



[RECRUITING THE BABY BOOM GENERATION]

A Resource Guide



INTRODUCTION

New members are the lifeblood of your Lions club. Because membership attrition is inevitable, they are the renewable resource that must constantly be replenished in order to keep the club going and growing. For this reason, attracting the new men and women your activities demand – people who are vital, capable, enthusiastic, and committed – is fundamental to your future.

Building membership has always been a challenge. Today, however, that challenge has become an opportunity, something very different from what it was in the past, because its focus is upon recruiting and retaining a very different group of individuals: those who grew up during that unprecedented era known as the Baby Boom. For the next two or three decades, this will be the generation that in large part will have the time and resources for significant contributions to Lions activities, including your club. It will provide the people upon whom we will depend to survive and to thrive. They are the ones we need to reach, and we need to begin doing it right now.

Reduced to its basics, recruitment is about persuasion. It is about helping prospective members understand why they should choose to devote many hours of their time and a great deal of their energy, not to the many other pursuits that await them, but to volunteer service as a Lion through membership in your club. It is generally accepted that to persuade them successfully, you will need to do much more than convey your own message. You will also need to do it in a way that truly engages your Baby Boomer audience, a way that captures their attention and speaks directly to their wants, their interests, and their aspirations. In short, you will need to help them recognize the connection between your actions and their passions.

Recruiting The Baby Boom Generation is a program designed by Lions Clubs International to help you accomplish this goal by providing you with recruitment tools of three kinds. The first is information, a summary of recent research about the Baby Boom generation and especially about the attitudes and habits that drive its volunteer affiliations. The second is a series of communications materials that have been specifically created to address these attitudes and habits, demonstrating that what Baby Boomers want to accomplish as volunteers they can achieve as Lions. The third are suggested techniques for using these materials, for approaching Baby Boomers and, more generally, for aligning your club's practices and procedures with their aspirations and expectations.

It has been clear for decades that wherever the Baby Boomers go, they bring change. In the final analysis, the purpose of this Resource Guide and the recruitment program it describes is to help clubs make changes of their own, the kind that will enable them to gain and retain the people who will shape their future.



WHO ARE THE BOOMERS?

There is no shortage of information on the Baby Boom Generation. It was the Boomers themselves who raised the profile of demographic and psychographic research in the social sciences, finance, marketing, and politics. They have gathered data in extraordinary breadth and depth, studying virtually every cohort, including their own. The following is a summary of recent research that reports on their generation, most of it gathered in the U.S. Although the findings are specific to one country, the consensus among Lions from many others is that the trends identified in North America are also influential in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and, to a lesser extent, South America.

The term “Baby Boom” is no misnomer. In the U.S. alone more than 78 million were born between 1946 and 1964. Proportionately, Australia saw a similar boom, with more than 4 million births adding to a population that, at the end of World War II, had stood at 7.5 million. The “boom” was also heard in the United Kingdom, other European nations, and many countries in Asia. In the U.S., the 76 million Boomers who survive can anticipate living to an average age of 83. Their life expectancy is approximately 8 years longer than that of current seniors and is likely to increase further during Boomers’ lifetimes. Moreover, their health-consciousness and access to history’s highest standard of medical care suggests that they will be more active in middle age and beyond than any previous cohort.

It is widely accepted that these statistics indicate an extraordinary opportunity for those who rely upon volunteers. As the American Association of Retired People (AARP) has put it: “In the coming years, the 50+ population will be healthier, will live longer, and will continue searching for ways to change the world. We expect volunteering and giving to be part of their lives.” A report published by the Harvard University School of Public Health agrees: “As some of the demands of work and family...recede, Boomers will have the potential to become a social resource of unprecedented proportions by participating in the lives of their communities.” In the U.S. alone, the pool of potential volunteers has already expanded and will ultimately increase by as many as 35 million people (based on current rates of volunteerism). Attracting just a small proportion of this total will ensure the Lions’ strength for years to come.

