

Go Getters

Overcoming Objections

Even when organizations have a good benefits message that is presented effectively to qualified prospects, there will be some people that still won't join right away. Anticipating and overcoming objections effectively is a skill that membership volunteers need to master if they're going to maximize their membership efforts. An objection is a statement made or question asked by a prospect that expresses reluctance to join.

Regardless of which recruiting method is used, prospective members will have objections. The most important thing to remember when thinking about ways to overcome objections is to listen carefully to what the prospect is saying before responding. It is natural for recruiters to become defensive when someone presents objections. When recruiting in a one-on-one situation, you are presented with the best opportunity to show some empathy for the prospect.

The all-time, #1, Absolutely Best Way to Overcome Objections to Joining

There is one technique, which can be used to overcome virtually any objection. This technique is known as the **feel-felt-found** method and it is very simple. When prospects say they think membership is too expensive or that they don't have time to participate, the person asking them to join simply says, "I know how you feel. I felt the same way myself, but I found that membership really was a great investment."

This method combines the real benefits of joining with the testimonial of someone, like you, who has already made the commitment.

The following objections are the most common ones heard in all associations:

Objection: That's a lot of money

Things to consider: The most commonly heard objection is about money. When prospects say that it costs a lot to join, they haven't said that NSA isn't worth the money. They just said that the amount to join is high in their opinion.

Things to avoid: The first thing many recruiters do is disagree, then try to convince the prospect that the cost isn't a lot when you look at all the things the organization does. This gives the prospect the feeling that you have just said that he or she is wrong and you are not listening.

Suggested responses: What you need to do is agree with the prospect. If the prospect says that it costs a lot of money, you need to respond that it is a big investment. You need to explain that the dues reflect the amount of money it takes for NSA to deliver programs and services that can help the prospect's business. Then explain how they can get a good return on such an investment. It is not the amount of money to which people really object—it's the fact that they don't understand what value they are getting for their money.

Objection: I don't have time to participate

Things to consider: The second most frequently heard objection is that people don't have time. They say they'd like to join, but are just too busy.

Things to avoid: When many recruiters hear this objection, the tendency is to go right back into all the basic reasons to join. Don't tell the prospect how participating in programs and meeting will benefit him or her because you were told that programs that require physical presence are not of value to the prospect.

Suggested responses: Since lack of time is a common objection, you need to be prepared by having two lists of reasons to join in your mind. One list would include benefits members would get from participating in organizational activities such as meetings. The other list should have benefits members get even if they never leave their office. This would include publication, insurance programs, right to practice, tax research, discounts etc. Focus on these benefits for these prospects. Let the prospect know you understand and that fortunately there are reasons to join that don't include spending a lot of time in meetings. The actually help the prospect save time and alone are worth the cost of membership.

Objection: I'm already a member of another organization

Things to consider: Many people are members of more than one organization, so it should be no surprise to you when prospects say they are already members of too many associations.

Things to avoid: This situation can become a real trap for the recruiter. If the prospect says they like NSA, but are already members of a competing organization, you need to be careful not to get caught in the position of comparing one association to another. Without knowing it you may be talking to somebody who is very active in that other organization. Be careful about saying anything negative about competing organizations.

Suggested responses: When prospects say that they are already members of other organizations, one of the things you want to point out is the fact that many members of NSA are also members of more than one association. This is because they believe they get different benefits from each organization. If you know the competing organizations well enough, you can point out the differences between the two, but avoid talking about programs where they overlap. Let the prospect know that joining more than one association is done all the time and that this new membership is an additional investment needed to get additional benefits.

Objection: I've listened to what you're saying, but I just don't see the benefit.

Things to consider: When prospects say they've heard what you are saying, but just don't see the benefit, they are basically saying that you haven't said anything that they feel meets their needs.

Things to avoid: There is a temptation to ask the prospect what he or she would like the association to do for him or her. When you ask the prospect to identify his or her key need, it can appear as though you are going to say whatever it takes to get them to join.

Suggested responses: Rather than giving the prospects the impression that if they'll tell you what they'd like to hear, you be glad to say it, you can ask the prospect to put aside what you've already discussed and try to envision starting a new association. As the prospect to identify the first thing this new organization could do to provide value. The prospect will describe exactly what he or she wants any association to do for him or her. This allow you to adapt your presentation so it highlights benefits that best meet the prospects needs.

Objection: I get the benefits whether I join or not

Things to consider: This objection is probably the most frustrating one you will hear. It is most frequently mentioned when discussing legislative and advocacy programs that benefit the entire profession. The prospect is correct, he or she will get the benefits whether he or she joins or not.

Things to avoid: Try not to respond to this objection by telling prospects that you merely want them to contribute their fair share for the benefits NSA provides.

Suggested responses: You might want to respond by saying they are right, or by agreeing that they do get the benefit of what NSA is doing and that you are proud of NSA's accomplishments. Tell the prospect it's not a question of being effective, it's a question of how much more

effective NSA would be if we could represent the entire profession. Suggest that the prospect join for a year and see how much better off everyone will be when the whole industry is united. You need to reinforce that the benefits they are already experiencing would be even better if they and other nonmembers would join. It is a positive way to overcome this objection.

Objection: I'd like to think it over

Things to consider: This is a variation of the I just don't see the benefit objection.

Things to avoid: Don't force the issue, but don't give up.

Suggested responses: There are three ways to overcome this objection without seeming too aggressive. First, you can tell the prospect that you understand and will be happy to get back to him or her. Then ask when would be a good time to follow up (ask the prospect to be as specific as possible about the day and time). Then you can ask if the prospect has any questions or would like information to be sent before the follow up. If the prospect responds with a request, you will have the chance to show what great follow-up service the prospect is going to get when he or she joins. Second, you can invite the prospect to attend an upcoming function to sample the networking and other benefits of joining. Finally, you can try to get the prospect to make a decision more quickly by offering an incentive. NSA offers a variety of different incentives for Go Getters to use.

No one can anticipate every possible objection and no one can expect to get every prospect to join. Overcoming objections is a skill that can be developed by knowing the most common objections and practicing effective techniques to overcome them.

Adapted from: Membership Development, 101 Ways to Get and Keep Your Members, by Mark Levin, CAE, CSP

