

Maximize Member Attendance

Why don't people attend meetings?

- They don't know where or when the meeting is being held.
- They didn't know about the meeting soon enough.
- They are too busy with other commitments.
- They think the meetings are too time-consuming or boring.
- They don't think the meeting topic is relevant to them.
- The meeting sites are too far away, inconvenient or inaccessible.
- They think important issues have already been decided before the meeting.
- They don't like some of the people in the group.
- They don't think it makes any difference whether they attend or not.

Chapter leaders can do a lot to increase and maintain good chapter attendance.

First of all, chapters need to be sure that they have done everything they can to respond to the reasons why people do not attend meetings. There is a list below of ideas for increasing chapter attendance. Also look at the ideas in Section 4: Educational Resources for planning technical sessions.

Next, chapter leaders need to be aware of why people join PTG and what they expect from their local chapter. People join groups for lots of reasons. Most join to gain new skills, build their businesses, create professional and personal networks, find new friends and acquaintances with similar interests, and experience new things. For new members, joining a PTG chapter may be an introduction to a new career and the opportunity to gain credibility through the RPT exam process. Find out through discussions and short surveys what your members want from their local chapter.

Lastly, try some of the ideas listed below. Many of these would make good committee goals.

- Get the word out early and more than one time. Most of us need to hear things three or more times before we remember the message. Early means three to six months when you have a special topic or event.
- Get the word out in different ways. Go beyond postcards and newsletters. Use e-mail and internet opportunities, but don't neglect printed materials. Colored papers, interesting graphics and unusual packaging get extra attention.
- Make a telephone call. Divide up your member list between the board members and have them call each member. Have each RPT call one or more Associates before each meeting. People are more likely to come if they are asked individually. Communicate how important their presence is every time your chapter meets.
- Get as many people involved as possible. Assign different people to present committee reports. Ask a new member to help with set-up or refreshments. Put someone in charge of greeting people as they arrive and another in charge of distributing handouts. Make it hard for people to miss meetings.
- Don't forget to plan interesting meetings. People can tell how much effort you put into planning. Topics have to be relevant and present useful information. Not every session will appeal to every member, but try to meet the needs of the majority of your members.

- Be sure your presenters are effective speakers and educators. Choose people with not only good messages, but also the ability to communicate that information in a group setting. Set up the room so that everyone can see and hear. Tell the presenter as much as you can about the experience and interests of your group. Ask the presenter for an outline if possible and remind them that they have a time limit. The test of a good presenter is to find out if people feel more informed or motivated after participating in the session.
- Stick to the published agenda and timeline for your meeting. People may be reluctant to attend if the meeting always runs over time. Use every minute wisely. Each member should leave the meeting feeling like it was time well spent and they gained some new bit of knowledge.
- Try meeting in different locations and at different times. If members are spread out geographically or have trouble with meeting times, you may have to alternate periodically to give everyone a chance to attend. Be sure and give lots of notice of changes. Call individual members to let them know you are changing meeting arrangements so that they can be included.
- Add some fun and social time. If people join groups to find others of similar interests, set aside time for members to interact. Serve refreshments and allow for a brief time for people to greet others and talk informally. Have some prize drawings. This month's winner has to bring the prize for the next meeting. Recognize good attendance by giving awards. Give other awards for volunteer service.
- Have an open house each year and encourage members to bring guests. Have at least one social event for members and their families.
- Take a field trip or have a joint meeting with a nearby chapter. Break away from the usual agenda. Make members feel like they are really missing something when they are absent.
- Make it everybody's business to build attendance. Make sure members know the value of their chapter membership.
- Hold a short brainstorming session at one of your business meetings to generate ideas. Form a short-term task group to plan an event or some meeting-building activities.