

HOW TO INCREASE CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Mike Stein WB9NOO

The Golden Rule

Every person who gets into ham radio does so because one certain aspect of the hobby has attracted them. It is up to us, at every club meeting, code and theory class, Hamfest and ham exam session to find out what that is and encourage it. We must set aside our prejudices, opinions, and interests in order to do so. If we do this, the new ham may become excited and more involved with the hobby. If we don't, they may disappear forever.

Diversity

The biggest problem with ham radio is there is simply too much to do. This is becoming a "Virtual" hobby; that is, one can be completely immersed with all aspects of the hobby but never transmit an RF carrier. If a club is to survive, it must strive to be everything to everybody. Here are some of my ideas.

Newsletter

First, I would suggest printing out a list of all hams in your area. Next, "brainstorm" the list past several members to update from a personal level. Then, send out newsletters to everyone you can, perhaps two or three months in a row. This helps to make your club known to others.

Next, you may want to combine your newsletter with another nearby ham club. This certainly cuts down on the costs for both sides, and yields more interesting articles. You need to add more items in addition to the ARRL bulletin reprints. Some examples:

Product Reviews- Contact club members and find out what new items they have purchased. If they don't want to write an article, find someone who does and have them interview the person. Everyone is interested in what other people have and how well they like it.

Biographies- Personal articles on the lives of other club members, or simply what they like doing with this hobby.

Theory Lessons- Explanations of how something works.

New happenings- Plenty of exciting new things in electronics to write about, such as Bluetooth, LED light bulbs, or the new 42 volt automotive systems.

Officers

Every year at election time, it seems we must beg people to run, and vote them in unopposed. Why doesn't anyone want to run? Simple- in this day and age we love to criticize others. Who wants to try to get something done and receive criticism in return? Perhaps what a club needs to do is to make a goal that every member will hold office, regardless of how good or bad they are perceived to be. Assign permanent elmers for each position so the new person will never be left floating. Everyone should experience being an officer.

Sub Groups

Try to start as many sub groups as possible, based on members' interests. It does not have to be anything fancy, and may simply be a list of members who got together to operate in a contest, or hold a foxhunt, or whatever. The idea is to introduce those with common interests together, while providing an elmer base. One good example of a sub group would be a Tech Team

Virtual Library

Books are expensive. However, most of us have a good collection of what interests us. Make a list of books and magazines that members have, who are willing to loan them out. Start a club "virtual library".

Virtual Test Equipment

On the same note, make a list of test equipment that members are willing to loan out. They may wish to accompany the more expensive pieces to assure proper operation.

Club Activities

Club activities are important. Unfortunately, most clubs limit themselves to field day. There's always someone who cannot make it, or just wishes to repeat the joy of field day without waiting another year. Members who enjoy operating events should hold some impromptu operations during the rest of the year.

Also have a worked all club members award, or who can collect the most QSLs from other members. List other operating frequencies members like to frequent, in addition to the local repeater.

Fund Raising

Fund raising is extremely important, since it can keep the dues down which encourages more members to join. Some examples are-

Auction- where members bring in low priced items and the club receives 10 percent of the action. This is perhaps the biggest fund raising event of our local club.

Tail Gate Hamfest- where one meeting is spent in the parking lot showing off and selling equipment.

Banquets- the perennial favorite

Shack Tours- A new idea inspired by the local West central Neighborhood, who charges ten dollars to tour ten grand olde homes. This event is held once a year, and generally has different homes every year. I would suggest charging maybe three dollars a person to tour five hamshacks. Each shack is to advertise a theme, based on the operating interests of the owner. Examples are the homebrewer's shack, contester's shack, digital communication's shack, etc. Also each XYL is to have an XYL theme, based on her interests. This encourages one's spouse to accompany him. As you can see, this exposes kids, theory students, and other hams to other aspects of the hobby. A 2 meter talk in frequency adds to the excitement.

Summary

My interest in this hobby has always been the technical side, learning everything about everything. I have enjoyed meeting others to see what excites them about our hobby. Also, if I have a question, I know who to talk to.

As you can see, my suggestions above thrive on that principle: sharing with others everything this wonderful hobby has to offer.

Mike Stein WB9NOO
mjstein1@onlyinternet.net
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