

# The Glue Factor



# The Glue Factor

The Sticky Secret of Campus Recruiting

By Tzvi Gluckin

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This book is dedicated to anyone  
who has ever recruited on a college campus.

To My Dear Friend Rabbi Tzvi Gluckin,

It was with much happiness and satisfaction that I received your well thought out and comprehensive volume *The Glue Factor*. Life on campus has it's own set of unique and often confusing rules. What is considered "cool" on the street may be considered "lame" on campus. Understanding what attracts college students versus what repels them can make a layperson dizzy! It takes a wise and insightful person to put himself in the student's shoes and emerge with the right understanding of the collegiate "laws of attraction."

Rabbi Tzvi Gluckin is just such a person. Rabbi Gluckin has been working the Boston college scene for years, deftly navigating its confusing and difficult waters, while creating lasting friendships and permanent positive impressions. In the area of college recruitment, Rabbi Gluckin is a pro's pro, masterfully teaching his craft to others and giving them the tools and confidence to grow wings of their own.

I heartily recommend *The Glue Factor* to any professional involved in college recruitment as an invaluable tool and a faithful guide. I cannot imagine anyone, from the beginning beginners to veterans of the field, who will not gain from the wisdom and insight of this important work.

With blessings of success for the honor of the Creator,

With respect and admiration,

Benzion Klatzko  
Afkim Foundation  
15 Tevet, 5769

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# Introduction

This is not a marketing book. This book does not have case studies, blindfold tests, random surveys, pie charts, or graphs. It will not discuss your position, guerillas, viruses, or buzzwords. You will not learn about expensive gimmicks, tricks, or how to pull a rabbit out of a hat.

This is a book about campus recruitment: how to get college students interested in what you do, to show up to your events, and to tell their friends.

If you work on a college campus or you are a student leader for a campus organization, you know how difficult it is to get college students to do anything. They don't respond to offers of free food, free beer, or free money. They do not show up to events (and when they do, they come late). They have a million excuses. They forget. They oversleep. They procrastinate. And this is in spite of your best efforts like handing out fliers, standing at tables in the cold, spending money on ads, staying up all night, and vandalizing campus bathrooms. You know the frustration of showing up to your big event only to find an empty room (and you consider quitting at least once a semester).

Relax. There is a better way.

You will be surprised to learn that the secret of campus recruitment is not really a secret at all. It is about building a network of people who like what you do, and – in addition to hard work and believing in your message – doing things that get them to talk about you to their friends.

In other words, campus recruitment – like anything else – is built on simple, basic, no frills, no gimmicks word-of-mouth.

You do not need expensive marketing, flashy posters, fancy websites, table tents, free beer, supermodels, full-page ads, or any of that. You simply need students talking to other students about you and what you do.

That is what this book is about.

The first section discusses twelve conventional campus recruitment techniques: what works, what doesn't, and why. The rest of the book is about word-of-mouth: how to generate it and how to get it to work for you. The ideas are simple. But like anything, successful recruitment is not magic. You don't mumble an incantation and presto, students show up to your events. Word-of-mouth recruitment is work. It takes planning and effort. It requires consistency, perseverance, and a daily investment.

But it works.

If you are willing to make the effort and stick to the formula, students will show up, they will bring their friends, and they will become loyal partners and leaders in your organization.

### Who am I and why did I write this book?

I am the last person you would expect to write a book about campus recruitment. I am a rabbi. I work for a non-profit that specializes in Jewish education on campus.

I didn't wake up one day and decide I wanted to do this. I grew up in New Jersey and thought I was going to play guitar for a living. For college, I attended the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and earned a Bachelors Degree in Jazz Studies. After college I moved to New York. I played in loud bands, taught guitar lessons, and sold tickets for the New York Philharmonic. After about three years I left New York, bought a one-way ticket to Europe and backpacked for six months. My last stop was Israel and I thought I would stay for two weeks. I stayed for seven years.

