



Growing a JGS: ATTRACTING MEMBERS

Deborah Long, [Triangle Jewish Genealogical Society](#) 2022

If a genealogy society is to survive, its leadership always has to keep an eye on attracting members. Even the most loyal members will move away, let their membership lapse, become less interested in their ancestry, or otherwise become unengaged. Attracting membership is a challenge that requires constant effort.

1. First, review the suggestion made in the article titled [Starting a JGS: Organizing Your First Meeting](#). The resources mentioned in that article will continue to be useful.
2. Ask your current members to help by capitalizing on their networks—their synagogues, organizations such as Hadassah, friends, and business colleagues (if appropriate).
3. Give them flyers and other printed materials to post or hand out.
4. Attend programs of related interest (such as Holocaust remembrance programs) and ask the sponsor for a short block of time to introduce your JGS and provide a flyer. Offer to provide a free introductory genealogy program at retirement centers. (In our area, when Jewish newcomers move to a condo, the Shalom Club welcomes them. Such clubs often look for free programming.)
5. Co-sponsor an event with organizations with similar interests, such as a Jewish Historical Society or Holocaust and Genocide Center. Invite their members to your events.
6. Put brochures, flyers, and posters in JCCs and Jewish senior living facilities. You may also want to reach out to bookstores, libraries, and grocery stores. Make sure easy-to-reach contact information is on printed material.
7. Let other genealogical societies in your area know of your existence and offer to provide free programming.
8. Reach out to non-Jewish groups including other genealogy groups. A surprising number of our members are not Jewish but are married to someone Jewish or have Jewish ancestry.
9. Have a contest for current members. Whoever brings in a new member gets a book on Jewish genealogy, useful software, an hour of free tutoring, and the like.
10. Reach out to expired members or members who have not attended in a while. Determine their reasons for not coming to meetings and see if those issues can be addressed.
11. Don't forget the power of simply asking someone to come to your JGS. A personal welcome can be very meaningful. Make sure your guest is introduced formally or informally.
12. Send a press release on your events to Jewish newspapers and consider advertising.
13. Place customized bookmarks in library books
14. Have booths at malls, fairs, festivals etc.
15. Give the membership chair one minute at every JGS meeting to remind current members that every new member brings a world of resources (fluency in a language, access to software and other resources) that are valuable to the members at large.

See also the article on [Sustaining a JGS: Retaining Members](#).