Society Partnership Scheme

Marketing for membership

January 2018
Gaining and retaining new members can be a tricky business. Oftentimes, a society can be measured by quantity of members they have and not the quality of the interactions they have with them.

By clarifying your society’s mission, increasing the quality of your society’s output and member interactions and promoting and enhancing access to these, you will find it easier to recruit and retain large volumes of members.

**How can we get more members?**

- **Knowing me, knowing you - have a reason for being!** What does your society want to achieve? How are you going to portray this? Once you have this clear in your minds, you can communicate your raison d’être, or your brand, to current and prospective members.

- **Have an offering -** Compile a list of the things you can offer your membership. Develop your offering as you develop as a society by listening to what your members want. Reflection and member consultation is key.

- **Sell yourselves -** Once you’re clear on what you’re offering is, make it the headline and shout about it at every opportunity.

- **Be open and accessible -** Everyone knows a clique and everyone knows that they can be incredibly alienating to outsiders and ‘new blood’! Be open, welcome new people and instil a positive, open and friendly culture within your committee – they are your ambassadors after all!

- **Get to know your audience -** Being a membership organisation is a two-way conversation. You should always be asking your members what they want and evolving to suit their needs (so long as that fits within your aims and remit.)

**Who are you and what are your aims?**

- **Knowing yourself -** Learn more about defining yourselves as a committee and society in the ‘running & leading a successful society’ training and toolkit.

- **Plan ahead -** Set out what you want to achieve for the year – campaigns, activities, events – early on so that you have more time to advertise and you have something to shout about at key events and opportunities such as Freshers’ Fair.

- **Why would people want to join?** Take a moment to detach yourself from your position and think about yourself as a potential member, or a new student – what is it that would make you want to join? Tell your friends who aren’t involved about the society and what it offers – what are their takeaways and what are they most impressed by?
• Have a message to buy into - Take the aims and objectives of the society and distil them until you can encompass it within a sentence or short paragraph - make it your tagline. The more obvious, the better!

Membership offering

• To charge, or not to charge, that is the question! Membership fees can add value and integrity to your society’s output whilst being an essential antidote to keeping your society’s finances afloat. Take stock of what other societies are charging on your campus and be aware that when people pay, they will have heightened expectations of your offering!

• Events - Most societies purely revolve around an event schedule. Making membership compulsory for event attendees can be an excellent way of capturing new members. Events are incredibly important touch points for members who usually value face-to-face exposure above all else. Plan an exciting but achievable event timetable early on in the year and show the diversity of what your society, and GP as a career, can offer.

• Projects and activities - Whether it’s schools outreach activity, campaigns, research projects or fundraising, make it known to members the breadth of activity that they can get involved with! This is the most tangible benefit for most students who dip in and out of society activity depending on their interests. If you are worried about delivery, you can speak to the RCGP and your students’ union to find out if there is any resource or funding out there!

• Communications - You could offer a fortnightly or monthly e-bulletin, listing your upcoming events, GP interviews and other any opportunities. This type of valuable content could also be found on social media channels and the society website. Ensure everything is up-to-date so that, if your members want to know, they’ll be able to find out!

• Discounts - Try both local businesses and bigger organisations to see what sort of discounts they can offer your members. You might want to offer book discounts or GP specific goodies to members – think creatively and pull contacts from members of your committee and social group. Students have huge spending power and are in demand from a huge range of stakeholders. Your students’ union are likely to have guidelines and contacts with companies small and large. Approach them to help advise on sponsorship and discounts.

• Have a mission and make it known! Societies can be a force for good in medical schools, universities and in local/national politics. If it’s what members want, campaigning can be an invigorating experience, a good opportunity for members to feel like they have something to get behind and an opportunity to make a difference.

• ...whatever your members want it to be! Societies should be open and sensitive to the needs of members. Listen to suggestions, go out and ask for feedback, speak to members at events – what do they want to see from the society? The more flexible you are and the more your members feel like they are being listened to, the more they will value their relationship to the society.
Communicating with members

- **Brand Yourself!** Now you have something to sell, establish a brand. Have a logo designed and start using a consistent colour palette. Logos can be created using free online tools such as Canva. You could also get your society out there by holding a design competition in your medical school.

- **Get it out there** - Set up a mailing list through your Students’ Union, a contacts list on Gmail or use a free sign up and database platform such as Mailchimp. Make your mailings exciting and dynamic with new content and regular features so that people are left looking forward to the next edition but not bombarded.

- **Give your content a home online by creating a website** - If your students’ union does not provide a platform, Wix and SquareSpace offer cheap/free and easy to use platforms to build a good online home for your society. You could also use free blogging sites such as Wordpress or Tumblr. The better and more up-to-date your site is, the better it will rank in Google searches.