BOOMER VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer Activity. The sheer number of Baby Boomers is only one reason to be encouraged. Another is their propensity to volunteer. Studies in the U.S. show that their rate of volunteerism is relatively high, consistent over time, and greater than that of other age groups.

Boomers Are Active Volunteers. According to several studies in the U.S., approximately 45% of all adults engage in volunteer activity. Among Baby Boomers, however, the rate jumps to 60% and is somewhat higher among the generation's women, its well educated,

Boomer Volunteering

- ✓ Boomers are active volunteers.
- ✓ Boomers want choice and flexibility.
- ✓ Boomers are in no hurry to retire.
- ✓ Boomers know what they want - Lions can provide it.

and its more affluent. These findings suggest that the stereotype of the elderly, retired volunteer is not entirely accurate. Volunteering actually peaks in life's middle years and declines with age, although the total number of hours committed to volunteering does tend to rise.

Boomers Want Choice and Flexibility. Because the availability of those hours may vary with busy schedules, Boomers express a preference for organizations that offer a "menu" of volunteer activities that includes both regular and occasional tasks varying in their times of the week and the hours they require.

According to the Harvard University School of Public Health, "volunteering in mid-life seems to be associated with having more, rather than fewer, obligations and commitments and with being actively engaged in other aspects of life, such as working and parenting."

Boomers Are In No Hurry To Retire. It may well be that for Baby Boomers the activities associated with "mid-life" will last longer than for their parents. In large part this will derive from their very different attitudes towards retirement. Unlike the previous

Boomers hope to maintain a focus on purpose, people, and community...in both their professional and their leisure activities.

generation, Boomers state that they are likely to continue working beyond what had been considered as the traditional retirement age of 65. They also indicate that rather than retire abruptly, they expect to do so gradually, in the meantime devoting many years to part-time work. More importantly for volunteer recruiters, the majority of Boomers are planning transitions to second careers where they can focus less

on their own advancement and more on helping others. Thus, in both their professional and their leisure activities, they hope to maintain a focus on purpose, people, and community.

Boomers Know What They Want – And We Can Provide It. As volunteers, they also expect to maintain their focus on a chosen few organizations. Unlike younger people, who are more apt to experiment with a variety of volunteering experiences, Baby Boomers state that as they age, they will be unlikely to change their affiliations, instead sustaining long-term connections with those organizations they come to know and trust. For a Lions club, the central implication of this information is clear. The greatest promise for recruiting success lies among people who are still working and still forming new volunteer affiliations. With the possible exception of its leading edge, virtually all of the Baby Boomer Generation falls into this category.

Volunteer Attitudes. Although an understanding of Boomers' volunteer behavior is important to your recruitment effort, a clear sense of their motivations and attitudes is even more so.

Perhaps the defining characteristic of their generation has been its drive to create change. This was something Boomers first expressed through their long hair, their bell-bottomed

Boomers Are Motivated By:

- ✓ Self-esteem and personal satisfaction.
- ✓ Commitment to a cause and making a difference.
- ✓ Giving back to the community.
- ✓ Health and longevity.
- ✓ Individual Impact.

jeans, an abiding belief in their own importance as a generation, and a political liberalism that may only have been visible among a relative few but was influential among a great many. Today, the politics of the left no longer drives them - in fact, in the 2004 presidential elections they voted like the electorate at large, with 52% casting ballots for George Bush and 48% voting for John Kerry. Even so, this distinctive cohort retains most of the other characteristics that have long been its hallmarks: a skepticism about government, a deep strain of independence and self-

reliance, an activist passion for causes, a tendency to pursue those causes not only for altruistic or civic reasons but also as a means to personal growth, and a drive towards self-fulfillment. Based on studies of these and other attitudes, recent researchers have identified five major factors that make volunteer opportunities attractive to the Baby Boom Generation:

