.
2. Avoid using the word “but” or it’s dress-up cousin “however” since they imply that the person is wrong.
3. **Do** acknowledge their objections/point in a positive fashion, then go on to make your point (keeping in mind #2).

4. Remember: you don't have to argue. Learn when to quit. If you start feeling rage welling up, back off and either let the conversation die, or change the subject. Unlike the corporate world, there isn't an escalation chain to utilize to bring a person back in line.
5. **Never** lose your temper while representing the organization. If it's starting to slip, take a walk.
6. Keep in mind that the real objection may not be the one that you see. For example, a person having a bad day may argue with everyone, even the cat.

Example 1:

Initial statement: "You folks really need to get a life!"

Bad reactions: "Oh, yeah? Do you really think you have a life?" or "You're wrong! We have lives and do this to get away from it!"

Good reaction: "I am sure there are some who fit that description. If you'd like, I could share information about the diverse nature of our group. Did you know we have writers, professors, network engineers, and even a rocket scientist who works for NASA in our group?"

Example 2:

Initial statement: "I don't have time for your group"

Bad reaction: "Sure you do!" (implicitly calls the person wrong)

Good reaction: "I understand what it's like having many demands on one's time. There are some options to consider..."

Some books to consider:

Discipline without Punishment by Dick Grove

Managing Up by Michael and Deborah Singer Dobson

In addition, the Dale Carnegie books are great resources.

5 Publicity

5.1 Informing the Media

If your group is having a meeting, concert, or some other gathering, informing the media is necessary. All public media have an obligation to donate a certain amount of their resources to advertise community events. This is cheap advertising!

In some large metro areas, media outlets require four weeks advance notice. Other areas may only need two weeks notice. Find out what your local papers require. Your press release should include the following information:

- Who you are, and that your group is a local non-profit
- What the event is
- Where it will be (address)
- When it will be (date/time)

- Contact person for more information
- Any other pertinent information

Keep press releases short and to the point. If you need to add more information, consider having a cover letter of explanation followed by the press release. Make sure the meat of the information is presented at the top of the release. Editors will cut submissions to fit, and you don't want important information to be lopped off.

More and more media outlets are utilizing electronic means of accepting event information. Utilize that as well. Some outlets will pay more attention to mailed releases, others prefer faxes, while others prefer electronic communication, either via email or through a web form. Try multiple ways of contacting them. Unless otherwise specified by the publication or medium, press releases and PSAs need to be sent between 2—3 weeks before the event. Sending them too early could mean that the information gets lost, sending too late will not provide sufficient time to include it.

Many TV and radio stations have online community calendars. Since the information shows up as soon as it is approved, send information about the event as soon as possible (within reason... 6 months or more in advance may be too much!).

For broadcast media, go through the same list of questions and create a version that can be said in 15 seconds and another that can be said in 30 seconds. Give them the option since radio, cable, and TV can use the information as “filler.” Or, consider a *media advance*, which is a short version of a press release that includes a bulleted list of who/what/when/where/why/cost information and a “Special Note” paragraph. The advance allows the broadcast media to create the PSA in their own format.

Yahoo Local is a great place to gather information about local media outlets, including websites that will accept advertising.

Closer to the time of your event, consider re-sending your announcement to broadcast media outlets in audio form. If your organization has someone with a great speaking voice and has the equipment, try recording the announcement and burn it to a CD to send to the studio. Include lead space as either music or dead air so that the station has a place to cut without interfering with the announcement itself. Make sure that station knows how much lead has been included and what type it is (music or dead air).

For large or very special events, follow up with as many contacts as possible with a postcard or other brief reminder about the event. If you have contact names at the media outlet, send the reminder directly to that person.

Over time, build a relationship with the media. For each outlet, try to get a contact name. Make sure that contact receives information about upcoming events. If an email address or phone number is available, try contacting the person and talk to him/her about your organization, upcoming events, etc. Word of caution: there is a line between building a

relationship and becoming annoying. Don't overdo it, or your organization runs the risk of never being taken seriously by that outlet ever again.

Do not underestimate the advertising power of free publications! Pick up one of every free publication and booklet within reach and flip through it to see if there are any community announcements. It is amazing how many of them have an announcements section! Look for information on how to contact the editor or community correspondent and find out their requirements. Some restrict postings to once every so many weeks, others only list IRS-recognized non-profits, and some will take anything in good taste. The vast majority require very long lead times, sometimes up to two months.

