



Tips on Participation

Getting Participants:

1. It's important that a potential participant see himself somehow connected to the project or program. That is, he has to have an interest, or "feel" the problem personally. Said another way, he needs to identify with the project because he understands that its accomplishment will solve some problems which he holds in common with others.
2. People are probably more inclined to participate because they want to, rather than because they ought to. How can you describe a project in such a way that you don't threaten a prospective member? How can you convey to him what he will gain and what he can contribute?
3. People "join" in group activities for a variety of reasons: To gain recognition or status, because everyone's doing it, because of a sense of belonging to a group and wanting to contribute to its welfare (and one's own welfare), because of discontent with "the way things are." Which of these or other reasons might fit your prospective participant?
4. People don't take part because of feeling inferior and inadequate as a result of past failures and frustrations, because of a sense of not really belonging or being wanted, because of a lack of personal involvement in the group and its destiny. Try to analyze which of these or other obstacles may be blocking certain people from joining in your program and search for ways of helping these people to hurdle them.
5. Many individuals in groups--perhaps half or more of the population--simply have never developed the habit or seen the necessity of group participation. Try to think of techniques to reach these people; help them form new habits or ways of looking at themselves in terms of their place in your group.

Keeping Participants:

1. To get individuals started taking part in group projects is to solve about half the problem. Next, it's important to see that they have an opportunity to actually participate and contribute their knowledge and ideas.
2. Let people go at their own speed. But make certain they feel welcome and comfortable, feel free to speak out, have a voice in decisions, have a chance to shoulder jobs that they think are right for them in carrying out plans. In short, provide opportunities for them to grow as individuals, while making their best contribution to the group,
3. People need recognition by their neighbors and friends, and they need the satisfaction that comes from a sense of accomplishment. As best you can, see that all participants gain recognition and taste success, understanding that cooperative group effort is often its own reward.
4. Participants need a clear understanding of the task to which they are devoted, their part in it, and the relationship of that task to the total welfare of the group,
5. All members of the group are, in a real sense, leaders. Each can contribute to some phase of the task, moreover; the more members that are invited to plan meetings, plan projects, and kick in new ideas and criticisms, the stronger and more lasting their participation is apt to be.