1. Self-Esteem and Personal Satisfaction. The most frequently and emphatically cited motivation for volunteering is the resulting sense of satisfaction and self-esteem. According to one influential research report, volunteer work makes people feel good about themselves, and among Baby Boomers, this factor was found to be the most important reason for giving their time to nonprofit organizations. Their satisfaction derives equally from two sources: a feeling of being needed by others and a sense of personal growth or self-improvement.
2. Commitment to a Cause and Making a Difference. Members of the Boomer Generation retain a strong desire to help create social change by working for causes in which they believe. They are still very much defined by their activist spirit, especially on behalf of causes such as hunger relief, environmental protection, children's well being, and affordable healthcare.
3. Giving Back to the Community. Three-fourths of Baby Boomers report that at some point along the way they received considerable help from people and institutions in their communities. The result is another defining attitude of their generation: the desire to give back. The majority indicates that helping others and making the community a better place to live are primary reasons for volunteering.
4. Health and Longevity. Some Boomers may be aware that doing good for others can also be good for their own health – and, considering their health-consciousness, those who don't know about this benefit will certainly be interested in hearing about it. A number of studies conducted over the past decade have demonstrated something that, for many Boomers, has already been accepted

as a matter of intuition: that people who experience the social connections and physical activity associated with frequent volunteering can expect better general health and greater longevity.

5. Individual Impact. Data developed by several sources, including Lions Clubs International, suggests that Baby Boomers tend to be disinterested in organizations that are hierarchical, ritualistic, or devoted to their own traditions and inner workings at the expense of their external mission. Instead, Boomers want to be involved with groups through which they as individuals can have an immediate and visible impact. They prefer smaller organizations (like a local Lions Club) that are clearly focused on goals that are well defined and aligned with their own personal beliefs. In return for their time and energy, they expect a reasonable degree of independence and the authority to make decisions.

Just Ask A Boomer!

Research shows that the biggest single inducement for Baby Boomers to volunteer is *being asked* by someone with whom they have an established business or social relationship.

What Has Kept Many Boomers From Joining LCI? They Were Not Asked.

As important as the above factors are, there is one more that is the catalyst for all of them: the social network. According to the Harvard study cited earlier, the biggest reason Boomers give for volunteering, the one cited by more than 70% of respondents, is simply that they were asked by someone with whom they had an established business or social relationship. This would suggest that the key to recruiting more Lions clubs members from the Baby Boom cohort lies in extending more invitations to join.

In other words, your greatest likelihood of success lies in the effort itself – in developing a vigorous program that effectively identifies Boomers who might be interested in club membership and actively recruits those people by contacting them personally, cultivating their relationship with the club, and communicating with them persuasively.

YOUR BABY BOOMER RECRUITMENT PROGRAM

It doesn't take research to demonstrate that your club's future depends on Baby Boomers – that much is self-evident. What the studies add to the picture is the kind of information that can help you be more successful in recruiting people from a generation whose character is distinctly different from that of its elders. Based on its current attitudes and activities, the Baby Boomers include millions of men and women who have the predisposition to identify with your club's mission, the desire to do the kind of volunteer work you offer, the time to participate, and the will to make a difference in your community. In recruiting them, your job is to *connect* with all these feelings by presenting your club in ways that demonstrate how its people and plans align with their wants and interests.

The next few pages offer some ideas for doing this successfully in four key facets of any recruitment program: identifying prospective members, positioning your club for greatest appeal, planning for retention, and communicating effectively.

Identifying Prospects. The first step in recruiting prospective members is to determine who they are. This is something your club has been doing for years, and your best techniques for the future will probably be those that have proved successful in the past. The following suggestions are based on approaches that have produced good results in other organizations.

As you read them, keep your focus on a profile of the men and women who, according to the research, will be as interested in you as you are in them. If they are career people, they are probably still working. Most are less than 60 years old. In the past, the largest portion of their volunteer work was associated with raising their children. Now that their sons and daughters are nearly or fully grown, they are seeking to remain busy and looking for new volunteer challenges, ones they hope to pursue for many years to come. They will often display the characteristics we mentioned earlier: independence, self-reliance, a sense of mission, and a desire for self-improvement.

