

TORCH

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS

Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs



International Association of Torch Clubs
2917 Duchess Drive
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
Phone: (269) 312-8026
Toll Free: 888-622-4101
Email: jamescoppinger@att.net

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Table of Contents

Preface

Introduction

Section One: Organizing for Member Recruitment

Section Two: The Recruitment Process Step by Step

Section Three: Resources for Member Recruitment

Section Four: Enriching the Torch Experience Through Diversity

Section Five: An Active Commitment to Member Retention

Section Six: Sharing the Light of Torch: Establishing New Torch Clubs

Section Seven: Things to Keep in Mind

Appendices

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Preface

In the long history of the international Association of Torch Clubs, inc., the issue of the recruitment of new members, the retention of new and old members, and the laudable work of establishing new Torch Clubs has been before the general membership many times. It has been the substance of newsletters, Torch papers, and special membership campaigns beginning as early as the first decade of the Association's existence. This booklet, with Suggestions and resource information for torch clubs on recruiting and retaining members and club extension, is designed to focus attention on the issues as it presents itself at the onset of the 21st century.

A favorite saying of one of the first secretaries of the IATC was that "where there no vision the people perish". This desire, this need for vision applies to the membership efforts of individual Torch clubs, of Regional Directors and of the International Association itself. The future of each of these belongs to the people who believe in the spirit of Torch and who are willing and able to find new initiatives and ways to share the torch experience with new members in existing and new Torch Clubs

It is the Earnest hop of the Officers and Staff of the IATC and the Regional directors that Torch Club Officers and their membership committees will find useful and motivating information in each of these sections of this booklet.

George P. Crepeau, PhD
Past President, IATC

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Introduction

The thoughtful Torch papers, lively discussion, and congenial fellowship we cherish in Torch depend on steady attention to member recruitment and retention. In the long run, investing efforts in membership development bring the rewards of better fellowship to all club members. All Torch members have a responsibility to assist with member recruitment and retention, but the directors and officers of the Torch club have special obligations to assure the long-term stability of the club through attention to membership. This resource guide is intended for club leaders as they address those tasks. This booklet also offers specific suggestions on retention and new club building. Retention is essential for every club. Establishing new clubs is important for a vital International Association of Torch Clubs.

This resource guide updates the previous IATC *Handbook on Membership Development and Recruitment* by incorporating the insight of the many club leaders who participated in the work of the Torch International Membership Advisory Committee chaired by Leo Kellogg. The six mailings prepared by the Advisory Committee were filled with rich collegial advice and detailed examples of strategies that have been successful in some clubs. Specific advice from the Membership Advisory Committee and membership discussions at the Winchester Convention of the International Association of Torch Clubs appear as text boxes throughout. Other boxes offer perspectives on membership drawn from the history of the International Association of Torch Clubs (IATC) as recorded in Thomas Carroll's *Evolution of a Social Compact: Essays on the Torch Experience* (1981).

Attendees at the Athens Convention were invited to add comments and suggestions to a draft of this guide.

Local Torch Clubs have evolved and flourished in various ways and each has distinctive identity. This collection represents an array of strategies that have worked in some circumstances. It is our hope that they will help other clubs maintain and spread the light of Torch.

David C. Smith
Director-at-Large Membership
International Association of Torch Clubs
2003

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Section One

Organizing For Member Recruitment

The Keys to Success in Recruitment

There is no magic formula that will insure a Torch club's success in recruiting new members, but fruitful efforts usually have these fundamental underpinnings:

- A widely shared conviction in the club that membership in Torch is an honor;
- Maintenance of high standards of qualification for members;
- A record of high quality meetings featuring thoughtful and engaging Torch papers.;
- A convivial meeting place where professional feel comfortable.

Club quality is the basis of recruitment

J. Patrick Sewall, past president of the St. Catharines Torch Club writes:

Membership success can only be accomplished if the quality of the program (chiefly the papers and discussion of them) is high. In a sense we are only as good as our talk, talk before dinner, talk in the form of a paper, talk as the introduction of the paper-giver and thanks befitting the paper by a pre-designated respondent, talk in the form of questions and (inevitably) talk as comments using the paper as springboard, talk as conversation in the dining room, until the last souls head homeward.

Organization for membership development? We seek to proactivate all members to discern and interest outstanding candidates for Torch. Our club has a quiet but persistent and effective Membership Chair who follows up with prospective members once they have visited. The importance of a prospect's initial visit can hardly be exaggerated. Hosts often have lined up for pre-dining conversation fellow members who help the visitor feel welcome and may thereafter elect to co-sponsor his or her membership. Frequently a table has been composed in advance (our tables seat eight in a circle) with couples sitting a few chairs apart and, when feasible, alternate seating of men and women. A guest will be introduced to all diners assembled, sometimes with an amusing anecdote, always with respect, and will have met or interacted with many people in the course of an evening. Yes, we recognized that Torch is about good fellowship as well as inter-professional stimulation.

Creating Participation and Accountability for Member Recruitment

The board of directors has responsibility for maintaining the club's values and for translating them into action. Many clubs find it helpful to set plans and goals in regard to membership. Good understanding of membership issues within the board is the basis for effective communication with the entire club membership.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Shaping the Context for Recruitment: Suggestions for Building Public Awareness of Torch

- Publicize the club program with local press releases
- Invite the public access cable channel to tape a club meeting for broadcast
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A Membership Committee?

