

SCA Recruitment Part II

“Demos, Networking, and Community Relations”

by Syr Kyppyn Kirkcaldy

This is the second article in my series on recruitment in the SCA. I will be discussing demos, how to network for recruitment, with a brief touch on proper public relation practices. Demos are very important in creating SCA awareness. They can be a tactile representation of our Society and give a “realness” that a flyer or poster cannot. After all, we encourage participation in our Society. We do not want our audience to just be entertained; we want them to be involved. Having demos allows your audience to touch, see, and interact with our equipment and people. They can ask questions and cheer their favorite fighter on the list. The right kind of demo can bring you new members; the wrong kind of demo can give you a bad name in your community. It is better to create the right kind of demo than having no demo at all.

- 1.) Who should talk at a demo? This is a great time for your knowledgeable members to talk about the SCA and what a great group it can be. They should always be positive. Never tell stories that talk about fighters who “rhinohide” or bad Tuchux stories. If you are recruiting college students, talking about youth activities is probably not appropriate. Social activities, Armored combat and dancing, may be better topics. If you are recruiting families, talk about our Youth Activities and Page for a Day Programs. Again—identify your population and relate to their interests.
- 2.) When should we do demos? Most SCA groups recruit sporadically when there is a great need. They will go through a time when their older members are burned out and new members are scarce. The group will do a series of demos that brings in a lot of new members but will only hold on to a few because there aren’t enough resources to help them all. Then the group will settle back into a comfort zone until the next time this happens. This is not the way to increase your group’s numbers and maintain a healthy SCA group. Regular demos held throughout the year is always better. Become involved with a local community activity where people expect you and count on seeing you. If you recruit all year long, you should receive more members in smaller quantities, which your group should assimilate more easily.
- 3.) What should we do at a demo? First thing you do is take stock of the resources within your group. Do you have fighters, artisans, archers, dancers, etc.? Draw on your group’s talents and make sure they are represented. Hold a mock tourney, have an arts and sciences display, perform a dance or a play. Use whatever you can to bring your audience’s attention. While the fighters do their combat, explain how our combat works, the rules, who is a knight, a squire, how everything relates. Heraldry and pageantry are very important. Have banners, medieval pavilions, videos, pictures, etc. Have a newcomer table, with a sign-up sheet for more information, flyers, coloring pages for kids, and so forth. Give them something they can put in their hand and take home.
- 4.) How to sell your demo. Your audience is looking for a show. Typically in the SCA we want our members to participate, but at a demo the people watching haven’t made a commitment to playing in the SCA. If they are watching, then their interest is piqued, and you are in that precarious position of both hooking them and reeling them in, or losing them. So, you need to get your audience involved without them physically participating. You are giving a demonstration. Think about how you would sell a product. It is more than showing people that the product ‘slices and dices’, that they can take the product or leave it. If you are going to sell your product, than you need to do everything you can to

convince your viewer that they want your product, even that they need your product. Get your audience involved.

- 5.) Fighting at your demos. Talk to your audience about what is going on during the fighting. Let your fighters fight a couple of “demo fights” with lots of loud shield banging and big, colorful movements, and then make sure whoever dies, dies spectacularly. Explain some of the armor we use and why. Explain how we call blows. Mention why we use rattan and its safety features. Remind everyone that these fighters are trained professionals. Do not try this at home.

Networking. Your current members are the most powerful recruiters you can find. They have decided to be active in the SCA and something about our organization keeps them active. They are the best testament to our organization and should be actively recruiting new members. If each member brings in just one new member, you have doubled the size of your group.

Public Relations. Partnering with your community is very important. Whether it is your local schools, churches, or city organizations (i.e. libraries), these groups represent the community you live in. People will make assumptions about your organization based on the company you keep. They can also be a credible source for you in your community. Each member of your group should see themselves as a SCA public relations representative.

Next month’s article will discuss your first step in promoting the SCA to your potential new members as well as giving some tools to increase the number of members you keep after a first contact and/or demonstration.

If you have any questions about this article or general recruiting in the SCA please contact
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