These are people who, as they progress through their middle years, are seeking to make a difference, to give back to their communities, and to continue their personal growth. Their interest in joining Lions will be less about wanting to be members of a club than about wanting opportunities for personal impact.

Among all prospective members, the easiest to identify are those who *identify themselves* by expressing – or at least signaling – their interest in your club. These are people you don't need to find; they'll find you. What you do need is to be on the lookout for them and be responsive to any expression of interest. How will these people make themselves known?

The Direct Approach. Some will take the initiative to contact your club with inquiries about membership. These are your best prospects - the self-starters who are often the mainstays of a recruitment program and, eventually, of the club itself. Be sure to contact them immediately and personally with a phone call and the offer to meet. Don't rely solely on a letter or brochure. Personal contact is critical.

The Indirect Approach. When you are out in your community working on a volunteer project, you are likely to encounter people who will engage you in conversation about what you are doing. If they seem unusually curious or speak with you at particular length, they may be signaling an interest in your club. The best way to find out is to ask – and to offer opportunities to learn more about Lions.

Inactives. Inevitably there will be people who have stepped up in the past by joining the club and subsequently have become inactive. It may be of value to contact them, determine why they lost interest, and extend an invitation to rejoin – especially if recent changes in the club might give them renewed interest in participation.

Referrals. In most organizations, the most productive source of new members is current members - and the most productive source of Boomers will be their peers. Be sure you have a formal program through which your members born between 1946 and 1964 will mention the Lions club to their friends, describe its volunteer work, offer them the opportunity to learn more about it, and put them in contact with your recruiting team.

Another good source of referrals is local businesses that are seeking to create volunteer opportunities for their employees. The impetus comes from two sources. One is the Baby Boomers themselves who, as they progress through mid-life, are looking to join their co-workers in serving the community. The second is the growing number of companies worldwide that are adopting formal programs of corporate citizenship that mandate results measured in terms of a “triple bottom line:” profitability, environmental responsibility, and community service. The best way to make an inquiry is through contact with the Human Resources and Public Affairs departments of major local employers.

Keep in mind that identifying prospective members is only a first step. The next is to follow up with them. With this in mind, there are several important things you will want to do. The first is to develop a procedure for keeping written records of your potential recruits – for instance, via computer, note cards or simply a list. The form doesn’t matter. What does is that, having found people, you don’t lose track of them.

Be Sure To Follow Up!

- ✓ Personal phone call.
- ✓ Informal get-together.
- ✓ Invitation to a club meeting.
- ✓ Invitation to join a club volunteer project.

A second important procedure reflects one of the statistics cited earlier: that for 70% of Baby Boomers, the main factor in their decision to volunteer was an invitation to do so. When people express interest in your club, it is important that the club express interest in them. While sending literature will be helpful, it is far more important to begin a dialogue through a contact that is more personal and engaging. This might include a phone call inviting the individual to attend a club meeting, or an informal get together with current

members representing the Boomer age group. In light of the Baby Boom Generation’s focus on mission and individual impact, the most successful relationship-builder might be the offer to join some of your members for a day of volunteer work.

Positioning Your Club. As we have already pointed out, the hallmark qualities of Baby Boomers are their independence, self-reliance, and passion for mission. In a positive sense, these qualities may be expressed in their preference for organizations where they feel a sense of immediate individual impact, a direct influence on the conduct of their volunteer activities, and a reasonable degree of autonomy. On the more negative side, these qualities are also seen in their wariness about organizations they perceive as looking inward rather than outward – ones whose community service is diluted by a preoccupation with the organization’s own politics, policies, procedures, and ritual. Unfortunately, many Boomers tend to view traditional service clubs as falling into the latter category. To attract Boomers, a club must demonstrate a true commitment to

community service and work to downplay the internal conflict and politics that may arise from time to time.

