



Order Sons of Italy in America
Achieving Membership Goals



Acknowledgement

It is with deep appreciation we acknowledge efforts of Laura Frappollo, Membership Chairperson and the Grand Lodge of Virginia for their contribution to this presentation.

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Basic Goals for Membership

- As we all know, the lifeblood of any organization is its membership. The number of members who renew each year, the number of members who take an active part in meetings and activities, and the number of members who pay their dues each year but only attend special events.
- There is another type of member every organization absolutely must have if it is to survive – they are new members.



Keep Members Coming Back!

- We have found that keeping meetings brief and programs fun is the most effective way to keep your members coming back. Most business is conducted during the Council meetings. During Lodge meetings present the Council's recommendations and decisions, then move on to an entertaining program. Try to have food or food-related programs because, believe it or not, we love to eat! Making sure we have some socializing time is important. Your lodge is like an extended family to many of members and we do our best to warmly welcome all new members into our family.



Suggestions for Membership Retention

- The most important thing you can do to draw in new member is to make your Lodge fun, productive, accessible and exciting.



Lodge Meetings Can Be Fun!

- Take a serious look at your meeting place (if you do not have a Lodge building), dates and times. Are they convenient for young families?
- Are your business meetings long and boring? Although OSIA does recommend the prescribed form of meeting and this should be adhered to; try conducting all business on the Council level. Let your General Meetings be a place to have fun after a *brief* business meeting.
- Do your meetings only have speakers? Many younger people are not excited about sitting for ½ hour or so listening to a lecture. Consider some of the following programs to make your Lodge more fun:
 - Cooking contests
 - Wine tasting
 - Move Nights
 - Game Nights
 - Cooking demonstrations
 - Parties based on time of year (Valentine's Day, Christmas, etc.)
 - Make Pizza or Gelato



Lodge Meetings Can Be Fun!

- Hold special events.
 - Trips to vineyards
 - Go to local shows
 - Go out to dinner at local restaurants
 - Take a trip to an Italian Festival
 - Participate in a local community event selling Italian goods (food, etc.) to help make your name known community-wide.
 - Columbus Day Dinner and/or Dance
 - Carnevale
- How to get members involved:
 - Ask them personally! Rather than wait for someone to volunteer, ask them personally to do a job. Most people will say yes, they've just been waiting to be asked.
 - Divide your membership up into teams . When you need jobs done, divide the jobs between the teams (Incentives). This is also a good way to have lodge contests (cooking, etc.).



Try These Suggestions

- Send application with newsletter.
- Have brochure about lodge ready to hand to newly found prospect.
- Give free Italian language lessons.
- Show Italian films.
- Sell gift certificates for membership (a great Christmas gift idea!)
- At events have a sponsor/mentor at each table of new members.
- Have Pizza making demo program.
- Contact prospect/recruit after first meeting.
- Have very little business at General Membership meetings; handle most business at Council meetings.
- Have wine tasting program
- Mail letters to those of Italian surnames; get names from church directory.
- Publish notice of activities each month; takes three notices for some to act.
- Join the Chamber of Commerce



Try These Suggestions

- Make a library display, e.g. of donated books.
- Hold dances.
- Food, food, food!
- Have a lunch bunch of buddies, and have them invite a friend.
- Have meatball making contest.
- Have cooking contests with teams; invite non-members to judge.
- Have three teams of cooks: appetizers, main course, dessert for pot luck dinners.
- Feed students.
- Have fashion show program.
- Make meeting reminder calls.



Try These Suggestions

- Make birthday calls.
- Give free meal on birthday.
- Call members who don't have email.
- Have special children events.
- Have weekend meetings, so children can come on non-school night. Take friends to meetings; provide incentives to do so, if needed.
- Hold flea markets.
- Target recent retirees.
- Raffle theater tickets to public; have to be present to win.
- Rent a race track box.



Promote our National Presence

- OSIA is a National Organization
 - Supreme Lodge
 - Grand Lodge
 - Local Lodge
- All members are part of OSIA Foundation for all charitable endeavors
- All members are part of Commission for Social Justice fighting stereotyping and discrimination



Promote our National Presence

- Italian America Magazine
- Commemorative Italian American Heroes of Baseball
- Unitours OSIA Travel
- OSIA Cookbook
- “Italian Heritage” Continuity DVD Program
- Licensing Agreement with Votto Wines Launching 6 varieties under the exclusive label Leone D’Oro, presented by Figli d’Italia, Inc.



Increasing Your Membership

- Select several zip codes in your area and identify people with Italian surnames. *(Ask several members to search the telephone directory of your area noting Italian names is one way to do this.)*
- Mail out a letter of introduction, which should include the following:
 - The name of your lodge
 - The name and telephone number of your president and membership chair
 - The web address of your lodge (if you have one); the web address of the Grand Lodge; and the web address of National OSIA (WWW.OSIA.ORG)
 - Some of the activities and charities of interest to your lodge
 - An invitation to your next meeting or special event.
 - An invitation to attend even if they are not interested in joining. It is important not to pressure anyone into attending. If they feel pressured, they will not attend and they will be left with a bad impression about us.



Increasing Your Membership

- At an open house or special event, have name badges for all members and a different color name badge for those who are guests. Members can then easily identify each guest, introduce themselves and help to make the guest feel at home. After all, that is what being Italian is all about.
- Each guest should be given a packet which should contain information about the Sons of Italy, about your lodge (including names and phone numbers or email addresses of officers,) your latest newsletter, and an application form.
- Each guest should receive a newsletter for a minimum of three months. Longer, if they attend meetings and events.



Increasing Your Membership

- The president and membership chair should keep in touch with those guests who have not become members and find out why not. It is important to identify why they do not want to join. It might be the types of activities, or the lack of activities. Once the reason is identified, they and others might join.
- Membership drives must continue all year long or the membership will dwindle. It is harder to build back up than it is to expand.



Conclusion

- To keep OSIA membership growing will take hard work on the part of all members and supporters.
- These tips will help you on our journey to the future of OSIA.