



LEADERSHIP TIPS

MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

COMMON QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Here are a few of the questions you may hear and some suggested answers:

Q: I can never get to meetings because of my schedule. Why should I join?

A: Because there are many other ways in which you can get involved and help further the profession. For example, you can be a mentor to an early-career journalist, help organize programs, judge contests, attend programs, etc. By joining, you add to our strength as an organization and help us speak out with a louder voice on First Amendment issues.

Also, by joining you receive materials and access to services that can help you as a journalist, such as Quill, access to seminars and national convention at a reduced rate, and several benefits including the [SPJ Freelancer Directory](#) and SPJ Job Bank to help with employment needs.

Q: What do I get for my dues payment?

A: SPJ doesn't cost. It pays. You receive Quill magazine, including annual reports on FOI, ethics, diversity, and technology. You can move to nearly any significant market and plug right into an SPJ chapter. You have the opportunity to discuss vital issues with other journalists in your market. You have access to professional development programs designed with you in mind.

Also, don't forget that SPJ is the only organization that represents all journalists—regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or media affiliation. That puts SPJ in the best position to protect your First Amendment and FOI rights as a journalist and citizen.

Q: I'm not interested in joining a local chapter, and I don't really see much at the national level.

A: The local chapter is interested in improving, and we need you to help. We can only be as good as the quality and the number of members we have. If you care about journalism in this town, how about helping us?

On the national level, you just need to [take a look at SPJ's website](#) to stay up to date and find information on current happenings. By joining, you add to our strength and our voice at the state, local and national levels.

Q: It's nice to sit and chat about issues, but they don't really have much to do with my job day to day.

A: That's not true! Many issues, such as sunshine laws and cameras in the court, have a direct bearing on how you do your job—no matter what type of journalism you're in. And, with public scrutiny of the media at an all-time high, an open examination of journalism ethics can only add to our credibility.

Besides, SPJ isn't in the business of just sitting and talking. We also act, both on the local and national levels.

Q: Journalism is in a hopeless situation, and nobody cares. Why bother?

A: It's an uphill battle, but it's a battle worth fighting. People may not seem wildly supportive of the media right now, but public opinion ebbs and flows.

Q: As journalists, we're supposed to be objective. How can I be part of an organization that lobbies and advocates?

A: Objectivity means we are trying to make sure that all viewpoints are represented in news coverage. It does not mean that we totally abdicate our rights and responsibilities as a citizen. If we don't stand up for First Amendment rights related to news coverage, it will only lead lawmakers to believe that we consent and agree to any curbing of our freedom they may choose to impose.

Q: I'm already a member of another journalism organization and I don't see any reason to join SPJ as well.

A. We respect those organizations and certainly don't want you to choose between us. SPJ, however, is in a unique position. It's the only organization that represents all journalists, and it addresses those issues of concern to all of us. On such critical issues as First Amendment freedoms and FOI issues, SPJ has the most potential to make a difference. You are needed to help protect journalists' rights in these key areas.

Q: I thought SPJ was only for print journalists (or only reporters). Why should I (a photographer, or online journalist) join?

A. That's a common misconception, and it's one we're working hard to correct. [This would be a good time to point out local and national officers who are NOT print journalists].

We believe there is value in journalists of all kinds sharing their viewpoints on issues of interest to all of us. We want to help make that happen.

Also, the more types of journalists we can include in SPJ, the more representative we will be. That is valuable as we speak to lawmakers, the courts, and the public about issues of concern to all of us.

Q: Why do you allow PR people in SPJ?

A. Only members of the working press can join SPJ as new professional members. However, once someone has been a member of SPJ, they can continue their membership even if they change professions.

Our PR members are welcome to remain in SPJ if they keep their dues current. Many of them still take a personal interest in helping to protect journalism. It also can help the working relationships between journalists and PR people for them to know one another from SPJ. Finally, many PR people provide valuable assistance in keeping chapters active and vibrant.

Q: I'm at a stage in my career where I really don't need SPJ anymore. I'm established, I'm versed in the issues of journalism, and I know what I need to know about being a journalist.

A. As a matter of growth, it's important to continue to work on these issues throughout your career. Also, you have a lot to offer to young journalists on their way up. Don't think only of what you can get out of the organization; think of what you can give back to journalism.

With your experience, you might make a valuable contribution as a chapter leader as national committee member, or national board member.

Q: I'm a freelancer. What does SPJ have to offer me?

A. As a freelancer you probably spend most of your time working on your own without networking and professional support available in newsrooms. SPJ offers you the chance to meet regularly with other journalists from your area and to participate in professional development programs that can help you grow your freelance business. The [Freelancer Directory](#) allows members to post bios, contact information, and work samples to the online directory. Editors and media outlets seeking freelance writers can search the directory by location or specialty.