Many clubs have a membership committee which is responsible for initiating, encouraging, and/or coordinating member recruitment. A committee approach to recruitment has several advantages. Several club members bring their experience and expertise to the focused tasks of recruitment. They share responsibility for the work and for helping the club achieve goals set by the board of directors. The committee approach also enables a club to develop continuity of experience and policy on membership.

Who Should Serve on the Membership Committee?

Club members who serve on the membership committee should:

- Have the concern, time, and energy to devote to membership development
- Represent a variety of professional backgrounds and ages
- Have skills in management and communication
- Have stature in the professional community

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

How Many Members Should a Torch Club Have?

The number of members in a club determines, to a great extent, a club's "personality."

Among the advantages of a large club:

- More potential speakers
- Greater diversity of professions
- Stronger finances

Among the advantages of a small club:

- More intimate fellowship
- More frequent opportunities for members to present papers
- Greater opportunities for participation in discussion

The club members should discuss the dynamics of size and determine what best suits their situation. On that basis, the club should adopt maximum and minimum limits for club size. With those limits in mind, the board can assign annual goals for new member recruitment to the membership committee. (Note: IATC requires a new club to have a minimum of twenty members in order to receive a charter. Within the IATC, the size distribution of clubs is approximately as follows:

Small Clubs (35 and under)	66%
Medium size clubs (36-50)	14%
Large clubs (over 50)	20%

Establishing criteria and procedures for member election

The bylaws of a Torch Club set forth the formal process of election and may list general criteria that candidates must meet. Beyond these bylaws, there is a need for an orderly, consistent procedure for presenting applications to the electing body. Section Two of this guide addresses the recruitment process step-by-step. Criteria for eligibility and the procedures for evaluating candidates should, of course, be developed or revised *apart from the review of specific membership applications*.

Some clubs have very formal election processes; others are quite informal. At a minimum we recommend that the club have:

1. A written application providing information about the applicant's educational background, professional experience, present professional position or status, and topics he or she might wish to address in a Torch paper. The purpose of this information is not only to determine if the candidate is qualified, but also (a) to provide information to club members so that they can make a new member feel welcome; and (b) provide the club leaders with a steady updating of the club profile (professions represented, etc.);

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

2. A process of formal review of the application to assure that the candidate meets the standards of the Bylaws of the Torch club and the IATC; and
3. A process for formally notifying the candidate of the outcome of the review process.

A membership committee works within the guidelines set by the club's officers or directors. It is often the case that, in its work of recruiting and reviewing individuals for membership, the committee encounters matters that require policy clarification or invite policy additions or amendments. Indeed, one of the advantages of a committee approach to membership is that the committee is positioned to give focused and concise advice to the club's board on improving procedures that will enhance that club's ability to achieve its membership goals in an effective and timely fashion.

The following section discusses the steps in the member recruitment process in more detail.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Section Two

The Recruitment Process Step by Step

The processes by which Torch clubs bring in new members vary from the very informal to the very formal. In general, there are seven basic steps to the process.

Step One: Identifying Prospects

There are two basic approaches to identifying prospects: committee-directed and club member directed.

Committee-directed identification

In this approach, the membership committee reviews the club's current membership and decides what the needs of the club are in terms of overall size and balances (professional, gender, age, etc.). Based on this review, the committee draws up a "target list" of candidate types; e.g., a female lawyer, a young physician, an accountant.

With the focus provided by this list, the committee then generates a list of prospects who could potentially meet the club's needs. To identify the prospects, the committee may draw on its members' personal contact information, follow up on suggestions provided by other club members, or search public sources (professional listing, media reports, etc.).

The *advantages* of the committee-directed approach are:

- Greater control by the club over the growth and composition of its membership;
- Clear fixed responsibility for achieving membership goals;
- _____
- _____.

The *concerns* associated with the committee-directed approach are

- The members of the committee are required to commit a reasonable amount of time and effort to the task;
- _____
- _____.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Innovative Approaches to Member Recruitment

- The Trenton Torch Club divided club members into five teams. Each team was charged with attempting to recruit one new member during the club year. Each month, the team leaders reported their progress at the club meeting. Result: 7 new members.
- The Lancaster Torch Club displayed a chart at the club meeting listing the names of club members and the prospects each had contacted. “Public recognition of effort contributed to success in recruiting 6 new members.

Member-directed identification

In this approach, the membership committee announces to the club membership that there are vacancies. It is then the responsibility of individual club members to identify candidates. In this approach, the individual member usually assumes the responsibility for contacting the prospect and inviting him or her to a club meeting.

The *advantages* of the member-directed approach are:

- The time and effort required to identify prospects is distributed among many people;
- Club wide “ownership” of the task may build involvement and loyalty;
- _____
- _____.

The *concerns* associated with the member-directed approach are:

- Some club members may not accept the responsibility of initiating recruitment;
- Club members may feel that they are being pressured to recruit; at the same time, the membership committee may feel that it is continually “begging” for help;
- Even when the process succeeds in sustaining or increasing club size, it may not produce the balances desired; in particular, the member-directed approach may faces challenges in adding members from underrepresented categories.
- _____
- _____

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

We recommend a committee-directed approach or a mixed approach in which candidates are recruited both on the personal recommendation of current members and by focused intentional efforts of the membership committee.

Who should be invited to join Torch?

