

SCA Recruitment Part III

“Promoting the SCA to Newcomers”

by Syr Kyppyn Kirkcaldy

“I did a demo, now what?”

In the previous recruitment article, we discussed having a sign up sheet at your demo. Once you collect the sign up sheets, you need to follow up on the contact information. The people who signed your sheet had enough interest to take the extra time and place some of their personal information on a piece of paper. Contact these people as soon as possible, while your group is still clearly in their thoughts. Timing is everything.

What is going on in the mind of the person with SCA interest?

Some of the people you encounter with interest in the SCA are going to be 100% involved from the start. They have always loved medieval history or have always wanted to do living history reenactment. Joining your group will meet their needs and they will jump in with both feet with little encouragement beyond information on when and where to go to an event.

A portion of the people who meet your group will appreciate what you do, but it is not for them. These people are still very important. Their word of mouth to others about what they have seen may bring in potential new members. Always leave them with a good impression.

Others are going to be on the fence. They have seen something that they like and are interested in seeing more. This is a critical time for your potential new member. They do not have any personal investment in our organization. You have an opportunity to provide a good first impression that will hopefully let them make a decision to participate in the SCA.

First Impressions

More than likely new people do not know any SCA members, or if they do, it is a relationship through work or another social organization. Most people are more accepting of new situations when they have familiar surroundings or are comfortable with the people around them. In the beginning, it is best not to overwhelm someone with too much new information. If you do not have an event for them to attend right away, trying to explain all of the nomenclature, politics, and culture of the SCA in one sitting may be too much. People are more accepting if they have something familiar with which to connect. Try to get to know them as people, too. This will begin a trusting relationship that may let them acclimate to our SCA culture better.

Provide a basic info packet

They have made the first step in becoming a new member. Now you need to be a hospitable host and provide more information. Send them a small packet of info about your local group, meetings, classes, and calendar of events. Maybe a list of what they should bring to their first event or a glossary of some of our unique terminology. This is a time to give them just a little more info to make us seem interesting, but not too much to overwhelm and scare them off.

“Welcome to the SCA” class

A welcome class to introduce people to SCA culture in a low-pressure setting is crucial. Some groups have a newcomer gathering, a newcomer’s feast, or a social function just to welcome new

people. This gathering should NOT be your business meeting. It needs to be an event where the focus is on the new people you are hoping to recruit.

Always have a welcome class scheduled after your demo. You do not want to tell interested people that you will get back to them or you have no idea when a class will meet. Remember - you are a professional organization and need to appear professional and competent.

Think of this gathering as a small demo. Your group members can now speak with people who are interested in your activities, not just the general public, who may distract them from holding conversations or interrupt social interactions. This event does not have to be a structured lecture class. Maybe you can have current members bring some of their interests: weaving, leather craft, or illumination. Have a fighter and rapier combatant bring their armor. Provide items to touch and talk about. Some people can be in garb and others should be in modern clothes. That way your newcomers will not feel uncomfortable and out of place. Remember that you are giving them their first impression of the SCA and your group, keep conversations positive and upbeat.

Next month's article will focus on retaining your new and current members. SCA 101 classes and follow-up procedures your group should use to increase the likelihood that your new members become productive members of your group and the Society.

If you have any questions about this article or general recruiting in the SCA please contact Kyppyn Kirkcaldy, KSCA, Deputy to the Kingdom Seneschal's Office for Recruitment at syrkyppyn@fastmail.fm