In Israel I got married and started working for the organization I work for today. At the time, we ran four-week trips in Israel for college students. The trips were an intense mix of travel, Jewish education, and Israeli politics. I started as a counselor, but soon ran and directed my own programs. An office based in New York recruited the trip

participants. I met the participants at the airport in Israel, ran a great program, and said good-bye a month later. When the trip was over the group went home and I got on with my life.

All that changed in late-2000 when someone suggested I move to America and recruit the trips myself. A foundation in New York gave a grant to pay for my first year and I moved to Boston, America's college town.

I arrived in Boston and got to work. I was not trained to work on college campuses. I knew nothing about campus recruitment, campus life, campus politics, or anything about the campus community. I just knew I had a lot of work to do.

I tried my best and learned by trial and error. Along the way I made every rookie mistake. I got in trouble with the big players on campus. I got banned from campus. My email address was blocked. Students and administrators yelled at me. I wasted thousands of dollars. And I had my share of lame programs and empty rooms.

But I had successes too. In eight years of campus work, over 700 students participated on long-term, overseas educational trips that I recruited and ran. Thousands of students came through my doors or met with me on campus. I learned how to recruit students – what works and what is a waste of time – and how to generate a word-of-mouth buzz about what I do.

This book is a collection of my experiences, successes, mistakes, and failures. I didn't do scientific research or commission a study. I will share what I know about campus recruitment so you don't make the mistakes I made and don't waste your time.

Recruitment is not fun and not the reason you started working on campus. You probably have great ideas and amazing things to offer students. But if students don't show up to your events, join your club, or participate in your programs, then your great ideas are not worth very much.

Learn how to recruit, gain the confidence that students will show up, and then focus your energies on the things that are really important.

### Is this book for you?

This book is for campus professionals and the student leaders of campus clubs and organizations.

If you work in campus life, a campus activities office, Greek life, for an off-campus non-profit, as an activist, or offer programs or services to the campus community, you need to read this book.

If you are in student government, the president of a student club, fraternity, sorority, or you are the student representative for a cause or off-campus program, movement, or organization, you need to read this book too. And you should share it with your friends, staff, colleagues, partners, board, and volunteers.

Read this book. Try my suggestions. Recruit a lot of students.

## Conventional Campus Recruiting

I moved to Boston in January 2001 to launch a campus initiative for a non-profit that specializes in Jewish education. Boston was the obvious place to start. It has a massive student population (approximately 250,000 students) packed into a small area (more than fifty different colleges and universities are in the city and surrounding suburbs). My job was to get students to come to events, attend classes, and sign up for off-campus programs.

When I first moved to Boston, a lot of people – including a few experts – gave me advice about campus recruitment. I tried everything they told me: standing at tables in the cold, giving away free stuff, hanging up posters, tackling students in the hallways, gathering lists of email addresses, placing ads in the school paper, offering cash incentives – plus anything else I could think of to get students to know who I was.

Did I meet people? Yes. Was I successful beyond my wildest dreams? No.

What I discovered – and the reason I wrote this book – were two important truths about campus recruitment:

1. You can spend a lot of time being very busy – and looking very busy – and not recruiting many students. Hounding random people is not an effective recruitment method – no matter how much free stuff you give away or how creative or crazy or wacky your on-campus antics may be.
2. Most of the students you meet – who fall in love with what you do and become loyal partners and friends – you meet through

word-of-mouth. A friend told a friend, or brought a friend, or recommended a friend, and you met and began your relationship.

### Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth – students talking to students – is the engine that drives campus recruitment. Word-of-mouth is how you get your message heard.

Think about it.

College students are together all day, every day. They live together, go to class together, party together, travel together, hang out together, eat together, and study together. They are always together.

College students never stop talking. They talk during class, between classes, at meals, in the bathroom, in the car, in the library, at parties, on the phone, online, at every time and in every way.

College students are easily distracted. They are overwhelmed, pre-occupied, and busy.