In part you can accomplish this through the communications program described below – in what you *say*. But it may also be necessary to prove it through your organizational behavior – in what you *do* and how you do it. To that end, you may want to take a steely-eyed look at yourself and the way you operate. The following are some suggestions you may want to discuss. You can explore them in greater depth by reviewing the series of pamphlets published by Lions Clubs International in conjunction with the President’s Retention Campaign.

Planning for Retention.

Cut the Red Tape. A certain amount of policy and process are necessary to making a club run smoothly. However, their effect is precisely the opposite when they are treated not as means but as ends in themselves. The result is the waste of time and energy that comes to the minds of Boomers when they hear the word “bureaucracy.” Here are some ways to avoid a preoccupation with process:

- Keep your eyes on the prize. Be driven by the club’s goals, using these as the touchstone by which every activity is measured. Devote your energies to activities that have a direct and visible impact on your club’s mission. Focus your priorities on what you do and why – not how.
- Run a “flat” organization. Minimize hierarchy. Give individuals and committees a large measure of independence. Insist that their work be designed to serve the community, not the club itself.
- Run “tight” meetings. Devote minimal time to the past (rituals, old business) and maximum time to the future (new business, volunteer activities, measurable results).
- Talk less and do more. Keep the emphasis on action. To that end, reduce meeting time by publishing important information in your newsletter or on your website.

Lock the Back Room. Nothing dampens enthusiasm and initiative more profoundly than the practice of “back room politics” and the cultivation of “cliques.” For those who are not among the inner circle, these things can produce a sense of disenfranchisement, a feeling of resentment, and a belief that the broader agenda of the club is being sacrificed to the personal agendas of a few. The antidote is to encourage a culture that is inclusive and open – one where all members’ ideas are invited, where a team atmosphere pervades, and where recognition is given more for accomplishment than for longevity. The best way to reduce the influence of politics is by imposing term limits terms for club and committee leaders and continuously renewing or rotating your core leadership team.

Insure Involvement. Remember, most Baby Boomers will not join you because they want to be members of a club. They’ll do it because they want an immediate

opportunity for individual impact. With this in mind, it will be important to get them involved quickly and directly. Make sure that soon after joining they are given a ***thorough orientation***, preferably in groups to create a team attitude. And make equally sure that they have ***immediate opportunities*** for meaningful volunteerism. As we have pointed out, many Baby Boomers lead lives that give them too much stress and too little time.

Provide Opportunities. Keep Boomers involved by providing them with ample opportunities. Utilize their vast experiences, talents, and energy. Match them with meaningful activities through a “menu” of volunteer options that includes considerable variety in the kinds of activities that are available, the days and times when they are scheduled, and the number of hours they require. Here are samples of activities that may be of interest to them:

Youth Activities

- Volunteering at local schools to tutor children in reading and math
- Mentoring young people to help them plan and achieve goals
- Assist with Lions vision and hearing screenings
- Accompanying youth to help with local mission projects

Aid to the Elderly

- Deliver meals to the homebound elderly
- Provide medical assistance and equipment to impoverished residents
- Assist with elder programs at local retirement communities and hospitals
- Help to make home repairs for the elderly

Environmental

- Paint, plant and pitch in to improve neighborhood schools, parks, and community centers
- Participate in a clean up and beautification project
- Join a recycling project
- Sponsor a tree planting day

Missions

- Participate in Lions health care missions locally and globally
- Participate in Habitat for Humanity partnerships

Fundraising

- Sponsor a “Boomer” sock hop
- Sponsor a midnight walk for a local charity
- Plan a “Boomer” prom night

Most important, satisfy the Boomers passion for fun...while serving others. Explore new and creative activities that allow for social engagement and entertainment, while providing needed community services.

Communicating Effectively. Effective communications are always important to recruiting, and they are particularly so with the Baby Boom generation, who are so attuned to the TV screen, the personal computer, and the printed page that it would be equally accurate to call them the first “media generation.” Although your club may wish

Key Themes

- ✓ We Serve...Like Never Before.
- ✓ We're Building Community.
- ✓ We're Helping Young People.
- ✓ We're Advancing World Health.
- ✓ We're Exploring, Learning, Growing.

to develop communications materials of its own, Lions Clubs International has created a full program for your use. In designing it, we were particularly aware of the 70% statistic we've mentioned—the one underscoring the importance of an invitation to join. The new communications program is designed to help you extend that invitation.

