

Recruitment Tips and Ideas

or How to grow by fostering recruitment and promotion

This brief, idea-packed guide is largely derived from ideas shared on the College of Seneschals email list since 2009, with additional elements from the RnR team in 2020. Treat it as a very rich smorgasbord of possibilities and a basis for brainstorming new ones. Take the ideas that might work best for your group, consult with the rest of your team to develop them into fully-rounded form, then try them out!

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A couple of suggestions below are repeated with different wording in different sections. Why? No reason, except that they are possibly the most useful suggestions of all.

Identify your target market and its interests

- **Broad target:** people who are willing to make a lifestyle choice to engage in medieval recreation AND who appreciate doing so in a fairly broad-church approach. This means that the SCA tends to be much more of a lifestyle choice than joining, say, a Tae Kwon Do or Bridge club. It is not nearly as easy to get people on board, because the choice is ultimately, for most, quite a major one.
- **Specific interest-groups:** martial arts; calligraphy societies; crafts groups of many and varied interests; archery clubs; kendo and dojo; fabric and craft stores
- **Close contacts:** ie friends and relations, acquaintances, colleagues. It's important that the group be in good heart or few people will want to do this - but close contacts are far and away the best qualified leads you can find.
- **Former members:** take the opportunity to reach out and remind former members that the SCA is still here; invite them to an anniversary event or a local picnic and help them reconnect
- **Students:** tertiary students will often be looking to form new social networks and typically arrive en masse so present a good target; consider opportunities like O-week with demos, low-cost or free events aimed at them
- Consider running events likely to be of interest to the chosen target market (eg invite craft groups to an A&S Collegium; families to an early feast)

Make use of a managed media approach

- Find out who has media experience and/or appoint a Media Officer to deal with media enquiries in an appropriately professional manner
SCANZ media intro, tips and policy: <https://sca.org.nz/media>
- Plan a supported media outreach campaign using experienced people and/or around events
- Consider inviting local media to a specific event or part thereof eg the Food Editor to a feast or its preparation; Sports Editor to a tournament; prepare a

release with useful info such as a quick-description of the SCA, names (correctly spelled!) of key people etc

- Ensure everyone knows what is expected. The media need to be briefed on requirements (eg timing, garb, interviewees etc); members need to know what is happening and when so they can choose to take part or not.
- Understand how the media works (eg fast response, serious deadlines) and what doesn't work (eg don't expect to be able to vet photos or edit content)
- Use social media as an effective promotional tool – keep it current, keep it friendly and exciting – some of our easiest recruits in recent years have come from folk who first encountered the SCA through social media pages. Note the benefits of having a regularly-updated group page, linked to/from your website with lots of photos and different activities showing, visible to search engines and with a name like “xyz Region Medieval – SCA <groupname>” so it's easier to find for people doing a casual search for local medieval activities. Make sure there's an inquiry link and make sure inquiries are followed up!
- Don't forget your website! See <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/luring-newcomers-via-your-website>
- Consider using Meetup.com if you see it already has a decent number of listings for your city/region. There is a cost, but it has served other groups well for a while. So perhaps it's worth an active (and measured!) experiment for 6 to 12 months, longer if it works for you.

Check out social outreach opportunities

- Check your local newspaper or e-noticeboard - see if they run a free ad for groups in their 'community diary' and a 'what's on' in the local area and advertise practices or events that would be OK for a public presence
- Take advantage of local community festivals or events (eg St George's Day, Heritage Week, Bunnings sausage sizzles, school fairs)
- Identify regular annual events which may offer a demo opportunity or other relevant marketing/advertising opportunity (eg Ren Faires, Armageddon, O-week, Arms & Militaria Shows, A&P shows etc)
- Touch base with the local library, adult education facility, council offices or other venues with display areas and offer to provide a display that can be tied in with their own interests and activities
- Demos can be good but it's important to encourage engagement with conversation starts, active activities (eg fighting, weaving, fletching); have fighters salute the crowd and go mingle at the end. And it's *vital* to have a follow-up simple event one or two weeks later with support material like flyers to encourage people to come along to that

Develop recruitment-friendly resources

- Review flyers and brochures to keep them up-to-date and relevant, ensure contact information is likely to remain valid as long as possible (eg website URLs, group email address, Facebook group addresses)
- Tailor your posters for the places you put them. Eg fighting ones up in gaming stores and dojo; A&S ones up in craft stores; feasting ones up at food and cooking equipment shops