Most students won't find out about you, your event, or sign up for your program unless another student mentions it. They won't look at your flier or poster. They won't open your email. They won't read your ad in the paper. They won't come up to your table on campus. They won't respond to your invite on Facebook. They will not be receptive to your message or listen to what you are saying.

Why not?

There are two reasons:

1. You are an outsider (even if you work for the university)
2. Your message is just one of many

A college campus is a small, insular, tight-knit community. College campuses are bombarded with messages all the time. Students listen to each other and trust each other. They don't hear static and they don't trust outsiders.

The way to reach students is to get them talking about you. Your key to successful campus recruitment is a word-of-mouth referral from one student to another.

I did an informal, unscientific study of the students who are involved with my organization in Boston. I found that the majority of them first heard about us from a friend. Almost every semester I spend

a fortune on fliers, posters, ads, or something similar and yet word-of-mouth is the primary recruitment agent. (Sometimes the percentage of word-of-mouth referrals is overwhelming. On a recent trip, I asked each participant how he heard about us: in all but one case, a friend sent him.)

The lesson is obvious. If the majority of your students come by way of word-of-mouth, learn how to make word-of-mouth work for you.

Word-of-mouth doesn't just "happen." Students will talk about you if they have a reason to talk about you.

Give them a reason (don't worry, this is what the book is about – keep reading).

Word-of-mouth is what works. Do what works. Don't look busy.

## Twelve conventional recruitment methods

What about the conventional recruitment tools like tabling, handing out fliers, mass email, placing ads in the school paper, offering cash incentives, and the like? They are valuable when you already have a word-of-mouth buzz in play and serve to enhance your campaign. Otherwise they can be inefficient, expensive, and time consuming.

There are twelve conventional, non word-of-mouth recruitment techniques everyone says you have to do (there are probably more, but this is the list I came up with). Your job is to understand these twelve techniques, understand what they can do and what they can't, and then incorporate them into your overall recruitment strategy to assist your word-of-mouth effort. (They are not listed in any particular order):

1. Fliers and posters
2. Ads in the school paper
3. Tabling
4. Facebook
5. Mass email
6. Stunts and events
7. Speaking at clubs, groups and fraternities
8. Cash incentives
9. Pricing and programs students can't resist
10. Students speaking before class
11. Press release - college paper/local papers
12. Interviews on college radio

## Fliers and posters

Fliers are postcards and little pieces of paper you hand out to everyone. Posters are a version of your flier you hang on a wall.

I have a love/hate relationship with fliers.

On the one hand (as I will discuss later), fliers are essential – they have all the information for your next program or event, aggressive ad copy, and web address. I carry them around instead of a business card. I give them out to people I am talking to, to people I meet, and to friends of friends. I write my contact information on the back and use them as scrap paper.

On the other hand, distributing masses of fliers to random people is useless.

Check the trash the next time you stand on campus handing out fliers. Most people take your flier, glance at it (if you are lucky), and throw it away. Oftentimes the garbage can closest to where you are standing is overflowing with your fliers. Call me oversensitive, but that is depressing.

I dare you to find a fliering technique I haven't tried. I have done them all including handing them out on street corners, hallways, student union buildings, and the quad. Taping them to the ground, hanging them on bulletin boards or in bathrooms, sticking them to computers, putting them on cars, giving them out with hot dogs – I even hired someone to go through the dorms and slide one under every door. The results are always the same – students do not read random fliers or take them seriously.

## Ads in the school paper

Most colleges allow you to buy ad space in the student-run newspapers.

I don't like buying ads in the school papers because the results are rarely better than fliers (although more expensive and annoying). The advertising desk is always student-run – expect the representative to be lazy, bored, distracted, irresponsible, and to make mistakes – assuming you get through.

A word of caution: before you place an ad, find out if anyone reads the school newspaper.

If no, this is a red flag and don't waste you money.

If yes, study the way they read it. Find out if students read the classifieds, do the crossword puzzle, or bother reading the articles. Depending

on what you learn, place your ads accordingly. Don't waste your money on an expensive half-page ad if most students just do the crossword puzzle and throw the rest of the paper away. Ads can be very expensive and you can easily spend thousands of dollars – research well before spending your money.