1. Ask interesting people
2. Seek people who can write and deliver good papers.
3. If a member is lost, find a prospect from the same profession.
4. Check local newspapers for reports of professionals new to your community.
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Step Two: Contacting the Prospect

There are three important questions to be answered in this step:

1. Who should contact the prospect?
2. What should be the avenue for contact?
3. What should be the goals of the contact?

Who should contact the prospect? This responsibility may rest with the membership committee, other club members, or a combination thereof. Some clubs have been most successful when a prospect is invited by a club member with whom he/she is acquainted and who is respected by the prospect.

What should be the avenue of the contact? Contact can be effectively made through a personal visit, telephone conversation, or letter. It depends mainly on the relationship between the prospect and the member making the

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

contact. If the two individuals are not acquainted, it would be best to make the initial contact by letter and then follow this with a personal visit or call.

What should be the goals of the initial contact? The first is to explain to the prospect the concept and purpose of Torch and the basic background of the local club. *The Torch* magazine, the pamphlet “*Torch Is...*,” and other literature is available from the Torch International office in Norfolk, Virginia, and may be ordered by using the toll-free number 1-888-622-4101.

Tips on giving prospects a picture of Torch

1. Provide a copy of *The Torch* (available from the IATC office—or collect copies from club members who have finished reading the magazine);
2. Provide the prospect with the club newsletter;
3. Provide the prospect with the web site address of the International Association of Torch Clubs, www.Torch.org;
4. Provide the prospect with one or more of the Torch pamphlets, such as “The Torch Club,” or “The Torch Paper,”
5. _____
6. _____

The second goal is to assess the prospect’s interest in Torch. If the prospect expresses an active interest in learning more about Torch, he or she should be invited to be a guest at a club meeting.

The club representative making the contact should never attempt to force a prospect’s interest. Such a tactic demeans the prestige of membership in Torch and creates an unfavorable impression. The prospect should be aware that this invitation to a meeting is not an invitation to join the club.

What do you say about Torch in contacting a prospect?

1. Stress the *enjoyment* of meeting and mixing with other professionals.
2. Mention the social time.
3. Emphasize that Torch is not a service organization.
4. Describe the meeting location—it should be a club or restaurant where professionals would enjoy dining.
5. _____
6. _____

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Intellectual sharing has stood the test of time

Allan Powell, the “prime mover” in the establishment of four Torch clubs writes that behind the Torch experience is the concept of intellectual sharing.

This idea must be a good one, because it surfaces wherever intellectual creativity is gathering momentum. . . . Teachers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle met on porches, in olive groves and in the market to discourse with the intellectually curious. . . . Elites in Paris created salons to hear poetry, essays in literature and presentations by notables in science and math. . . . Colonial America: In New England the learned formed breakfast clubs to share books, new ideas, and critique prevailing custom. In Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin formed the Junto . . . in 1729. It should be noticed that his approach was not too dissimilar from our own.

The foregoing would seem to indicate that Torch is a good idea, because it surfaces wherever there is serious intellectual activity. There must be a sustained will to make the idea of Torch a more publicly recognized concept.

For my own part, the tried and true method of one-to-one personal interest in new members will get the desired result. I have found that people are pleased to be invited to share their experiences with others. Torch may best be defined as an attitude of mind. Commercial-mindedness is missing. The success of the founders in organizing a series of clubs dedicated to the enrichment of member minds through spirited discussion and intellectual self-examination is best demonstrated by the results. Torch offers its members a place where active minds can become more active; an intellectual rallying ground; a refreshing look at today's and tomorrow's world, and the enduring friendship of kindred spirits.

Norris Paxton, IATC president 1955-56

Step Three: The prospect is Invited to a Torch Club Meeting

Before an invitation to apply for membership is extended, the prospect should attend a club meeting. This meeting allows the prospect to gain more information about Torch and decide on his/her interest in Torch. Also, this meeting will allow the club to meet the prospect. The image and opinion a prospect formulates of Torch will be largely based on his/her experience as a guest at the club meeting.

To insure that the prospect feels welcome and comfortable at the meeting, the person who made the contact and another key member of the club, such as an officer, should serve as personal host to the person.

This host should:

1. Offer to provide transportation to and from the meeting for the guest;
2. Make sure the guest is included in the socializing and dinner conversation;

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

3. Make sure the guest is personally introduced to a number of club members, especially club officers;
4. Formally introduce the guest to the assembled group. The introduction should include mention of his/her professional background, present position, and vocational and avocational interests; and
5. Explain more to the guest about Torch and the local club, including the dues and any other costs of membership.

One club has successfully used an approach in which a specific meeting was designated as “Prospective Member Night.”

If a club is faced with any of the following situations: (1) a membership which is, on the average, quite elderly and in need of younger members; (2) a desire to have more women as members, or a more diversified membership; or (3) a low membership and a need to add a substantial number of new members; it might be advisable to bring new members to a meeting in a group. The group approach is important, because it relieves the pressure on each individual prospect, offers the prospects some individuals with common backgrounds with whom they can identify and relate, and enhances the impression of the club.

The club visit—personal attention is the key!

