

How A Career Drive Can Improve Chapter Membership By Appealing To Career Changers



Non-profit and for-profit organizations continue to reorganize and lay off people. People in their 40s and 50s are burning out in their careers. Those who have always been in jobs using their left brains (in analytical and logical roles) are thinking about right-brained (creative and intuitive) careers and vice versa.



How can you use what you know about careers and career changers to help people like this while also growing your chapter? Have you thought about diversifying your chapter membership and looking for people who could be interested, and do well, in your industry but know nothing about it?

Your chapter can provide the information people need, as well as the necessary skills, contacts and opportunities. And you can do that with a career drive.

So...what's a career drive?

Career drives help introduce people to your industry, as well as your chapter and all it offers. They can help drive membership growth by promoting your industry, connecting people who aren't in it with those who are, and showing how your chapter can be a great resource before, during and after a career change.

Career drives can be in person or virtual events. Hybrid career drives can work too. The format doesn't matter and activities can vary, from resume and portfolio reviews to industry panels, career coaching and mentoring and networking events. The important piece is to provide information about your industry and opportunities in it, delivering the ins and outs of moving through your industry while highlighting how your chapter helps people get into it and move forward.

How career drives can lead to new chapter members

Member recruitment can be stressful. Career drives provide a new angle that can decrease some of that stress and deliver the increase in membership you're looking for.

Instead of the "please, please, please join our chapter" messaging people may take from your typical member recruitment, career drives let attendees experience the true value of your chapter.

That value is especially strong when existing members share their career journeys with all their twists and turns, like your VP of membership who was a chef before she became a lawyer. If the chapter can give a picture of your industry, along with how it helps with career transitions, attendees see that what they're thinking can be reality, which can drive them to take the leap to your industry and chapter membership.

Organizing and executing a successful career drive

Step 1: Identify the audience. Who do you want to connect with? Is your chapter the best fit for providing guidance to students and recent graduates who haven't chosen a career path yet, as well as those completely changing roles or industries, like moving from publishing to accounting or chemistry to event planning? People you want to engage could include those you've never met, as well as member guests, who've attended events but haven't joined and vendors and sponsors in adjacent industries.

Step 2: Recruit volunteers. In addition to those you need to help plan and execute the event, look for members to present and participate. Create a list; who would be for activities like speed mentoring or resume reviewing? Have members who moved into their roles from other industries who would be fun, knowledgeable speakers and panelists? Many will be excited to give back to their industry.



Step 3: Keep the format simple. Often a one-to-two-hour event with activities like panel discussions and small breakout sessions for Q&A work well. If you have a lot to share, you could hold a series of events, each focused on a different aspect of moving into and succeeding in your industry.

Step 4: Promote beyond your membership. Partner with local universities, training programs and industry groups. Encourage members to invite people interested in learning more about your industry and all the opportunities in it. And take advantage of your chapter's social media channels.

Execute the right career drive marketing campaign

The "build it and they will come" mentality is almost never the right way to approach chapter events, especially when you need to connect with people who may not be familiar with your chapter or your industry.

Create a robust event landing page with a full event description, a link to register and a contact for questions. Include details like the flow of the event, the presenters with bios (or links) and any expected takeaways, like the Top 5 Skills Real Estate Agents Need to Succeed in Today's Economy.

If you're asking members to talk to potential attendees, provide talking points and handouts they can print. Share chapter benefits as they relate to those considering a new career and how the event you're holding is one potential career changes need to attend.

Social media is a great way to promote your industry and show your chapter as a good fit for career changers. Channels like LinkedIn can provide a lot of demographic data that can help you target people in your area based on age and career. Look for job titles that suggest people are in entry-level or transition roles (coordinator, associate, intern, consultant) and search for goals like job search, promotion, career change, skill-building, etc.

Create engaging content, including headlines on a LinkedIn or Facebook post or email like "Thinking about a career change? Meet connectors in the top 10 INSERT INDUSTRY firms in Southern California," or "See if INSERT INDUSTRY is right for you" followed by a list of the top 5 reasons your industry could be right for them.

Craft an email or series of emails for vendors and sponsors with similar content. Ask if they'd be interested in attending and to share the invitation with those they know.



Converting career drive engagement into membership

Some may join your chapter while at your career drive, while others will need a little more information and motivation. Consider ways to engage all attendees after the event, like holding an educational session just for potential career changers, a discount on membership or attendance at your next chapter event for free. Gather feedback through follow-up calls and emails, provide additional chapter resources and share relevant ways for them to get involved in your chapter, even as member guests.

Invest in outside connections to grow your membership

A lot of people are rethinking their current careers, either by choice or by force. As they go through this mindset shift and consider other opportunities, they need support to make the right decisions.

A career drive is a great way to highlight the value of your chapter, show your chapter and members as thought leaders in your profession and that you are the right place for a career change and continued career growth. You'll help them grow their network, their skills and their confidence, while you simultaneously grow your chapter membership.

