MOTIVATING YOUR MEMBERS

Keeping group members motivated is the key to a successful, healthy group. The difficult part is figuring out how to do it. Motivation is a very individualized need – each group member will have different keys that unlock the secret to their own personal reasons for working with the group. Each person's reason for joining the organization gives you the key to what s/he wants to gain from involvement in the group.

Some students may have joined to meet people and make new friends. You might motivate them by involving them in tasks that require them to work closely with others, by assigning them to the social committee, etc. Other students may have joined your group because they have strong beliefs in the cause your organization represents. These people could be motivated by the opportunity to voice those beliefs – ask their opinions often, invite them to give a talk at a meeting, ask them to recruit new members, etc.

Students sometimes join groups to learn or explore something new. To motivate these members, try planning programs and events that appeal to their curiosity (or better yet, ask them to help plan such activities).

A group often attracts members because it relates to their major or future career. You might motivate these members by giving them a chance to practice developed skills and the opportunity to gain new skills.

Finally, students may have joined your organization to have a place where they "belong" – where they feel satisfied and needed. Providing opportunities for these people to make contributions to the organization is an especially important means of motivation. Acknowledge their accomplishments frequently and publicly. Let them know that they are important! Of course, this applies to all members, no matter why they joined the group. The following methods of motivation tend to have "universal" application also. Try these with all of your members:

- Use people's _names_ often – A person's own name is the sweetest sound in the world.
- Be _courteous_ and _respectful_.

- Give *individual attention* and demonstrate that you *understand* members and *accept* their strengths and weaknesses.
- Keep members *informed* – what they're not up on, they're likely to be down on.
- *Listen* to others.
- *Be fair, honest and consistent* – show no favoritism.
- Provide honest *feedback* – praise their successes publicly, and privately give constructive criticism to help them learn from their mistakes.
- Involve members in *goal-setting* and *decision-making*.
- *Clarify* your *expectations* of members and their expectations of you.
- Occasionally serve *food* or have some kind of *treat* at your meetings.
- Use *team-building activities* to re-energize the group and strengthen loyalty and commitment. (People will work harder for other people than for an impersonal entity called an organization).

Motivation comes from inner needs, drives and goals. As a leader, your task in motivating others is to tap into these to supply a channel for their fulfillment. The individual members must do the rest.

If you are having problems figuring out how to motivate group members, try this exercise. During a meeting, conduct an open brainstorming session on all of the reasons why people joined the group. This list will probably range from personal growth to meeting new friends to free food!! Then, break up your group into sub-groups and assign each sub-group a portion of the list. Have each sub-group analyze how well your organization meets each reason for joining. Then have each sub-group report back to the large group. Allow this exercise to promote dialog in the group about how motivation could be increased with group members.