



# LEADERSHIP TIPS

## MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT: PRO CHAPTERS

### POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH

While there is still a large majority of our professional members in print journalism, they are just a fraction of the working journalists in this country. The potential for growth is great.

Your chapter should strive to recruit journalists of all types. Your chapter and the national organization should also focus on retaining young journalists who were members of a student chapter.

The Society appears to have problems on two important fronts: attracting greater numbers of students to join student chapters and keeping journalists in mid-career. The latter is of particular concern because that is where we would be most likely to find leadership on local and national levels.

The loyalty of our present members is encouraging and provides a base for growth.

### WHY DO MEMBERS STAY?

Members stay members for various reasons, including instruction in professional development; networking, receiving legal advice, gaining a resume credential, Quill, chapter activities, and FOI activities.

Our greatest challenge may be recruiting members from among a group of people not known for being “joiners.”

Like anyone, they need bolstering from time to time and reassurance that they’re involved in something meaningful and bigger than themselves. This is a purpose SPJ can serve for them.

The quickest way to alienate them is to appeal to their “need to belong” or their “need to join.” Instead, appeal to the need to preserve the vitality of journalism.

### WHY DO MEMBERS LEAVE?

A survey found those who left often cited **inactive or ineffective local chapters** as a reason. Often, people leave the Society when they leave the profession.

Many people believe the organization didn’t offer enough direct services, such as job placement and professional development.

Some saw SPJ dues as being too expensive, although our dues have ranked among the lowest of communications associations for years.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY TO PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS?

Many prospective members have not joined because they have not been asked. They are likely to respond positively to a personal invitation sent by a respected colleague. Personal efforts and recruitment materials should contain key message points:

- Journalism deserves the thought, care, and attention of those who practice it.
- You can do this by joining SPJ.

- We're on the way up both locally and nationally. Your input and energy can help us make things happen.
- The power of the media depends on the confidence and support of the public. You can help maintain and strengthen such confidence and support by joining.
- You can be a better journalist by joining SPJ, and your career will be enhanced. (Emphasize local and national professional development programs).

### TIPS ON PROMOTING SPJ MEMBERSHIP

Know your organization. Be prepared to talk about local accomplishments in programming and First Amendment issues. [Check SPJ's website frequently](#) for examples of recent national actions.

Appeal to the professionalism of journalists. They are not by nature joiners, but they do care about their profession. Emphasize SPJ's efforts to keep the profession strong and growing.

Appeal to journalists' desire to advance journalism and make and keep it a respected profession.

Let prospective members know that they will get out of SPJ what they put into it. Their level of commitment is up to them.

Stress the benefits of becoming a member, including:

- Professional development programs
- SPJ's website
- Quill magazine
- Job contacts/networking
- Advocacy
- Annual Convention

### HOW CAN NATIONAL SPJ HELP?

Membership recruitment and retention is a major concern of the national office, which is there to help and provide support in any way possible. Specifically, national SPJ can offer the following:

- Experienced staff members who know the problems you face and help by answering questions.
- Brochures are available to help you promote SPJ.
- In areas without a chapter, national will assist in determining the level of interest in starting a chapter.