The prospect's host should:

- Offer transportation to the meeting
- Make the guest feel special
- Be sure that the prospect has literature about Torch
- Be sure that the guest is seated with congenial conversationalists
- Follow up personally after the meeting

The club officers should:

- Prepare a name badge for the prospect in advance
- Provide hosts with information about Torch, to be passed on to the prospect
- Provide hosts/sponsors with application forms (for use in post-club-meeting discussion).
- Have in place a well-defined method for paying for the guest's dinner
- Upon the new member's election, recognize both that person and the sponsor at the next club meeting

One special note! When recruiting younger professionals for a Torch club, remember that age is an important factor in determining what a professional will find attractive about Torch.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Younger professionals are striving to achieve certain goals in their chosen fields. They are searching for opportunities that will help them realize their ambitions. Fortunately, Torch offers much to younger professionals in this respect – the opportunity to associate and learn from the leading professionals in their community and to hear and discuss outstanding papers dealing with important issues. Therefore, these advantages of Torch membership should be highlighted when approaching younger prospects for membership.

Fellowship is important to younger professionals, but it is not a primary appeal to attract them to Torch.

Step Four: Initiating Formal Application for Membership

Whether a club relies upon a committee or upon individual club members in gauging the suitability of a candidate for Torch, this judgment should be made in Step One of the process. The invitation to the meeting is basically an opportunity for the prospect to learn more about Torch and to meet club members. This positions the prospect to make an informed choice about applying for membership. An expectation has been created that an invitation to membership will be forthcoming.

Clubs vary in how they make the crucial move of extending the formal invitation (see appendix 2.3). In general, the candidate's host has the responsibility of following up and assuring that the candidate receives the application form. See samples of membership application forms, appendix 2.1.

After an application form has been provided to a candidate, it is important to maintain good communication continues between the club and the candidate. The candidate should be given an indication of when he or she will receive notification of action on the application.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Why join Torch?

Here's how Dr. Joseph Atkins, then chair of the Akron Torch Club Membership Committee, reported to his club:

Let me ask you two questions. Why are you a member of Torch? Why on earth would you invite anyone else to become a member? Let me suggest an answer.

What is it that Torch Clubs International brings to the table of social conversation? In a world where communication is characterized by media driven sound bites, market driven bottom line and an inclination to seek self-serving agreement rather than provoke thoughtful discussion, Torch introduces the value of the serious presentation and thoughtful discussion of ideas and experiences that speak in our time.

It is worthwhile to be part of that. It could be worthwhile to someone you know to become a part of that as well.

Step Five: Review of the Application

It is the prerogative of the club to establish procedures for review of applications (sample, appendix 2.2). These vary from club to club in degree of formality. It is important to be consistent in how applications are treated. The process should allow for candid discussion of a candidate's qualifications. Of course, all discussion of individual candidates should be conducted in a courteous and confidential manner.

Step Six: Notification

Notification is an important step in the process for the candidate, the candidate's sponsor(s), the membership committee, and the club officers. The procedures should be designed to keep everyone "in the loop." Sample letters of notification can be found in appendix 2.4.

Step Seven: Celebration

The conviction that Torch membership is an honor is a major key to successful membership development. The introduction and welcome of a new member at his first meeting after election should be an occasion of hearty welcome. Some clubs present the new member with a commemorative memento. The club newsletter may feature a short article on new members (appendix 2.5).

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

In sum, these seven steps are basic in member recruitment. There are numerous alternatives for a club within each of these steps. Member recruitment does not happen without effort, but the benefits to the club justify those efforts. The next section discusses sources of assistance to club leaders in regard to recruitment.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Section Three

Resources For Member Recruitment

A Torch Club can draw upon a variety of resources, both human and documentary, to support recruitment, retention, and new club development. Human resources include the Regional Director, the Director-at-Large-Membership of the Torch International Board, other members and officers of the Torch International Board, and the Torch International staff in the office in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Members and officers of other Torch clubs are always glad to share ideas. The IATC convention is an excellent occasion to seek advice and share successes.

Documentary resources are available through the Regional Director and from the Torch International office in Norfolk, Virginia.

The Torch Leader is written by James Coppinger and sent to the presidents and secretaries of all Torch Clubs every four to six weeks. It is usually two pages, and contains much valuable information that can be passed along to the other officers and members within a Torch Club, including the chair of the membership committee.

Nomination and application forms are provided to club secretaries and can be obtained from Torch International by submitting the Order of Supplies form—copy enclosed appendix 3.1. Extra New Member Packets can be ordered, but one is automatically sent to the club secretary for each new Initiation Fee received. Member Appreciation certificates can be ordered, as well as other certificates, such as “years of membership” certificates. Torch lapel pins can be ordered. Brochures are available: *The Torch Club*; *Torch Is . . .*; *All they Do Is . . . Talk*. (Other items are available on the Order of Supplies form to assist in operation of a Torch Club, but are not related to recruitment and retention.)

The Torch International Web site is www.torch.org. Several Torch Clubs have their own Web sites; check with the officers of your Torch Club or look for a link in the Torch International Web site.

An especially effective documentary resource for recruitment and retention efforts is *The Torch* magazine. Every issue contains excellent Torch papers. Copies are available from two primary sources – current Torch members and the IATC office. Some club members may be willing to donate copies of *The Torch* that they

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

have finished reading to the club's Membership Development Committee. A few extra copies of *The Torch* are available from the IATC office on request.