Becoming a member of the local Chamber of Commerce can be very useful. It can supply PR contact lists including contact names as well as forums to exchange ideas and information with other non-profits. One service that is provided by some Chambers is matching for-profit corporations looking to donate to non-profits. In addition, some Chamber members may feel a certain degree of obligation to help other Chamber members and would be more willing to put up flyers, or help in some other way.

If your bank account can afford it, consider placing an ad in a popular newspaper or other publication, or even working with the local TV station. When budgeting, don't forget the setup costs.

5.1.1 Print Ads

Ads range widely in price depending on the frequency of the publication, type of publication, and circulation size. For example, a ¼ page ad in a large publication like USA Today¹ is in excess of \$30,000. A ¼ page ad in a free, local newspaper (about 100K circulation) may be around \$400-\$500. A ¼ page ad in your local homeowners association (circulation of 500-1000 households) may only be \$25. These are for one-time ads.

Of course, the finished size for each publication may be different; in which case, a ¼ page may be quite different. A ¼ page ad in USA Today will be substantially larger than a ¼ page in the typical letter size (8.5"x11") homeowners association newsletter.

5.1.1.1 Newspaper Ads

Most newspapers charge by the line, which is approximately 1/14th of an inch, and by column, which can range from 1.25" to 1.5" (possibly even wider) depending on the layout for that section of the paper. Many major papers have their rates and technical specifications available online.

More than one type of ad exists in newspapers. Classifieds are words only and typically retyped to fit a set format. Ads for certain newspaper sections may require the newspaper

¹ Approximate prices are for comparison. They are based on known December 2002 prices.

reset anything that is sent, and that cost is included. Stand-alone ads, like the ones seen for stores, are typically sent as camera-ready.

If you are submitting an ad that needs to be reset, remember to send the information with enough lead-time to review the results and the price before it goes to print. Typically, this communication is handled via fax. If your organization does not have a credit application on file (required for billing), make sure that the lead-time is sufficient to cover sending and processing payment.

Whenever a newspaper does something good such as placing the ad in a really nice spot, putting an eye-catching border around it, being creative with ad formats, etc. be sure to send a personal thank you note to recognize their efforts.

5.1.1.2 Other Ads

There are many other places for ads including newsletters, programs, Chamber directories, etc.

There are many newsletters out there. Pick your targeted audience whether it is geographical, such as a homeowners' association newsletter, or demographic.

Putting an ad in the program book for a convention is good for services and possibly to bring attention to one's organization (depending on type of audience). Prices vary widely depending on production costs for the publication. For example, a business card ad may only be \$25 for one convention and \$50 for another.

The price information given assumes that your organization will create a camera-ready ad in the appropriate dimensions and format. If the publication editor has to modify the ad, it may be an additional cost. If the ad is submitted in an electronic format, always provide a hardcopy of the layout for the ad.

Not all of these ads need to cost money. Consider teaming up with another similar organization and proposing an "ad swap."

5.1.2 TV Ads

This requires contacting your local TV station or cable company to get particulars. Here's an example: Some cable companies have prime-time commercials on mid-tier networks cost \$30-\$50 per 30-second spot (although, adding flexibility can bring the cost under \$10 per spot). Some channels like CNN, ESPN, USA, etc. can cost more than \$100 for a prime time spot. Some basics:

- The cost goes up if there is a tighter timeframe for airing the commercial, such as airing the commercial during a specific show. The cost can be as much as 3-4 times more than allowing the commercial to air anytime during a 12 hour period.

- Keep in mind the target demographic. Adults? Families? Gender? Age Range? If working with a cable company, they will have statistics for all the channels. Use them in addition to asking for their expertise and pick your channels accordingly.
- Some suggest 30-35 spots per week per network for a one-week run, about 25 spots per week per network for a two-week run.

A single tape is needed for a cable station to run the ad on several networks (one tape per cable station). If working directly with TV stations, one tape will be needed for each station. Typical tape formats are Beta-SP and DVC-Pro.

Note that the prices above do not include the cost for copying the master professionally or creating the ad.

Creating the ad can be expensive unless there is someone with access to editing equipment and a sound booth that is willing to donate his or her skills and time. A basic ad can cost \$600 or more to produce.

5.1.3 Radio Ads and Promotions

Radio is another effective advertising medium. Stations will air Public Service Announcements for free, although the timing and frequency may not be desirable. Having a really important event advertised at 3AM does not have the same level of effectiveness as a professional ad played during rush hour.