- Ensure your group members have copies of brochures and/or introduction cards they can hand out and strongly encourage them to do so; hand several out to members 2-3 times a year or before demos – constantly refreshing their supply makes it clear that you *really expect* them to keep them in their wallets or purses and hand intro cards out, not simply keep them as an interesting souvenir. See intro card examples below.
- Make sure your advertising materials contain a range of activities and images (useful to showcase diversity, family-friendly, age-friendly etc)
- Have an SCA sign with URL or QR code for further information and use it! Get it in shot when people ask for selfies.
- Have a clipboard to collect email addresses for follow-up – then do it!
- Have a system in place – even if it's only a shared spreadsheet - for tracking newcomers from first contact through to the point they are well engaged in the group – keep good records about interactions with each and see what seems to work and what doesn't.
- Remember to pay special attention to newcomers at their first few events and activities – remember their names, remember to introduce them to other people, especially if they've expressed an interest in particular areas. If it's a large event with a fair few out-of-towners (e.g. a Crown event), be sure to keep looking for genuine newcomers – don't assume an unfamiliar face is just an SCA visitor from another group.
- When planning events and activities, pay attention to issues like wheelchair access, proximity to public transport and parking, access to power points, provision for allergies and other age or health considerations. Your event teams should plan for such things to the extent they are capable, not ignore them by default.

Make use of your best resource – your members

- Help your people to have a standard spiel ready, especially if they are the kind of member who knits mail in public or wears their garb to the supermarket on the way to events
- Wearing SCA-related T-shirts can spark interest and conversation – this happens more often than you might think
- Support your Chatelaines/Hospitallers by encouraging your people to take responsibility for talking to members of the public and, especially, to newcomers at the first couple of events
- Structured A&S nights or joint practices can help with engagement and social atmosphere especially if you can combine a broad range of activities (eg fighting, rapier, archery, group projects, A&S etc); being non-garbed reduces the barrier as do having these in public locations. The combination of energy, activity and sociability is a strong one.
- Run regular garbed tournaments or musters in public parks, with attendant local publicity, and encouragement for SCAdians to bring their cautious currently-non-garb wearing friends along to try the water
- Don't forget people who were playing until a few years ago, then dropped out for whatever reason. The reason for leaving may have gone away or become less significant (e.g. children getting older, group activities or politics changing) - but they may need a little nudge to recall that you exist and that you're fun. Such folk can be the lowest of low-hanging fruit.

- Sometimes your folk may stop talking about the SCA to family, friends and work colleagues for a while – shyness, a thought they’d heard it all before, some passing concern about the atmosphere, or whatever. When times are pretty good, *do* remind them how (very!) much easier it is to recruit from their existing networks, compared to reeling in complete strangers. It’s not just that getting people to come along is easier – the whole process of socialisation and acculturation is typically miles easier, because they have a built-in connection to rely on from day one. Again, this source is potentially very low-hanging fruit, and particularly valuable when a group is in need of a fairly quick (yet lasting) bump in numbers and/or activity.
- Ask your members things like: How did they find out about the SCA? What did they join for? Use that information to plan how to appeal to others.
- Above all, *actively encourage* all your current people to consider themselves part of the recruitment process. Recruitment shouldn’t be compartmentalised to “the Chatelaine/Hospitaller” or “the Seneschal” or “the B&B”. If everyone feels continuously empowered to recruit, your benefits can be multiplied enormously.

Other Resources

See also: **Retention Tips and Ideas** – <https://hospitaller.lochac.sca.org/retention>

Introduction card examples:

<http://sg.lochac.sca.org/scaimgs/sgcardsfront.jpg>

<http://sg.lochac.sca.org/scaimgs/sgcardsback.jpg>

<https://hospitaller.lochac.sca.org/resources-2/articles/> - several articles related to SCA recruitment and retention – see also the detailed Hospitaller’s handbook on this website.

<https://hospitaller.lochac.sca.org/resources-2/promotional-articles/> - premade flyers, leaflets and other materials you can adapt to help promote your local group.

<https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/resources#officer> – various officer- and recruitment-related guides and resources on the Lochac Kingdom Seneschal’s website

<https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/department/publications/publication/promoting-your-club> - Western Australia government guide to marketing and promotion strategies for clubs

<https://sportnz.org.nz/resources/marketing-and-communications-for-clubs/> - NZ government guide to marketing and promotion strategies for clubs