Another word of caution: the students who run the school paper are not professionals and will make mistakes. They are careless with your ad copy, layout, logo, and design. They take shortcuts, change fonts, and leave out important information. Don't be surprised if your ad is blurry or unreadable. (Just be nice when you call to complain – most students want to be helpful and will often try to fix and reprint your ad.) They also forget to send the bill.

If my recruiting is going well, I don't place ads in the school paper. I usually only run ads when my recruitment is slow and I am desperate.

## Tabling

Tabling is when you stand on campus – usually at a table – hand out fliers, and talk to random students about what you do or what you have to offer.

I hate tabling.

I have friends who love it, but they are insane.

Tabling works if you have an extroverted, gregarious personality – i.e. you hate being confined in a closed space, can't stop talking, love starting conversations with strangers, and don't mind rejection.

If you are normal, you probably can't stand it.

Tabling is to campus recruitment what cold calling is to fundraising, telemarketing, sales, and market research.

Cold calling is when you are given a list of names and contact information, and told to call everyone on the list whether you know anyone on it or not. Most of the calls you make are a waste of time: you won't get through, the person is not interested, you get yelled at, blown off, abused, rejected, or asked to "send me something." If you make 100 calls, ten people will talk to you and one will bite. Not a very productive use of your time – even if the person who bites, bites big. Yes – there are psycho telemarketers who love the challenge and don't stop talking until they get money or make a sale, but most of us clam up.

Tabling is live cold calling on campus. You look weird, stand around for hours, and most of the students you encounter are in a rush,

not interested, and annoyed. (On occasion you will meet great people. Decide for yourself if it is worth the hours of pain and rejection).

However, organic table encounters, as part of a planned word-of-mouth campaign are very effective. If you actively do things to generate word-of-mouth, you will spend most of your time at your table talking to students you already know (as opposed to accosting people you don't know). They will stop by, hangout, shmooze, and bring their friends over to meet you (the same as they would if they saw you in a café or walking down the street). This is good.

There will be times when you decide that setting up a table is a necessary tactic to get the word out – and this is fine – just don't expect tabling alone to recruit masses of students.

## Facebook

Facebook is an incredible tool and I will discuss in later chapters many different ways you can use it to generate word-of-mouth.

As a front line recruitment tool, I find Facebook to be ineffective.

There are two ways most people use it for recruiting new people.

The first is by placing ads. (Facebook is constantly improving their advertising options; check their advertising page for the most current information.)

When I first started advertising on Facebook, I bought Facebook fliers – simple ads that popped up on a user's profile page. At the time, Facebook was only open to college students and you bought the fliers per campus. The fliers were deceptively expensive – you bought thousands for not much money, but if you ran them for a few days on multiple campuses the costs quickly added up.

I didn't find Facebook fliers to be the best use of my resources – they were not a waste of money (I found great students from time to time) – but in general the number of applicants they generated versus the cost did not make them worthwhile. I found it difficult to target the students I wanted and like fliers and ads in the school paper, most students ignored them (keep in mind, every time you refreshed your page a new flier popped up – your ad was gone in a flash).

As of this writing, Facebook has revamped their advertising model and offers very specific targeted marketing. I haven't tried it yet, but my gut feeling is that it is not much more effective than Facebook fliers or any other anonymous marketing strategy.

The second way some people recruit on Facebook is by stalking friends of friends: first they friend a new person, then they contact all the new friend's friends. I think this is sleazy and I don't recommend it. It puts you in the category of Internet sleaze, freaks, spam artists, and other disreputable online characters. You may meet a few new people, but it will damage your image and reputation. Not worth it.

Use Facebook for what it is designed for – to build and maintain a social network. Facebook has enough built-in systems that enable you to network, meet new people, and get the word out about your programs without stooping to low-class stalking.

### Mass email

Mass email or direct email marketing (also known as friendly spam) is when you get access to a massive list of email addresses and send information about your program or event to everyone on your list.