5.1.3.1 Radio Ads

A 60-second spot can cost between \$100-\$200 (more or less, depending on the station demographics) per spot. Some stations require a minimum advertising commitment. For a music or arts organization, it is worth finding at least one station and working with them.

The ad can be created by the production staff. Typically, all they need is the background music (audio CD, WAV, or MP3 file) and a script and they will record the spot in their sound booth using their talent (on-air personality).

5.1.3.2 Radio Promotions

So, how do those “Caller #9” promotions work?

At least in large metropolitan areas, radio stations are given a lot of tickets and trinkets and each has their own way of sifting through it all. Some radio stations won't even consider doing ticket giveaways unless there is a minimum advertising commitment (or in the case of public radio, “underwriting commitment”). Even if that commitment is there, the tickets have to have a minimum face-value amount.

It doesn't hurt to ask and if the organization is a regular advertiser and there is an existing relationship, maybe they can do something. While this may be a good idea, it may not work out.

5.1.4 Other Ads

Ever go to a movie theater and see those slide ads on the screen before the previews start? Keep in mind that the cost to run an ad is multiplied by the number of screens in the theater. Typically, it is a set cost per screen for all the showings in a block of weeks (for example, \$100 for a 4 week block) plus an overall setup fee. So, a 12-screen theater at \$100 per screen and a \$150 setup fee would cost \$1350 for an ad. Contact your local theater chain for actual ad rates.

Public transportation provides exterior and interior bus ad space, ads inside metrorail cars, at metro stations, at bus stops, on brochures, etc. Check with your local public transportation office to get details and ad rates.

5.2 *Spinning a Web*

The World Wide Web can be an amazing place. Get a website up as soon as possible with contact information for your organization. Make sure events are posted on the site.

5.2.1 Creating a Website

There are various free and low-cost web hosting services out there, but you'll need to search since this changes daily. Tripod used to provide free services for up to 30Mb of data, then it was reduced to 20Mb for free. Free sites generally have many pop-up ads since the provider receives revenue from them. The ability to maintain a larger site without annoying pop-ups is available for under \$10/month. Many of these providers have tools to simplify building a site.

Things to keep in mind when designing a web site:

- Make it easy to navigate, especially getting to info on upcoming events
- Choose colors carefully. You want to invite people in, not blind them!
- Don't over animate... it can get annoying
- Be cautious about the use of Flash, ShockWave, Java, etc. Sites can look really cool, but not everyone's computer has the software to handle them. Have alternatives available... especially for the greeting page.
- Test your site on multiple browsers (Netscape, Mozilla, Internet Explorer), and try to test with browsers available on other operating systems (such as Netscape on Solaris, Mozilla on Linux, etc.). Not everyone uses a standard PC.
- Careful with the music... it can take a long time to load and can get annoying. Provide the option to turn it off.
- Keep in mind that not everyone has broadband into the home. Some people are still using 28.8 modems, so keep that in mind when adding graphics or other things that may take time to load. Consider thumbnail graphics with the option to

- click to enlarge (requires two copies of the image, unless a package like IDS is used)
- Make sure contact information is easy to find.
 - Keep in mind that a wide range of people could visit your site. Does your site have text that is easy for software for the visually challenged interpret, or is all the key information in a graphical format? Does your site use sounds to communicate key information that the hearing impaired will miss? Make sure your site is as accessible as the target audience needs it to be.

This is a start. Web designers would be able to provide more ideas.

5.2.2 Web site Advertising

Make sure the site is registered with various search engines like Yahoo!, Google, Lycos, AltaVista, Excite, MSN, AOL, Netscape, etc. Check out <http://www.dogpile.com> and see what engines they use. Some places on the web facilitate registering your site with several engines at one time.

Go to <http://www.google.com> and look for “search engine.” Many search engines will take free registrations. Some lesser-known engines may be spam traps. Some multiple-search engine registration sites require payment. Research them to see if they’re legit before paying.

Get your sites onto related webrings. Go to <http://www.webring.com> to start your search. Also do a Google or Yahoo search for “webring” and see what else is out there.

There are several advertisers such as LinkExchange (<http://www.linkexchange.com>, also known as bCentral) that will include a banner that you create to certain specifications (size, animation, etc.) to enter a rotation with others. People will see your banner, and hopefully click on it to reach your site. Search for “banner network ads” to find other resources.

5.2.3 Things to Avoid

Almost everyone who has an email account receives unsolicited commercial emails (UCEs), otherwise known as spam. Most people find spam annoying and either deletes it without reading it, or determines the source of the email² and reports the person with the hope that the Internet Service Provider will pull the plug on the account. Don’t be a spammer. Act responsibly.