- **Be Social** - Everyone relies on social media to get their news and find out what’s going on in the world. Make sure you cover all the bases – create a Facebook page or group, a Twitter profile and an Instagram account to share your news and events. Every time something is going on, make sure you post about it and get your committee sharing, liking and attending.

- **Be everywhere** - Find out about other communication platforms available to you; it’s likely that your medical school will share content for you and your students’ union should have a poster service, society events calendar and social media channels accessible to you. Members will expect to find out about these opportunities; make it easy for them!

- **Be there for your members** - Make it easy for members to access you. If you have an event, capture it online or cast it live on periscope, Facebook live, Instagram stories or snapchat to get interaction from those who can’t be there.

- **Up close and personal** - Face-to-face events and projects are arguably the most important way you interact. In person experiences are more potent and can leave you high or dry. Think about customer service – you’re more likely to remember the long hold on the phone on a company’s complaint line more than a smooth-sailing trip through a supermarket checkout. One bad experience can really mar people’s outlook on your society - make sure your events and projects are well run and committee members are visible for anyone who needs help.

- **Everyone loves a freebie!** Get some merchandise. Freshers Fair is usually a competition of which society has the most goodies to give out. RCGP provide stashboxes for societies on the Society Partnership Scheme. Stashboxes usually include items such as pens, notepads, journals, lanyards etc. to be given out at events and society fairs. You can’t buy love... but you can get some loyalty and plenty of exposure!
Marketing general practice

1. **Endless opportunities (“Create a career to suit you”)**
   Embark on a flexible, diverse and fulfilling career
   
   - One of the greatest things about general practice is how varied it is. Most GPs you meet will have interesting roles alongside working in the practice. This can be anything from teaching, doing research, writing, being involved in medical politics, to working in a variety of different settings such as a prison, a hospice or even the military.
   
   - A GP with a Special Interest (GPwSI) supplements their role as an expert medical generalist by providing an additional service while still working in the community. GPs can have a vast array of special interests from cardiology, dermatology and minor surgery, to mental and sexual health.
   
   - GPs can have portfolio careers heading multidisciplinary teams, leading work in areas of geriatrics to neurology, running ‘in-reach’ to hospitals and ‘outreach’ to patients’ homes. Most of all GPs will continue to be closer, and more important, to their patients than ever before.
   
   - GPs can move between many different roles and locations throughout their careers, and can build flexible working patterns around the needs of their patients as well as their personal lives.

2. **Intellectually stimulating (“Become an expert medical generalist”)**
   Diagnose a wide range of complex conditions, both quickly and compassionately as an expert medical generalist
   
   - General practice is a unique discipline. Rigorous scientific and clinical medical training and the ability to apply the evidence appropriately in community settings, places general practice at the centre of the NHS. This knowledge and skill set - when combined with the discipline's holistic, relationship based philosophy and broad generalist practice, distinguish the discipline in large measure from other medical disciplines.
   
   - GPs and GP-led multi-disciplinary teams manage the widest range of health problems; providing both systematic and opportunistic health promotion, making accurate diagnoses and risk assessments; dealing with multi-morbidity; coordinating long-term care; and addressing the physical, social and psychological aspects of patients’ wellbeing throughout their lives.
   
   - To adapt to new ways of providing patient care, the future expert generalist will continue to develop their skills and their roles after completing their training. Many GPs will undergo additional training to become a GP with a special interest, who build expertise in areas most relevant for their given community. Conditions such as dementia and diabetes, or in areas such as drug misuse, child protection, leadership or management.
3. **Teamwork and collaboration ("Share skills, knowledge and insight")**

   Work with multi-disciplinary teams, in a range of practice and community settings, delivering continuing and comprehensive patient-centred care

- GPs don’t face the challenges of modern healthcare alone, they are increasingly working with and leading multi-disciplinary teams.

- Patients with long-term needs and multi-morbidities will need a network of professionals around them to help organise and plan their ongoing care. As a result, a wider range of professional support GPs to provide care that is truly designed around the patients’ needs. There are many kinds of professional that GPs will work with, alongside fellow GPs.

4. **Innovation and leadership ("Shape the future of patient care")**

   Lead improvements in healthcare, both locally and nationally, to enhance patient care

- GPs are integrally involved in deciding how health and social services should be organised to deliver safe, effective and accessible care to patients in their communities.

- GPs are already pioneering new ways of working. These roles present new medical challenges that require additional clinical skills and innovative ways of providing patient care.

- To meet the challenges of modern healthcare and as patients increasingly manage long-term conditions and multi-morbidities care is moving into the community, as a result GPs are taking on new exciting roles both clinically and as leaders designing and managing services for patients.

- As technology evolves, it will play a greater role in the interaction with patients.

- GPs are taking on academic roles to provide the evidence future general practice will need, allowing them to balance other roles to work with top research institutions.

- As a GP Partner, you can strategically develop the delivery of local healthcare, for the benefit of your community.