I rode the mass email wave early and watched it fall.

When I first moved to Boston in 2001, email was relatively new and spam was infrequent (although people were already talking about it and computer geeks were sensitive to it). Spam filters did not exist and no one was worried about viruses. There were no anti-spamming laws. The Internet was wide open. And back then, people read all the email they received.

In my first semester I was recruiting for a ten-day trip to London. A friend helped me gather email lists from my local colleges and we sent a mass email to thousands of people. And it worked. In a two-week period, I received about twenty new applications a day for my program.

A year later spam was dead. Too many perverts and con artists ruined the party. People got spam filters, started blocking emails, and stopped reading all the email they received. (Not to mention that every organization on the planet started spamming and overwhelmed the market.)

Today, even if you have access to a massive list and a legal way to send your message, you will be disappointed with the results. I find that these days, the only students who respond to a mass email are students who were already interested in my program and my email was a nice reminder. Email is free so there is no reason not to do it, but don't be disappointed when nothing happens.

If you work for a department in a university and have access to all-campus email, you can send out your message that way (it is the safest and most legal) – but in my experience the results haven't been much better.

## Stunts and Events

Stunts are when you do something crazy like stand on campus wearing nothing but florescent yellow body paint. Events are when you put on a show (like a band or comedian) for the sake of getting your name recognized.

Doing stunts and putting on events are glorified forms of tabling. Similar to tabling, your goal is to meet people, get contact information, hand out fliers, and get the word out about your organization. But unlike tabling – because you did something unusual – you get more attention.

(I knew a student who was the president of the campus mountain club. During the campus activities fair, he repelled down the side of a five-story building and ran away before the campus police could grab him. Everyone was talking about it.)

Stunts and events help you get more names, numbers, and email addresses than standard tabling. But in my experience, they do not blow it away. Stunts and events cost more and require more planning – think long and hard if they are worth the extra effort and cost.

My organization was once recruiting students to help package food for homebound sufferers of HIV. To get volunteers, we gave out bowls of matzo ball soup to students waiting in line for a concert. We gave away 250 bowls of soup and gathered about 150 names and email addresses.

The cause was meaningful and the stunt was successful, yet only one student came out to help us package food.

Was it worth it?

## Speaking at clubs, groups, and fraternities

One of the most effective of the twelve conventional recruitment tools is getting invited to speak at the regular meetings of clubs, groups, and fraternities.

Most groups and fraternities have weekly meetings. They are always looking for things to offer their members, special opportunities, and

ways to fill time. If you know someone in the group, and he invites you to speak, you will have credibility with the other members and a word-of-mouth edge. If you are good at selling your programs (and even if you aren't), your word-of-mouth credibility will help you recruit.

But don't expect much if you show up uninvited.

As an aside, I was once invited (along with a colleague) to speak at a weekly fraternity meeting. We showed up and the members panicked. They were not expecting us – at least not two rabbis – and they were smoking funny cigarettes when we arrived. Someone blocked our entrance as the rest of the group ran around the house. They rearranged the couches and a few guys hid in the bathroom. After about five minutes, they let us in and I spoke about the big trip we were recruiting for. They were respectful, but giggled during my presentation and asked silly questions about oregano.

### Cash Incentives

A cash incentive is when you offer students money to help recruit. With most cash incentives you pay the recruiter per head, though there are other options.

I never had much luck offering incentives. I have tried many different incentives including; offering lots of money per person the recruiter recruited, small sums per application, gifts and prizes – you name it.

Nothing works.

Money is not the motivator most people think it would be. It may be different if you hire a full-time recruiter, pay a salary and offer bonuses. But just telling students, “Recruit and I'll give you money” is ineffective.

You will find students from time to time who are motivated to help you and they do a great job recruiting. But note: motivated students are the exception and not the rule.

I will discuss other types of effective, non-cash incentives later in the book.

### Pricing and programs students can't resist

Offering great programs – especially trips to exotic locations at a subsidized price or special discount – is a great sales technique and something you should consider.