Do not purchase a CD with email addresses with the intent of using it to advertise your site. Someone probably created that CD by using an automated means of trolling through

² Tracking down spammers can be done either by reading through the email headers and using readily available lookup tools, or by utilizing an automated system like spamcop.net that does the same thing.

web pages and pulling off email addresses or using spyware³. Some vendors claim that these are “opt-in” addresses only. I don’t knowingly opt-in to anything and I’m receiving spam from people using these CDs, so I doubt the validity of their claim.

It is better to ensure that your site is in the major search engines and find a few email lists/Yahoo groups to announce the site. Do not flood lists or cross-post to multiple lists with high overlap with emails about your site since it can annoy the people on the list to the point that your message is ineffective.

Consider creating an email list that people can join for announcements about upcoming events. Send them updates about once a month.

5.3 Flyers, Postcards, and Business Cards

Consider advertising your events, meetings, even your very existence by creating flyers in various sizes, business cards, and mailing out post cards.

Flyers should look good in either color or grayscale. Normal size would be 8.5”x11” (either portrait or landscape orientation). If possible, consider a half-size version and even a business card version for places with smaller bulletin boards. Flyers need the following characteristics:

- Main information is clear, such as putting the name, time, and location of the event in larger type
- Contact info for your organization, especially for smaller versions that may not have room for the who, what, when, where info.
- Eye-catching... a bold border works wonders, even for black and white.
- Your logo (if you have one, if not, try to make something representative of your organization)
- Costs, if any

Put them up anywhere that will let you... bookstores, coffee shops, grocery stores, comic book shops, music stores, computer stores, bowling alleys, etc. Ask about community bulletin boards. If there isn’t one, ask if a pile of flyers can be left somewhere to be given out. It doesn’t hurt to ask. Some companies may not put a flyer in the public area, but will put one up in the lunchroom, which is at least some exposure!

Carry business cards. Use them when interacting with others, such as when providing information about the organization, or trying to establish business relations.

³ Spyware is software, typically a web browser cookie or registry item, that is quietly installed on your machine while browsing the web. It gathers and sends information such as what sites you’ve visited, email addresses you’ve used, etc. and sends the data back to the source. Consider getting AdAware from LavaSoft to combat this problem.

If you have a mailing list, consider sending out post cards as a reminder of an event. They are a lot cheaper to send than a letter. Also, post cards can be made from using heavier paper stock and cutting the sheets into quarters.

5.4 Walking Billboards

Try to get shirts, jackets, hats, etc. made up with the name of the organization and be a walking billboard.

For small quantities, consider CafePress (<http://www.cafepress.com>), or try to make transfers yourself (careful, most need to be removed hot! Teflon tips for the fingers help!). In addition to materials at your local office supply or computer store, consider what is available from Transfer Technologies (<http://www.transfertechnology.com>).

Also, have those business cards, flyers, etc. handy just in case someone asks for more information.

5.5 Stationary

This was mentioned briefly in the flyer section.

Stationary, which includes business cards, envelopes, and letterhead, can be created inexpensively using today's home desktop publishing software (Word, StarOffice, Corel, MS Publisher, Adobe Front Page, TeX, even PrintShop, and many others). Of course, some software is cheaper and easier to use than others are, so pick what both your training and bank account can afford.

The key is making the stationary look professional. It needs to be clean, free of typos, and provide contact information (at minimum, postal address, can also include phone/fax numbers, web address, and email address) that is obvious.

5.6 Information Packets

When dealing with the media and the public, it is useful to have information packets ready. Typically, it is only necessary to have a few assembled and have the ability to produce more quickly. Consider including the following:

- Who We Are/What We Do page summarizing what your organization is about (see that section earlier in this document). A more detailed description can be included as a separate document for optional additional reading.
- Copies of a few select news articles. If your group has provided services in the community, copies of thank you letters also work
- Music organizations may want to include sample programs (reserve demo discs for special circumstances... keep in mind mechanical license fees)
- Example membership application, if appropriate
- Example flyers, if appropriate

- Picture of the organization, if appropriate
- Contact information (business cards)

The folder should not be big and bulky. Try to keep it under 10 documents, where an article or a flyer is considered a “document.” The folder could be as simple as a plain pocket folder with a nice copy of the organization’s logo inserted or pasted on, or as fancy as a glossy folder specially printed.

Keep in mind that too much glitz and gloss can detract from the message that your organization is trying to send (besides, it makes the papers slippery and harder to carry).