In sum, printed and electronic information and knowledgeable people are available as resources for member recruitment. Please make use of them.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Section Four

Enriching the Torch Experience Through Diversity

At the very heart of the Torch experience is the opportunity for engaged, cross-professional discussion of important issues. Papers presented in local clubs, *The Torch* magazine, and IATC convention presentations offer a rich array of topics. It is not only the variety of topics, but also the diversity of perspectives that emerges in lively collegial discussion that makes the Torch experience so enriching. The “case” for diversity in Torch is simple: it is intrinsic to the undertaking. Diversity of perspectives builds understanding of how others think and tackle critical issues. Torch members emerge from the club meeting with new thoughts and the anticipation of future engagements with diverse colleagues.

Perspectives on the world are shaped not only by professional training, but also in part by age, gender, and ethnicity. All of these diversities can enrich club discussion. Thus recruiting for some or all of these diversities becomes a way in which the membership committee’s work contributes directly to the long-term success of the club.

Recruiting for diversity can be a particular challenge for the club. Recruiting for diversity may involve a special effort to reach out beyond the immediate circle of one’s acquaintances. It is with regard to matters such as building diversity that the strengths of the “committee-approach” to member recruitment (as discussed in Section One) become apparent. It is particularly helpful when the composition of the membership committee itself reflects the diversities to which the club aspires.

Building Diversity

Invite two, three, or four prospects with the desired profile to the club meeting. This provides the individual candidate with evidence of the club’s commitment to inclusiveness. The candidate knows that she or he will not be just a “token.”

The steps in member recruitment outlined in chapter two do not change when recruiting to build diversity. Prospects whose characteristics differ from the club majority must, of course, feel welcome. In extending the

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

invitation to membership, the sponsor or club representative should address carefully any concerns or hesitations the prospect might have.

Member recruitment requires leadership

Member recruitment is important for every Torch club, not only in terms of “keeping the numbers steady,” but to keep club presentations and discussion fresh and relevant. This makes recruitment a responsibility of club leaders.

In their extensive research on organizational leadership, James Kouzes and Barry Posner (*The Leadership Challenge*, 1987) found that almost all instances of leadership success involved one or more (usually more) of the following five leadership practices. From these practices they then derived the “ten commandments” of successful organizational leadership. We believe that these apply to the leadership challenge of member recruitment:

- A. Challenge the process
 - 1. Search for opportunities to improve and innovate
 - 2. Experiment and take risks; learn from failures
- B. Inspire a shared vision
 - 3. Envision the future; present a hopeful outlook
 - 4. Enlist others; appeal to a common purpose; communicate expressively
- C. Enable others to act
 - 5. Foster collaboration; involve people
 - 6. Strengthen others; be accessible
- D. Model the way
 - 7. Set the example; talk with others about your aspirations; spend time on your highest priorities
 - 8. Plan small wins
- E. Encourage the heart
 - 9. Recognize contributions; say thank you; be personally involved
 - 10. Celebrate accomplishments

These steps summarize leadership practices that have produced success in many organizations. They apply to the challenges of building a diverse and involved membership base.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Section Five

An Active Commitment to Member Retention

In any membership association, losses are inevitable due to illness, relocation, time conflicts or other reasons. Member retention is not always an option. There are other situations, however, where losses occur that could have been prevented. Sometimes once-active members drift away for no compelling reason. It is in regard to these cases that *leadership for retention* is needed.

The Keys to Success in Member Retention

There is no magic formula that will insure a Torch club's success in retaining members, but fruitful efforts usually have these fundamental underpinnings:

- A widely shared conviction in the club that membership in Torch is an honor
- Maintenance of high standards of qualification for members
- A record of high quality meetings featuring thoughtful and engaging Torch papers.
- A convivial meeting place where professional feel comfortable.

If these hallmarks sound familiar it is because they are the same as the “Keys to Recruitment” proposed in Section One.

Encouraging attendance

Members who attend regularly are unlikely to drift away from club involvement. Clubs use various strategies to build good attendance at meetings. It is very helpful to have a newsletter announcing the program with some background information about the speaker—and perhaps a return postcard or e-mail address to facilitate the RSVP request.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Encouraging Attendance: A Primary Strategy for Retention

Establish a Hospitality Committee charged with:

- greeting guests and new members
- assisting members with special needs (transportation, wheelchair, etc.)
- assuring that everyone is drawn into conversation and no one is left standing alone.
- Assuring that everyone has a name badge.
- _____
- _____
- _____

Early warning signs

Active retention efforts may involve responses to warning signs that a member may be drifting away: e.g.

- a falloff in regular attendance;
- late payment of dues;
- _____
- _____.

Sometimes a friendly personal contact on the part of a club officer can draw the member back into more active participation.

Keep the focus on club quality

What keeps members involved amidst competing obligations on their time is simply the quality of the Torch experience—opportunities for discussion, convivial fellowship, and engagement with new ideas. When members regularly leave the club meeting having had that experience, high levels of retention will result.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Addressing Problems of Member Recruitment and Retention at the Club Level

Discussion, among Torch Club officers and board members, of challenges facing the club tends to be informal. From time to time, when faced with complex issues such as recruitment and retention, it may be helpful to step back and proceed more self-consciously through the steps in sound decision-making before embarking on a course of action. Management literature abounds in decision-making models. Here is one:

Step One: Define the Problem

Focus on: What is the fundamental issue?

Seek information: facts, opinions, feelings

Encourage: participation, search for causes

Ask questions: What do we know? Are there sub-problems? What are the causes?