You will be surprised to learn however, that these amazing and cheap trips – at least by themselves – are not a very good word-of-mouth generator. Yes: when someone hears about your great program and incredible subsidy he may be motivated to visit your website to learn more. But more often than not, the pricing or gimmick is just the icing on the cake – the real draw is the word-of-mouth referral given by a friend (especially if that friend is a past participant).

Over the years I ran some amazing programs at bargain basement prices including two-week Chile adventures (with hikes up volcanoes and whitewater rafting), cross-country tours of Southern Spain, trips to London, Tijuana, and three-week educational trips to Israel via three-day layovers in hot European cities (including Amsterdam, Prague, and Paris to name a few). No student ever paid more than \$500 and some programs were as low as \$299.

In every case I saw that the price and location alone were not enough to get students to sign up. What worked? When my base of current students and past-program alumni got excited about the new trip, started talking about it with friends, and spread the word.

### Students speaking before class

Convincing your students to speak about your programs and upcoming events in class – before the Professor is ready to start – seems like a dorky thing to do (and probably the reason I never tried it). But I know of a number of organizations that got started this way and use this method to recruit a lot of new people.

You need a student who believes in your cause, is excited about what you do, and has a lot of guts (or is a real nerd).

### Press release - college paper/local papers

If you are able to pull it off, getting press – even in the school paper – is a good thing to do. It is free, the paper gives you a de facto endorsement, and it generates buzz. Whether or not anyone reads the school paper, it doesn't hurt to get interviewed, photographed, or written up. If the school paper calls – be helpful and enjoy the free press.

I was once handing out free hot dogs on campus. A colleague worked the grill and I stuffed the buns. We are both rabbis and looked funny with our aprons and yarmulkes. A photographer from the school

paper came and we gave him a hot dog. He took our picture and the next day we were in the paper.

Did the free press help with recruitment? I don't know. But it was nice to be a campus celebrity.

### Interviews on college radio

College radio is a crazy, idiosyncratic place. It is a commercial-free world of random music, inexperienced DJs, quirky experiments, live Sunday broadcasts from the school church, and coverage of university sporting events. Some colleges have massive stations boasting megawatts and thousands of listeners. Others stream live online for a few hours a day.

It is easy to get on college radio, especially if you know someone who works at the station.

Many years ago I was on tour with a band. A college station interviewed us a few hours before a gig. We spoke for a few minutes and raffled off free tickets. I was surprised how many people were at our show. I know the interview generated interest because people shouted things at the show we mentioned on air a few hours earlier.

Another time I went to visit a student who had his own radio show. I hung out for an hour, helped him choose music, and did a fifteen-minute interview. I think he and I were the only people listening to the show that day.

Some stations have listeners and others don't. A popular station will help create buzz about what you do. An unpopular station will give you something to talk about with your friends.

### Conventional recruitment vs. word-of-mouth

I mentioned above that word-of-mouth beats these twelve conventional recruitment strategies. I want to be clear: you are not wasting your time if you use them. You will meet new people and generate interest about your organization, program, or event. The problem with each of these twelve techniques is that they take a lot of effort, planning, money, and time (to varying degrees and with varying results). You need to decide if the trickle of interest they generate is worth your time and money.

What I found is that these conventional tools are more valuable when used as part of an overall recruitment strategy. Their value is as

an assistant to word-of-mouth. If students are already talking to each other about what you do, and then see your flier, ad, or meet you on campus, the chances of them reading your flier or talking to you are greatly increased. Once a person's interest is piqued, your traditional marketing motivates him to attend your event, sign up for your trip, or further investigate your cause.

The rest of this book is about word-of-mouth: simple tools and techniques to change your approach to campus recruitment. If you successfully put these ideas into practice, students will talk about you and involve their friends.

## Run Amazing Programs

**Y**our programs must be amazing. You will never generate incredible word-of-mouth if they aren't.

Duh right?

Yet this obvious point is often overlooked.

