👤 Jenny Baker / Friday, March 24, 2023 / Categories: TIP, 2023, 604

Brother, Where Art Thou? Building Membership in Local I-O Groups

Bill Handschin and Maryalice Citera, SIOP Local I-O Group Relations Committee

The Local I-O Group Relations Committee's November 2022 Leadership Forum focused on building membership in local I-O groups. Participants in this forum represented the leadership of local I-O groups at various stages of development and from different geographical regions across the country. Not surprisingly, different groups had some membership building techniques in common and other techniques that were unique to their programs. The biggest divisions between different local I-O groups appeared to revolve around questions of the goals of the group: who the group was designed to serve, and with whom members of the group wanted to interact. The following is a summary of the presentation and follow-up discussions.

How One Group Recruits Members

Leading off was a presentation by Daniela Heitzman and **Lori Wieters** of the Applied Psychology Collaborative Group (APCG) based in Arizona. Although their group was initially formed before the advent of COVID as a local group in the Phoenix area, switching to Zoom as a platform during COVID allowed them to expand their reach. Having experimented with breakfast meetings, they now use a hybrid model and meet over the noontime period (11:15 to 12:30).

Recruitment and Student Support

Initially APCG recruited academics, consultants, practitioners, and students of I-O. One important goal of the group was to provide an internship-like experience for student members, as the local I-O graduate programs did not provide such an experience for their students. To accomplish that goal, APCG re-designed its meetings to create a collaborative problem-solving group, with presenters invited to bring a relevant problem or issue to the group for discussion. One problem was addressed at each meeting.

Community Involvement and Non-I-O Membership

APCG expanded the invitation to members of other communities, such as business, sales, technology, military, human resources, and manufacturing in order to bring real-life problems into the group for discussion. Their invitation techniques included recruiting by word of mouth and from LinkedIn, a roster of previous presenters, a Toastmasters group, a doctoral thesis Facebook group, and the Athena Valley of the Sun Women's group. Presenters represented various communities with specific problems including: schools, nonprofits (how to get the best talent), a yoga studio (how to build community engagement), a military defense manufacturer (how to get refocused on a purpose), an orchestra (how to search for permanent physical space), churches (how to create digital space for a congregation), and an assessment company (how to transition to the United States market). Presenters were screened and scheduled in advance of the meeting and provided training in how to structure the presentation of their problem or issue to the group. Presenters thus represented individuals from outside of the I-O group who could bring real problems to the group and provide a real problem-solving experience for students and other members. The meetings also provided exposure for I-O, familiarizing community members with the I-O field, and what we have to offer to the community at large. Presenters were invited back to join as members, thus growing membership and building a group with a more diverse perspective on problems. A larger organization has the potential to afford a greater variety of programs on topics of interest but may also require more overhead, both financial and administrative.

Internal Ethics and Identity Issues

Concerns about membership also surfaced. One of the considerations at APCG was that care must be taken that members are not seen as stealing clients from other members. APCG also lost its identity as an I-O organization for a while through the inclusion of non-I-O members and had to recapture its identity as an I-O organization by rebranding. The discussion did not go into these topics in depth, but they might be topics for a local group to explore.

Additional Thoughts About Building Membership

In the discussion periods following the initial presentation, a number of ideas surfaced about recruiting members. Recruitment strategies deployed by local I-O groups to attract and retain members and speakers differed based on the stated purpose of the local group and the populations of interest. One group (PTCMW in Washington, D.C.) formed as a group of I-O psychologists talking to each other about topics of mutual interest. That group then began thinking about adding members of adjacent professions, such as data scientists, economists, and attorneys, all of whom may have an interest in but different perspectives on these same topics. Another group (Central Florida I/O-LIO) formed through universities and expanded across the state of Florida. FLIO networked with educational groups to build membership and then built a wider base by holding their meetings at various locations across the state. They also set up networking events for different areas of the state and opened membership to people from any profession. Additional ideas used by FLIO for driving recruitment and membership engagement included working through professors to spread the word, partnering with an organizational development network, relying on personal and online networking, and sending personal invitations. Some groups maintained a database of potentially interested individuals and sent invitations to the list for upcoming events.

What Constitutes Success?

As might be expected, success of recruitment and engagement strategies has been measured by different groups in different ways. The quickest way to measure success was to count the membership: Was it growing? Those groups that have taken a problem-solving model measured success in part by whom the group has been able to help and the results of the intervention. For a group with this model, the degree of interest in the community was gauged by the number of presenters who are interested in bringing their issues to the group, and the length of the waiting list. Several groups reported surveying members about their experience and using that information to measure success and to set new goals. More than one group found that membership dropped during COVID, and that getting members back to face-to-face meetings is not easy. As much as most of us disliked the initial change to online meetings, we are now rediscovering that in-person meetings require commuting time and parking expenses. This resistance to rejoining in-person meetings highlights the necessity for local I-O groups to provide unique and additional value for its members to motivate them to re-engage at pre-COVID levels.

Summary Thoughts

Building membership in a local I-O group is simplified by first answering two questions: For what purpose and for whom? Local I-O groups can be formed to serve primarily the needs of I-O psychologists, or they can be expanded to include members of other professions to get their perspective on problems of interest to I-O psychologists and to build connections into the community. The purpose of the group will determine what will attract new members (e.g., networking opportunities, connecting with other I-O psychologists, educational programs, problem-solving programs, training opportunities, and providing continuing education credits). Once you know who you want in your group, the search for them becomes easier and the rationale for inviting them to join your organization becomes clearer. The group's choice of goals will dictate who you invite to meetings and what those meetings are designed to accomplish, thus creating ongoing value and engagement for your members. The Local I-O Group Relations Committee recommends local leaders use the ideas presented here to spark discussion in your local I-O group about your group's recruitment goals and how you might best accomplish them.

Afterword

The Local I-O Group Relations Committee hosts quarterly Leadership Forums for idea sharing and networking. We invite all interested leaders of local I-O groups to join us as we explore ways to build better and longer lasting local I-O groups. We invite you to visit SIOP's Local I-O and Related Organizations webpage, which includes a Toolkit of accumulated wisdom to help build a local I-O group (e.g., a bylaws template), a list of existing local I-O groups and leaders with contact information, additional resources for leaders, and an event calendar of committee activities.

👁 421   Rate this article: No rating