Step Two: Generate Possible Solutions

Focus on: creating options, brainstorming, creative approaches

Guard against: collecting arguments to support one's personal views

Prevent: evaluation of ideas *as they are being presented*

Encourage: questions that clarify or connect ideas

Ask questions: Are all alternatives on the table?

Step Three: Select the Best Solution

Focus on: establishing decision criteria, evaluating and combining options

Prevent: attacking or demeaning those who have offered ideas

Test for: agreement and commitment to the solution

Ask questions: What must a good solution achieve? What are possible negative consequences of the option? Possible positive consequences?

Step Four: Implement and Persevere

Focus on: communicating the decision and the reasons for it

Encourage: participation in the activities that flow from the decision

Test for: unanticipated consequences; ability to sustain the chosen course of action over *time*

Ask questions: Is the solution producing results? What do we know about its effects? Is there support for the course of action?

In sum, member retention begins with club leadership that is never complacent about member satisfaction. "Early warning signs" of disengagement are taken seriously. The focus on the quality of meetings and communications is constant. When a Torch Club is successful in recruiting and retaining members, it builds long-term strengths. The club is then also in a better position to undertake another important task: strengthening the light of torch by establishing new Torch Clubs.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Section Six

Sharing the Light of Torch: Establishing New Torch Clubs

Torch club leaders have very direct responsibility for member recruitment and retention. They are also sometimes positioned to see opportunities for building new Torch clubs, thereby bringing the Torch experience to professionals in new communities.

Within the IATC, the formation of new clubs has been a significant factor in stabilizing overall membership. From the perspective of the long-term future of Torch, new club development takes a place alongside member recruitment and retention as a necessary strategy for keeping the Torch flame alive. A policy of the IATC is to invest the modest amounts available for membership development in subsidies to existing Torch clubs for the purpose of organizing new clubs.

The Perennial Challenge of Club Building

For many years, the International Association of Torch Clubs relied on paid organizers to build new clubs. Torch Founder William Bullock and his assistant D. B. Zimmer organized 51 clubs between 1924 and 1933. They were followed by Elmer W. Smith who had organized several clubs as a volunteer and then worked for the IATC on a per diem basis. Herbert L. Sackett organized 34 clubs in the 1950's. He was paid \$10 per day plus another \$10 for expenses. Writing in 1973, Norris Paxon commented:

The saga of Sackett was almost unbelievable. He appeared to be what he actually was, a natural, quiet, retired, small town school teacher. But his qualities of persuasion, tenacity, dedication, and endurance soon became evident.

These same qualities still lead to success for today's volunteer club builders.

Resources available to assist new club creation include the booklet, *A New Adventure for Your Community (Starting a Torch Club)*, available from the Regional Director or the IATC office. This is an excellent 5-page reference that identifies the typical five basic steps in starting a new Torch Club and offers recommendations concerning implementation of each of those steps.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Torch does make an impact upon communities where it exists, because it makes its members think; it privately inspires them to a better understanding of life; it quietly germinates new ideas; it subtly influences its people to become involved with humankind; and it encourages the pursuit of those things which make the world lovelier, livelier, and less lonesome Why Torch? That's why!

L. T. C. Harbour, St. Catharine's Torch Club

Sharing the Light of Torch is a 38-minute videotape available from your Regional Director or from the IATC office. This is a presentation by Allan Powell and Davis Braughman, with an introduction and conclusion by Leo A. Kellogg. Professor Powell, a 40-year member of the Hagerstown Torch Club, has taken the lead in establishment of four Torch Clubs. He shares how he did it and identifies eight factors that promote success. Davis Braughman was a 30-year member of the Hagerstown club and a key person in helping Allan Powell establish the Torch Club of Waynesboro, PA, of which Davis is now a member.

The Regional Director is one of the greatest resources available to facilitate establishment of a new club. That person can assure that all information that is available, including whether other clubs might help, or if anyone in the area of the proposed new club has indicated an interest. If the location of the proposed new Torch club is in a different administrative region, your regional director will coordinate efforts with his/her counterpart.

All Torch International resources are to assist local clubs. The staff at the IATC office will be very helpful – alert them to your interest in starting a new club.

Starting a Torch Club

The following paragraphs are from the booklet, *A New Adventure for Your Community*, published and available from the IATC office.

There are five basic steps in starting a new club. They are:

1. Identify the site;
2. Identify an organizer, preferably one who is well-known among local professionals;
3. Identify prospective members;
4. Contact prospective members;

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

5. Hold a series of organizing meetings.

Following are recommendations on each of these five steps.

Step 1: Identifying the Site

Experience shows that certain demographic features should be considered when analyzing a community (or a group of communities) as a potential site for a Torch club. These factors are:

- A. Population: The ideal site for a Torch club is a community which has a population of 25,000 to 300,000. It is unlikely (although possible) that a community with fewer than 24,000 will have sufficient professionals to support a club. Cities of population greater than 300,000 present the problems of securing a central meeting place, establishing recognition of the club in the community, and developing a cohesive membership base. However, if you have no other choice, then concentrate the club in a cohesive, recognizable section of the larger community.
- B. A college community: Members of college faculties are strong participants in Torch clubs. Therefore, the site for a club should have a significant number of college faculty members residing in the community. However, faculty members should not constitute more than 50% of the members of any Torch club. Remember, Torch depends upon a mix between “town” and “gown” for its vitality and effectiveness.
- C. Proximity to an existing club: It is helpful if a potential site is near enough (less than 100 miles) to an existing Torch club so that the established club can support and assist the new club through its development period.
- D. Former Torch members: In starting a new club, try to select a site that is home to one or more former Torch members. Former members usually are interested in rejoining Torch and assisting in organizing the new club. Names and locations of former members may be available from the IATC office.