You may have the slickest marketing, the greatest slogans, a billion volunteers, access to all-campus email, friends at the newspaper, free beer, and supermodels handing out fliers – but if your programs stink, forget it. Your word-of-mouth buzz is finished.

When your programs are disorganized, boring, dull, a waste of time, or poorly executed, the only word-of-mouth you generate is negative. As a matter of fact, your amazing marketing will actually be counter-productive: if a lot of people attend your lame event and hate it, a lot of people are talking about you, your lame event, and how much they hated it.

If you want positive buzz, word-of-mouth, and people talking about how great you are – then you have to be great – accept no substitute.

### Make great programming your responsibility

The programs and events you run are your business card. Write this on your hand and make sure you believe it. The things you do – the events, programs, clubs, and trips you run – are what students talk about when you are not around. You want them to say good things.

You are probably busy, and you probably delegate many responsibilities to your staff, friends, and volunteers. Good – this is necessary

and in most cases your only hope for survival. However, people who delegate effectively follow this simple rule: Keep the most important tasks for yourself.

Delegate the grunt work (stuffing envelopes, hanging fliers, tabling, data entry, checking prices, booking flights, making coffee) and focus all your energy on making your programs amazing (and building/nurturing relationships – but more on that later).

You must take charge and design your programs. Create the schedules. Set the tone. Pick the speakers, bands, and entertainers. Your event or program must have your personality all over it. Once the schedule is set or the event is planned, you can have someone else handle logistics, bookings, and haggling with vendors – but the actual look and feel of your program has to be created by you.

Do not make the mistake of letting an employee, national office, or “professionals” design your programs. It is too risky. If the program is a flop, it will make you look bad, and worse, will kill your future recruitment. Great programs are your reputation and the key to your word-of-mouth. Make them your responsibility.

When I am planning a big program – like a three-week trip in another country – I always preempt whatever office I have to deal with and submit the first draft of the schedule. (Big central offices love to work with a schedule template they design, it makes booking much easier for them. Too bad their template doesn't work for me!) By submitting my version first, my schedule becomes the template we tweak and play around with – not theirs. It is the only way. If someone else is calling the shots the best you can do is damage control.

Never allow programming or classes you disagree with, or tours to venues you can't stand. (Call me a bore; I never take my Israel groups to Masada.) Every program is a reflection of you, your beliefs, your ideals, and your personality – make sure it represents you well.

When you are starting from scratch (i.e. no central office, new initiative, new destination), you need to create a basic outline to hand over to the local people you will be dealing with. Even if you don't know the lay of the land, you can still be clear about the general flow and energy you want for the program and just leave big blank spaces for where you want hikes, touring, food, or whatever.

Great programming is your responsibility no matter what the program is. If you book a comedian, make sure he is funny. If you book

a band, make sure they can play. If you book a mime, make sure he doesn't talk. If you book a speaker, make sure he can speak well. If you book a hypnotist, make sure he is not a racist (this happened once at a Boston campus). Get it? The programs you book must make you look good.

And don't forget to check out the room, PA, equipment, snacks, air conditioning, projectors, whiteboard, markers, drinks, security – anything that could ruin a program, assure in advance that it won't.

You are in charge: You should have trouble sleeping if you think a program is going to bomb. It should bother you when your staff books or schedules things you can't stand.

### Step up to the plate

This is the catch: when you insist on programming being done your way, you often end up as the only person able to do it. For example, if you insist on scheduling a class after a seven-hour hike at the top of a volcano, you can't insist on the out-of-shape educator getting to the summit with you. Be prepared to teach the class yourself.

When you are demanding, you end up doing a lot of things other people hire others to do. This is OK. Actually, this is great – even if you are not as good as the pro you would rather hire. Your students appreciate your efforts and will talk about you on campus. (“He is crazy.” “He never sleeps.” “What a maniac.”)

When you step up to the plate, you earn three massive advantages you wouldn't get otherwise:

1. You are in charge to guarantee the program runs the way you want it to
2. Your students see you “taking care of them”
3. Your students credit you with “running a great program”

You are in charge to guarantee the program runs the way you want it to.

