

Finding and Recruiting Team Members

"The secret of building a successful team is not to assemble the largest team possible, but rather to assemble a team that can work well together." - Dean Kamen, Founder of *FIRST*.

When you initially ask yourself what the qualities of a successful FIRST team are, you may not recognize the importance of having a strong recruitment program. With all of the craziness of organizing and attending community service events, and designing and building a robot, you need to keep the oncoming year in mind and remember that you will need new team members to replace those who graduate.

Here are two steps to having a strong recruitment program:

Step 1: Raising Awareness

High Schools:

A high school robotics team needs to portray a strong presence on their school campus that will draw attention and attract students to your team. Make sure that you don't allow your FIRST team to become your school's best kept secret. You can do this by building up your team's reputation on campus by continuously presenting at school/community events (such as open houses and rallies), posting fliers, and keeping your team involved in the school's student body. In addition, notify the students of your school that they do not need to have any knowledge within the fields of engineering or public relations, since over time they would gain the knowledge they need to know. You can even have open team meetings where those who are interested in joining your team can come and see what your team does and decide whether or not they want to join!

Home Schooled Students and Other Organizations:

A strong presence in your community or organization is great way to attract students to your team. Present your team to local news and radio stations, and have your own booth at community service events so you can spread the word about FIRST. Make sure that in your presentation you express that your team is open to new members, and those who are interested do not need to have any knowledge within the fields of engineering or public relations. In addition, you can use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to inform your followers when you are in need of new members.

Here are some questions that your team should consider while recruiting new members:

- What is the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC)?
 - An international robotics competition created by For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST).
- What are your team members' favorite aspects of the team?

- Meeting new students in different grade levels, designing and building robots, high energy regionals, team spirit, traveling, etc.
- How often does your team meet?
 - Team calendar
- What types of jobs does your team have?
 - Programmers, designers, publicists, etc.
- What types of events does your team attend?
 - Community Service
 - Festivals, environmental clean ups, etc.
 - Exhibitions
 - Interactive exhibitions with robots to show your teams abilities.
- What are the benefits of being on a FIRST Robotics team?
 - Designing and building robots, scholarships, meeting and interacting with new people from different areas, giving back to the community, etc.

Step 2: Creating and Maintaining Interest

When you're having team meetings with the new members, it is important to make them feel involved! You can set aside certain tasks that are targeted toward rookies so that during meetings they have jobs instead of watching the veterans do all of the work. In addition, keep in mind that there should be a lot of rookie/ veteran interaction so the veterans can gain leadership experience while passing on their knowledge to the rookies. It's like killing two birds with one stone.

Some ways that you can make the rookie members feel involved and more interested in your robotics team are:

- Having them dismantle previous years robots with the guidance of veteran members
- Editing write-ups
- Taking photographs
- Going to community service events
- Participating in team bonding activities such as bonfires, interactive games, etc.

Most importantly, make your team members feel as if they are part of a second family!

Lastly, as your team progresses throughout the year, there are two main things to consider: communication and organization. Your team should have a strong communication system between the students, mentors, and parents. You can do this by using services such as Google Groups to communicate within your team and have a Google Calendar to ensure that members and parents will be up to date with events. Another point to remember is that a stable structure within the team can help make sure that everyone is accounted for (to view more information visit the "Structuring, Managing and Utilizing Students" CowTip).

*Please note: There may be times when your team receives a great influx of members and you may run out of tasks for them to complete, so be prepared.