Step 2: Identifying an Organizer

It is desirable to recruit a committed local professional who is well known in the community and who can persuade others to form a core of members from which to start the new club. There are funds available from IATC to cover reasonable expenses when starting a club.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Step 3: Identifying Prospective Members

After selecting the site for a new club and recruiting an organizer, the next step is to identify prospective members. Sources are:

- A. Professionals in the local community who are members in good standing of a recognized profession; have a degree from an accredited school or an acceptable equivalent in training and experience; pursue (or are retired from) work that requires a mastery of some area of knowledge and skills; exercise judgment and assumption of individual responsibility; evidence an obligation of service to others; join with his or her vocational group in maintaining standards of competence and integrity in professional service.
- B. Active Torch clubs near the site: It is best to contact the clubs' secretaries and request that they solicit recommendations from their members for prospective members at the new site. This solicitation should request information concerning the prospective member's name, address and professional position, including whether active or retired. Also included should be the name of the person making the recommendation.
- C. The IATC office: Information may be available on former members now living at the site.

Step 4: Contacting prospective members

It is necessary to do some planning before contacting prospective members. This includes compiling a list of prospective members according to age, profession and gender. The goal in developing a Torch club is to bring together a diverse group. Therefore, even at this early stage, give priority to contacting persons who represent a diversity of backgrounds.

Three questions arise when it's time to contact prospective members:

- A. *Who should make the contact?* The first step is to ask the person who recommended the prospect to get in touch with him or her about Torch. This "opens the door." That person should indicate to the prospect that a representative of Torch will call in a few days. The second step is for the organizer and, if possible, a member of a nearby club, to contact the prospect.
- B. *How should the follow-up contact be made?* Contacts made in person are the most effective. Although contacts can also be made by phone calls or letters, these are usually less effective.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

- C. *What is the goal of the contact?* The goal of the initial series of contacts is to identify a minimum of five prospects who are interested in attending a “get acquainted” meeting. Plan this meeting for a convenient time and place.

Following are excerpts from an address by George Crepeau, past president of the IATC, *Why Torch?*:

In 25 words or less, how would you “sell” the concept of the Torch experience? Do you have the right words to convince, to persuade, to encourage someone to start a new Torch Club? If you don’t have these words, I suggest you look through your collection of Torch magazines. In them you will find many quotes usable to describe the “what” and “why” of Torch in a convincing and persuasive manner.

You will be asked some tough questions. Someone will say, “Why establish a new Torch Club when there are so many discussion groups, forums, lecture series, and other interesting cultural activities already competing for the attention and time of busy professional people? What’s really in it for me?”

Good questions! So what do you do? You speak about the wonders of Torch: the rewarding fellowship of professional colleagues, of the challenge of things intellectual, of high levels of curiosity, and papers and programs of quality. You wax eloquent about critical thinking and the civilized exchange of ideas and opinion.

Then someone else says “So what!” and proceeds to tell you that it is possible to experience most or all of these things without paying a membership fee and the price of a monthly meal.

So you go on and bring out bigger guns. Torch at its best offers the professional person an opportunity for learning outside his or her own professional milieu, an opportunity to discover what interests and stimulates others, to find respite from the demands of an all-consuming professional interest. In other words, to get in touch with the rest of the world.

To stimulate a prospect’s interest in Torch, the organizer should give the prospect a copy of the “Torch Is . . .” brochure and, possibly, a copy of *The Torch* magazine, explain the philosophy and background of Torch, and “testify” to the intellectual benefits and pleasures of Torch.

Make the first contact brief and end it with an invitation to attend the “get acquainted” meeting.

Step 5: Holding a series of Organizing Meetings

The best method for organizing a new Torch club is to hold a series of meetings.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

The First Meeting: This meeting is a “get acquainted” session to familiarize the attendees with Torch. Have a minimum of five prospects in attendance at this meeting. If necessary, a nearby Torch club might assist with meeting costs.

The agenda for this first meeting should include:

- a. Self-introduction by the hosts and attendees;
- b. An explanation of Torch;
- c. An explanation of the purpose of this meeting;
- d. A question and answer period;
- e. An evaluation by the prospects of the potential of their community to support a Torch club;
- f. A commitment from the prospects to support the formation of a club.

If the prospects express an active interest in the formation of a new club, the hosts should move to:

- g. Schedule the next meeting;
- h. Select someone who will be responsible for assisting the hosts with the arrangements;
- i. Request that prospective members participate in recruiting additional prospects.