5.7 Be Out There

Don’t hide in the basement, get out there! Have at least some of the meetings in a public location, such as a library. Consider participating in parades, telethons, charity walks car washes, bookstore or movie promotionals, etc.

Performing groups can consider attending chamber luncheons, getting involved with the local arts organizations, work with local schools, etc.

Be out there where people can find the organization!

6 Building Business Relations

Much of this has been covered already. Some things to keep in mind:

- First impressions are very important. Look organized and professional.
- Dress as you would for a job interview, especially for the first meeting. For sci-fi groups, showing up in a costume, wearing a Star Trek communicator, carrying a phaser or tricorder, etc. will bring about thoughts of that infamous Saturday Night Live “Get a Life” sketch with William Shatner. Instead, invest in an engraved name badge with your name and the group name.
- Bring information about the organization including the Information Packet (described earlier) and business cards
- Have an idea of what your organization can do. For example, building a relationship with a local theater for a movie promotional should include a written statement with ideas of what your group can do for them.
- Be prepared to write down notes, don’t trust memory.
- Follow up afterwards, at least to say “thanks for meeting with us” and to summarize the agreement in writing.
- Be prepared to give as well as take. This means knowing the limits of what you, as a representative for your organization, have the authority to do. For example, a music group could offer a free ad in the program in exchange for a business providing items for a post-concert reception, or a science fiction club offering free

- publicity and personnel for a movie opening in exchange for a recruiting/advertisement space in the lobby of a theater.
- Find out what the representative for the business has the authority to do.
 - Make sure that all agreements are in writing. That includes notes, letters, and emails.

Earlier, Chamber of Commerce involvement was mentioned. This is one of many ways to network and build relationships. Also, consider attending conventions that pertain to areas of interest for your organization and network. Have information about the organization readily available. Sometimes, an opportunity presents itself totally outside of normal context, such as running into someone at the doctor's office.

Find out about related events in other venues. For example, science fiction groups can look at events at local planetariums and museums. Flip through the calendar section of the newspaper every so often to get an idea of what else is out there. It is possible that a co-promotional opportunity could present itself.

7 Recruiting/Advertising Booth

This is an essential part of working in a public venue. It doesn't matter if your organization is trying to attract people to attend a concert, sell something, or bring in recruits... the same general principles apply.

7.1 The Table/Booth

The Advertising Booth/Table should be neat, provide information about the organization, and catch attention. Items to consider:

- Banners or signs identifying the group
- Flyers, including some printed on color stock (get document holders, if possible, to save table space)
- Awards and certificates on display provided there is room. At one event, we used two pieces of lattice in a frame, hinged together to make a corner, covered it in fabric, and hung awards on it.
- Scrapbook showing past events
- Who we are/what we do information
- Information packets (not on the table, but to hand out to media and potential business relations)
- Computer with monitor playing a slideshow on repeat with images and facts about the organization. Play a CD in the background (for music groups, consider past concert recordings, dumped to CD for this purpose). It's an inexpensive multi-media presentation!
- Freebies such as notepads, pens, pencils, and other giveaway items

- Cashbox and receipt book, if items are being sold or charity donations are being taken.

7.2 Conduct

Since this document addresses a wide range of people, those that think this section addresses the obvious just need to be patient.

First impressions count. Someone who comes by and sees people at the table bad-mouthing others, bickering, chowing down food, falling asleep, ignoring people coming by the table, or looking sloppy will just keep walking. Show professionalism and class. If a disagreement between table workers occurs, take the disagreement elsewhere. Eat food discretely, preferably away from the table (unless it's something small like a cookie). Act interested in the people approaching the table, say hello to them, and offer to answer questions, ask if the person needs help.

Remember, be polite.

In addition to personnel looking and acting interested and enthusiastic, make sure they know the answers to commonly asked questions, or at least have the information written down and placed where they can reference it quickly. For example, if your organization is selling items, make sure they know the prices.

Depending on the location of your table, people may treat your table as an information booth. Make sure that everyone working the table knows the area around the table, including the location of the nearest restrooms, ATM machines, directions to convention rooms, where an actual information table is, etc. Knowing the answers to some of these questions will leave people with the impression that you're a nice group of helpful people. It could be an icebreaker for more communication!

7.3 More Information

More information about working recruiting table rules, working at conventions, and selling items can be found on the USS Athena website at <http://ussathena.org>, click on "Crew Manual" and then go to the link for "Recruiting Table, Ship Sales, and Charity Raffles."