

5. Getting & keeping members

Members: How'd you get 'em?

Be practical

- Show people what you do. Use photos and displays to show your successes
- Show people how they can really make a difference. Often it's the personal contact with refugees and asylum seekers, through practical support for example, that will get people really interested in refugee rights. Speak to your volunteer coordinator or to STARs Volunteer Support Officer if you would like help and guidance on getting a new volunteering project off the ground

Be visible

- Have a brilliant stall at freshers fair – the best opportunity to recruit new members – then keep having stalls on campus throughout the year
- Keep your eyes peeled for other opportunities to have a stall. Check the Union Diary for events which you could book stalls at and/or organise events for.

Publicise!

- Use STAR resources. Remember registered users can download resources from the STAR website
- Design your own imaginative and eye catching posters and banners
 - Display them in novel places
 - Consider having a poster painting party!
 - Order free posters from UNHCR (see appendix for contact details)
- Design and distribute your own flyers. Cheap to produce and great for advertising an event, distribute them around cafes, bars, after lectures, etc

Be high profile

- Hold an event that would attract people beyond the usual suspects, such as a band night, world music night or speed dating night. Consider using a venue in town, rather than the SU
- 'Sponsor' a Union night.
- Organise a stunt like a sleep out, banner drop or demo and get the story in your student/local newspaper

Promote your brand

- Put the STAR logo on all your posters, flyers and leaflets so people get to recognise it
- Use STAR resources available from the National Office. Ask if you can leave STAR bookmarks in the library, for example
- Wear your STAR t-shirts, available from the National Office and at reduced prices for your to sell on in bulk

Members: How'd you keep 'em?

Use all the support available to you

- Students' union volunteering bureaux are often desperate to provide their support to societies who volunteer
- Keep in touch with STAR National Office
- Let your Societies sabbatical officer or equivalent know what you're up to
- Keep in touch with other union societies
- Make contact with refugee community organisations and tell them what you do

Respect and empower your members

- Make sure STAR members have a chance to meet and get to know each other. Sounds simple, but if your members are mainly involved in different volunteering projects it's possible they won't have much chance to meet all together. Organise socials and fun events too
- Use your meetings effectively (see Chapter 3: Running effective meetings for more info)

- Set realistic goals and stick to them
- Be consistent
- Make members aware that even small contributions count and are appreciated
- Involve all your members as much as possible in your decision-making
- Share the responsibility out
- Encourage the herd instinct! Buy STAR t shirts and hoodies from STAR national office

Communicate with members

- Be easily contactable and respond to any enquiries
- Set up an E-mail distribution list to share info. Consider sending out a brief weekly or monthly E – update and forward them the STAR E mail updates and newsletters
- Set up a phone tree where each member is responsible for contacting three more members
- Have a website or Blog
- Use your notice board

Invest in group knowledge (see also committee handover)

- Investigate training opportunities available to you such as
 - Free training offered to societies by the Students' Union
 - Training given by refugee community organisations
 - Training from STAR National Office available on request (see Chapter 1: About STAR for more info on training available)
- Get accredited – If your members are engaged in volunteering, why not get it recognised.

Other ways of attracting new members

- Make contact with the Students' Union societies officer and volunteering bureau or similar
- **Use student media** – Student radio, TV, magazine, websites, listings or newspapers are always on the look out for quirky, different and interesting stories. So give them some!
- **Build coalitions with other societies** - This can have loads of mutual benefits from free advertising and sharing contacts, to joint events and, ultimately some extra support
- **Make contact with university departments** – See if you can advertise on departmental notice boards or contact lecturers and departments who you think may have a natural fit with your groups aims and interests

Example

Sheffield STAR had a stall at their Students' Union societies fair. In order to grab people's attention they created a giant paper mache model of a swan which related to an inflammatory article in The Sun about asylum seekers and their eating habits. The model caught people's attention and when they came over to the stall to find out more, the group explained what the swan represented.

Using the internet to raise your groups profile

The internet is one of the best tools to raise your groups profile on a shoestring. It can also mean a great response to an action for little or no money!

Here are some suggestions for using the internet to promote your group:

- Some STAR groups have already started Face Book and MySpace pages. Join up or start your own group mini site.
 - Go to www.facebook.com or www.myspace.com

OR

- Start your own blog / website.
 - Go to www.blogger.com www.wordpress.com

E mail students@star-network.org.uk to see if the support office can link your new blog / site to the STAR website too.

- Link your new blog / site to as many relevant blogs as you can. The more links your site has, the higher up the web hierarchy it goes, the greater your sites legitimacy becomes and the more hits it will get.
- Have a look on www.en.wikipedia.org for articles that relate to your group. Add a link to your site / blog at the bottom.
- Take photos of your events and actions and stick them on www.flickr.com.
- Put in a range of relevant **tags** to your account.
- Put a link to your Flickr account on your blog / site.
- Upload videos of your events on www.youtube.com and again, put a link on your blog / site.
- Write articles on your groups actions for the STAR website, www.star-network.org.uk or for www.indymedia.org
- Let people know about your events at <http://upcoming.yahoo.com/>
- Publicise your events and get public support on the BBC Action network, www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork
- Find out what other people are saying about the issue you're working on:
- Go to www.technorati.com and search **blogs** using keywords relating to your activities. Get commenting on people's blogs.
- You can also use technorati to alert you whenever a blog is written according to your chosen keywords.
- Go to [www.bloglines](http://www.bloglines.com) to keep track of all the blogs you want to keep an eye on go to www.bloglines.com and open an account.
- www.icerocket.com tracks how many people are blogging on an issue at that time, and also over time.

If things are not going brilliantly, all is NOT lost...

- Even if the turn out at meetings and events drops to the faithful few, **don't panic!**
- **Contact the National Office.** Moral support is always available, along with ideas and practical help.
- **Keep in touch with your regional coordinator and with other STAR groups** around the country; pick their brains for ideas if you are at a stage of potential regeneration. Contact details of all STAR groups are available via the STAR website.
- Get your friends, lecturers, and local refugee projects to help you out or speak to your societies officer about what support they could provide
- **Put your energies into one achievable goal.** E.g. plan a brilliant stall in your Students' Union or for the next Freshers Fair.
- All societies go through ups and downs, don't lose heart - help is at hand.

