Committee on Membership Retention and Recruitment

Networking in a Box
AN INFORMATION GUIDE
Approach

This framework is meant to be flexible. It is adaptable for both in-person and virtual events.

The starting point for all events should be awareness of the ASA Code of Conduct. Make sure all participants acknowledge their responsibility to adhere to the Code of Conduct and to report any unacceptable behavior.

When planning events recognize that event participants have not previously worked together and may be at different stages in their career. Participants will come from different employment sectors and have different skills and knowledge so plan your networking events to account for the intersectional characteristics represented by the participants. Collaboration between academic departments, local chapters, sections, and student chapters is encouraged. Focus on making everyone feel that they belong.
Conferences may have networking sessions as a part of the formal program. For example, there is a reception for first-time attendees at the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM). Consider intentionally planning analogous receptions for first-time participants during smaller events.
Rules of Thumb

Student chapter meetings often build on the interests of students in a department, and are not necessarily limited to professional development and networking. Here are some "rules of thumb" to consider:

- students especially enjoy meeting alumni;
- they might be more likely to attend if food is provided;
- working around students’ course schedules is especially important;
- students will likely need support/guidance about budgetary issues;
- the nature and frequency of events related to student chapters can vary greatly;
- much of the planning duties for student chapter meetings falls on the officers of the chapter;
- the most successful events at student chapters often have broader planning in advance;
the CMRR’s Speakers Bureau is especially useful for identifying visitors willing to spend time at student chapters;

alumni often love to visit their (former) departments; they have common experiences with the students; students can learn about career paths from alumni; alumni can share advice about things that they wish they had done, steps to consider after graduation, making connections to other alumni;

have prompts for the VIP to engage students; but also can be helpful to have pre-planned ways to help enable students gain courage to talk to distinguished alumni and visitors.
How to Recruit

A key indicator of a successful event is the ability to recruit new people. The composition of the events falls into the guests (the majority) and the organizers/facilitators (will be few). The organizers should try to think about the target audience. They may also want to consider their limitations in their ability to reach out. An easy first step is encouraging each guest to bring a friend; strive to be adhere to the “the more, the merrier” advice especially to promote growth. A key question then emerges how to recruit guests?
How to Recruit

After the event is planned with location, date, and time, the organizers need to spread the word. It is recommended to try different forms of communication to maximize reach. Well-placed posters are an effective reminder. For targeting audiences within a larger organization such as academic departments, well-crafted emails can be effective. ASA community pages offer a convenient way to reach out to chapters, sections, and specific groups (e.g., young professionals).
How to Recruit

Another recruiting strategy is to identify “influencers.” Influencers tend to be able to reach a larger audience. Influencers can range from student chapter presidents, professors with large student followings, prominent statisticians and data scientists, department heads, etc. Some influencers may not need a fancy title, but are effective at reaching a large audience. Be creative.

Also keep in mind, recruitment can often be done at no cost. Money for food and prizes are “nice-to-haves”, but by no means requirements for a successful effort.
How to Recruit

Some key recommendations for recruiting:

1. Have a plan and start early.
2. Be direct and use a variety of methods to reach out.
3. Craft your outreach to be audience specific. It is worth the effort to create multiple messages to target specific groups.
4. Review the ASA Code of Conduct and be thoughtful about the language and images used in any communication.
5. Identify partners and consider a collaborative event.
6. Be creative. It may help to talk to organizers of similar past events for suggestions and lessons learned.
How to Build Connections on Social Media?

Some mid-career organizers might not be aware of the full spectrum of social media. LinkedIn is perhaps the most popular for professional connections and for making new connections.

LinkedIn is quite powerful at learning current affiliations of colleagues. Before applying for a position, it can be quite helpful to reach and talk to those within the organization to learn more and even secure an internal referral. Also, when a connection moves to a new organization, you can learn about this.
How to Build Connections on Social Media?

A few tips for networking on LinkedIn

- Complete your profile: LinkedIn prioritizes complete profiles over empty or incomplete ones. Consider including a professional-looking profile picture, an effective headline, a comprehensive and eye-catching summary of work experience.
- Create an online portfolio - the ASA Committee on Career Development has some excellent resources - https://community.amstat.org/ccd/portfoliotechnolog
- Grow connections: start with people you already know. Expand the connection in your field by sending a personalized request.
- Stay active on LinkedIn: Post regularly and engage with your connections by liking, commenting and sharing their activities.
How to Build Connections on Social Media?

Students might utilize platforms that are not known to professors or mid-career professionals, e.g., Instagram, TikTok, etc.? Discord is very popular among college students and WeChat is quite popular within the Chinese community. Make connections with influencers on these media.

ASA offers several social media tools for its members. For example, ASA also has community pages. It is an effective way to reach subsets of ASA membership. The membership directory is a great way to reach out to members to invite them to be part of a conference session.
Ice-Breakers and Activities

Networking events can be stressful for participants. Most likely the majority of the participants are strangers.

Ice-Breakers are particularly helpful at alleviating this stress and facilitating networking.

The type of ice-breaking activities depend on the size and type of networking event. Fortunately, there are wonderful resources online. The following provide some good examples of events that can serve as a good starting point for planning a networking event.
Ice-Breakers and Activities

- Networking Bingo is an excellent way to get people interacting - this is an example. This icebreaker can be adapted for workshops and conferences. For a larger conference, the “bingo card” could be included on the app and participants could be encouraged to complete the card throughout the conference. Organizers might even consider a raffle - ask participants to share their completed cards and have a prize drawing.
- Use icons or some other indication on name badges to help identify folks and make initial conversation easier, e.g., have colored dots to indicate employment sector, ribbons with preferred pronouns, etc.
- Designate members of the planning/organizing committee as social ambassadors - these folks should make sure participants are engaged and not isolated. Try to foster a sense of community.
Follow-up

There are three main ways to conduct Follow-up:

- Formal Evaluations
- Anecdotal evidence
- Social media interactions

Formal evaluations enable the most data driven approach. Response rates vary so put some effort into the follow up.

Consider establishing a “Feedback” link on the event website. This would allow for feedback to be submitted on an ongoing basis.
Follow-up

Anecdotal evidence is particularly well suited for getting the "big picture." Learning about what went particularly well or not. It is, however, a biased method.

A very successful networking event can result in social media interactions. Here, LinkedIn can be a powerful tool. A connection working on a similar research topic or a possible mentor can be a wonderful product of a networking event. Please see the section on building connections using social media to learn more.

Also, posts about a successful event such as a mixer, meeting, or session can generate a very positive buzz. You should also use social media to show how the feedback is used, e.g., when you make a change based on feedback let the community know.
Contribute

We want this to be a dynamic resource. Please share your networking ideas and strategies with us.

Use this form to contribute!