The Second Meeting. Make this gathering a “model” Torch club meeting with a pay-your-own-way dinner and a paper. The goal should be 100% growth in attendance. Have at least two representatives of the IATC or nearby clubs in attendance. The agenda should include:

- a. Social time (cash basis);
- b. Brief welcome by the hosts;
- c. Self-introduction by all;
- d. Dinner;
- e. Presentation of the paper by an effective speaker (preferably a member or former member of Torch);
- f. Discussion of the paper;
- g. Discussion of Torch and the formation of a new club;
- h. Solicit a commitment by the attendees to the formation of the new club;
- i. Schedule the next meeting;
- j. Request participants to recruit additional charter members.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

The Third Meeting. The primary goal of this meeting is expand and confirm commitments to membership in the new club. A minimum of 20 paid members is necessary for a charter to be granted. This meeting should follow the same format and basic agenda as the second meeting, plus the following:

- a. Have each person complete the “Application for Membership” Form and pay the initiation fee;
- b. Scheduling the Chartering Banquet;
- c. Electing officers (President, Secretary, and Treasurer) who have the authority to prepare and submit a Constitution and Bylaws at the Chartering Banquet.

The Chartering Banquet. Invitations should be extended to the new club members, officers of nearby clubs, the Regional Director and other persons instrumental in the organizing process. The agenda should include:

- a. Social time;
- b. Brief welcome by the club president;
- c. Introduction of all guests;
- d. Dinner;
- e. Presentation of the Charter by the Regional Director and/or other representatives of IATC
- f. Adoption of the Constitution and Bylaws;
- g. Announcement of the next meeting.

The Chronology of Establishing a New Club

In 2000-2001, Wilbur H. Wright, Director of IATC Region One, played a key role in organizing a new club in Geneseo, New York. He chronicled some of the steps:

August 2000:	File Livingston County document: “Doing Business as Geneseo Torch Club;” establish bank account (with funds lent by Wilbur); initial meeting at the Wright home of interested people
September	Meeting at the College to discuss Torch; dinner at the Big Tree Inn
October	Dr. A. Reed Taylor, past president of IATC delivers paper an “Anti-semitism: A Problem for Christians”, introduced by the president of SUNY Geneseo
November	Second monthly meeting speaker Dr. William E. Gohlman on “The Occult Today.”
December	Speaker Wesley Kennison, Town Supervisor, “Small Town Politics”
January 2001	Speaker David W. Parish, town historian, “Morgan’s Anti-Masonic Third Party.”
February	Speaker Dr. Karen Duffy, “Russia: Past Impressions, Last Impressions”
March	Speaker Dr. Wm. R. Cook, “DeTocqueville and How Successful Democracies Work”; election of officers and board
April	Geneseo Torch Club Board meeting (bylaws and future program)
May 19, 2001	Charter banquet, local dignitaries and IATC officers

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

FYI: Starting a new Torch club is actually a two-phase operation. This guide describes the first phase which is the process of obtaining the club charter. The second phase involves the adoption and implementation of administrative policies and practices. The guide for new clubs to use in this phase is the “Bluebook,” which offers Administrative Procedures for Torch Clubs. To obtain copies, contact International Association of Torch Clubs, Inc.,

Allan Powell: Multiple Torch Clubs Founding Facilitator

Allan Powell has been a member of the Torch Club of Hagerstown, MD, for more than three decades. He has an exuberant enthusiasm for helping others to enjoy the Torch experience. Allan Powell has been the prime facilitator in the establishment of *four* Torch clubs! He learned as he progressed in his efforts, and has shared his knowledge of techniques that have helped him be successful in a videotape entitled “Sharing the Light of Torch.” (The videotape is available from Regional Directors or directly from the IATC office.)

The ideals behind Torch are powerful and have stood the test of time. The present extent of Torch Clubs only begins to realize the vision of Torch and what it can provide to individuals and communities. There are many opportunities to share the light of Torch.

Torch Clubs that are stable and successful—because they have met the challenges of steady member recruitment and retention—pass on to their own communities a valuable resource for lifelong, inter-professional fellowship. They add to the quality of community life.

These same strengths position a Torch Club for building a new club in a nearby community. While most of the work will fall on one (or just a few) key organizers, the entire Torch Club can help in identifying promising locales and initial contacts, providing encouragement to the organizers, and offering access to Torch club meetings that model Torch ideals.

Just as member recruitment and retention are most successful when they are addressed in a club’s annual plan, so, too, new club building is more likely if it is embraced in the club plan. Sharing the light of Torch can become an intentional goal for every Torch Club.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS: Suggestions and Resources for Torch Clubs

Section Seven

Things to Keep in Mind

Member recruitment is accomplished by one person inviting another to attend a Torch meeting. However, recruitment on a planned and continuous basis requires organization and the attention of club leaders. This involves setting goals, encouraging members to act, and acknowledging achievements. These leadership practices will help a club maintain its membership level where it wishes. We urge you to organize for recruitment and retention in ways that meet the needs of your club.

One must begin by creating an environment for success. Keys to success are planning and people. Planning involves reasonable goals and smooth roads to reach them. People involves leadership, volunteer commitment, talent, and hard work.

Please use the many recruitment, retention, and club-building resources mentioned in this resource book. Your regional director and the IATC Director-at-Large-Membership are there to assist you or help you draw on other resources. The Torch International office is available every workday, with a toll-free telephone line: 1-800-622-4101 and an e-mail address: jamescoppinger@att.net The office will respond to your request for publications and information. Information is also available on the Torch web site www.torch.org

It All Boils Down to This

- Recruiting is a person-to-person effort that is most effective when it is encouraged and supported by the Torch club
- Retention results from members' enjoyment of the Torch experience: the papers, the discussion, the meal, the fellowship with other members, and the atmosphere of the meeting
- Planned efforts to establish new Torch Clubs are an important strategy for extending the fellowship of Torch.