Its materials are built upon **six key themes** that, according to Boomers themselves, resonate with their generation's wants and interests. The general theme of the campaign asks a question that echoes the past and provides an answer that looks to the future: **“Remember When You Wanted to Change the World? You Still Can.”** The campaign describes the means to this end through Lions membership and an emphasis on **five supporting themes:**

- We Serve...Like Never Before. This theme appeals to Boomers' sense of social responsibility, to their activist spirit, and to the ways they create positive change through new volunteer opportunities and the development of new kinds of Lions clubs – to serve like never before.
- We're Building Community. This theme appeals to Boomers' commitment to helping their communities and their satisfaction in “giving back” to make a difference in the lives of others, locally and worldwide.
- We're Helping Young People. The theme speaks to Boomers' concern about the well being of the young and the goal of world peace.
- We're Advancing World Health. This theme aligns with the Boomer concern about the global prevention and treatment of disease.
- We're Exploring, Learning, Growing. The final theme appeals to the Boomer generation's concern with self-improvement and personal growth.

The six themes are conveyed through a series of materials that can be used by clubs to highlight their activities and promote recruiting events. All are available as PDF files for output on any standard PC printer or reproduction by retail business service centers such as Kinko's. To download the materials, please visit <http://www.lionsclubs.org.boomers/>. The materials include:

- Brochure. The cover of this full-color, 12-page printed piece is clearly targeted at Baby Boomers. It features a late-60's “love bus” with a Lions bumper sticker. The

text highlights all six of the key themes and includes testimonials from Lions members representing the Boomer cohort.

- Posters. We have provided six different posters that can be used to announce events and programs. Each is in full color and features one of the key themes. The posters have ample space for the club to add its own message printed either electronically or by hand.
- Print Ad. We have provided a black/white, 4” x 5” camera-ready ad focusing on the main Boomer theme, “Remember When You Wanted to Change the World? You Still Can!” There’s room for a personalized message and contact information.
- Internet. We have created a new area on our website to support your Boomer recruitment. It can be accessed through a link from the “**Boomers Make a Difference**” banner on the home page, or by going directly to <http://www.lionsclubs.org/boomers/>. This user-friendly, interactive website features a free Boomer “E-card” to send to fellow Lions or prospective members, a fun “Boomer Quotient” quiz and an engaging electronic brochure for Boomers.
- Boomer Recruitment Kit. This attractive kit can help you with your recruitment efforts. It contains everything you need to reach out to the Boomers in your area. The kit includes a generous supply of recruitment tools such as Boomers posters, brochures, print ads, the resource guide, and other materials. The kit is available for US\$15 by contacting the New Clubs and Marketing Department by phone at: 630-571-5466, extension 522, or email us at: boomers@lionsclubs.org
- Dedicated People. In addition to these materials, we have a team of recruitment specialists ready and willing to help you at Lions Clubs International Headquarters. Contact the Extension and Membership Division staff at 630-571-5466, extension 522.

THE LAST WORD

Throughout our history, we have always known that our growth and vitality depend upon our dedication to recruiting new club members and our commitment to offering them opportunities for community service. What has changed in recent years is the identity and ideas of those we seek to attract. In comparison to their elders, the Baby Boomers are distinctive in their characteristics, and if we are to reach them effectively, we must have a recruitment program that is equally distinctive – one that speaks to their wants and interests, one that addresses their aspirations, and one that engages their passions. Most of all, it must be one that we implement with the deep reserves of energy and enthusiasm that we have always brought to our endeavors. To repeat something we said above...when it comes to recruiting Baby Boomers to your club, the most important factor in your success will be your effort.

For More Information...

Visit us at www.lionsclubs.org/boomers/ - and test your “Boomer IQ!”

Or Contact:

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