

Proven PR Tips to Increase Your Chapter Membership

~ Jeff Harris
State Public Relations Officer

If you're a member of a struggling club with less than 20 active members, you probably believe that increasing membership in your club is difficult, if not nearly impossible. Less than one percent of the 750,000 motorcyclists registered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are currently members of ABATE. This number is astounding considering the work our active members do on behalf of the motorcycling community!

The solution has nothing to do with luck, or living in a large metropolitan area, but everything to do with visitors.

Here are several proven Public Relations tips to help you increase your chapter membership:

- Before launching any new member campaign, you must improve the quality of your meetings. Open seats at the officer's table exhibits a lack of interest at the highest level. Visibly intoxicated members should be discouraged from participating in discussions. Try to limit meetings to one hour. Topics of discussion should not be allowed to wander endlessly. These discussions can be held after the meeting has adjourned, and added to the next meetings agenda.
- Apathy due to our passage of the helmet law amendment must be addressed. The bikers in the state of Louisiana recently lost their freedom of choice after enjoying five years of freedom! Stress this fact with those who feel our fight is over.
- Getting visitors to attend your chapter meeting is easy! We all know at least one biker who is not a member. Each current member needs to bring one of his or her riding buddies to the meeting. Impressing our guests enough so that they decide to join and come back...now that's the challenge!
- Instruct your Sergeant-at-Arms, or other Officer, to arrive 30 minutes before each meeting. He should be on the lookout for visitors and be prepared to greet the guest. Guests typically show up 15 to 20 minutes early. If no one is there, they might think the meeting was canceled.
- Your guest should be "partnered" with a member who will introduce the visitor to the group at the beginning of the meeting and be able to answer questions throughout the meeting as they arise.
- Educate the club members how important it is that everyone shakes hands and greets the guest before the meeting. We do not want our guests to feel unwelcome!
- Always offer participation in discussions as an "option" to guests.
- Ask the guest to provide a short comment toward the end of the meeting regarding what they thought about the meeting. This will give you a good indication whether they are a potential member. Tell your guest at the beginning of the meeting that these comments will be requested at the end, so they are not caught off-guard.

- Put your web site address on everything promotional that you do. Provide your Public Relations and Membership Officer's e-mail and phone number on your web site and encourage visitors to contact him or her with any questions.

What many people do not realize is that even the large clubs can run into trouble with membership. Usually, a decrease in membership is the result of poor leadership in the club and a decline in meeting quality. Make sure you have a good product before trying to get others to buy into it!