Obviously. But it is true. When you call the shots, you get what you want. This has massive advantages back on campus if you do it well – much better than something lame you have to apologize for or defend. When you are defending your programs, you are not selling your programs.

The students see you “taking care of them.”

This is important. As I will discuss in the next chapter, relationships are the key to generating word-of-mouth. People talk about things they feel connected to.

When you take care of your students (especially on long, off-campus programs in foreign countries), they look to you as an authority, respect you, want your opinion, and will come to you after the program to discuss serious life-issues and questions.

You want this.

If your students know you can take care of them, they will talk about you and recommend what you do to their friends.

The students credit you with “running a great program”.

When *you* run a *great* program, you get the credit for it.

If “you” and “great” are identified with each other, your students will talk about “you” being “great.” This is word-of-mouth.

### Plan follow-up in advance

Plan your post-program follow-up when you plan your initial event. The follow-up, next event, or reunion should be booked and something you talk about on your first program. Don’t be obnoxious about it (we’ll talk about the hard sell and being obsessed with your programming later), but whatever is “next” should be in the air while your current program is in progress. Your students will discuss it, they will ask you how they can get involved, if they can bring their friends (!), and will generally be excited (assuming your program is going well, and sometimes even when it isn’t).

Plant seeds and get the word out. Print information about the next event in the schedule, announce it publicly, and have fliers to hand out.

### “Organic word-of-mouth”

When you run great programs, seven word-of-mouth things will happen on their own – as if by magic:

1. Program alumni are thrilled when they run into each other on campus

People bond when they share a great experience together.

For example, when I was in high school, the Catholic kids in my school would go on a retreat one weekend a year. I am not Catholic and I didn't go with them, but I know all about it because the Monday after the retreat (when everyone was back in school), all the retreat alumni came to school wearing huge wooden crosses.

My hometown isn't very religious (I don't think many of the kids on the retreat were religious either) but – and this is the point – something happened on that retreat. The students felt connected and identified with whatever the message was. They were inspired enough to feel comfortable wearing a huge wooden cross to school – something they wouldn't normally do – and hugged each other in the hallways between classes.

My point: if your program is great and your group bonds, your participants will feel inspired and connected to each other. More importantly, they will feel a need to express their connection and inspiration when they see each other on campus. They will do things, or wear things, they wouldn't normally feel comfortable doing or wearing. The word-of-mouth message is communicated when their friends see them behaving this way.

Think about it.

I know all about the Catholic's retreat in my high school. I didn't participate. It was over twenty-five years ago. But the message got across.

2. Participants will create a network amongst themselves
3. Participants will host informal "reunions" (i.e. parties) without you

My students do this all the time. They throw massive parties and invite their friends and the participants from the trip. They have a great time. It is incredible hype for my programs and I don't have to do anything – though I wish they would invite me.

4. Participants will create photo albums of the trip or event on Facebook
5. Friends will be jealous and will ask about the program when they see the other participants interacting positively with each other – or with you – on campus
6. You will no longer be intimidating once introduced or recommended by program alumni

7. Your students will talk up your program and sell it to their friends. Oftentimes, program alumni and event participants will have no other involvement with your organization, except that they are positive ambassadors for what you do

Bragging rights are key.<sup>1</sup> If you are able to give your students experiences they would never get otherwise (access to a business leader, backstage access, meetings with government officials, crazy stunts like hang-gliding or wind surfing), it is another reason for them to talk about you and hype your programs.

### What if you blow it?

One caveat: after all is said and done – even if you blow it – it doesn't really matter. Yes, you want your program to be amazing. Yes, your reputation is everything and you are only as good as the last thing you did. But, as we will discuss, more important than your program is the relationship you build with your students. As long as you don't freak out, your students don't hate you, and your group bonded with you and each other, you really can do no wrong. Damage control is a pain and it is better if you never have to do it, but the power of people coming together trumps all.

As a matter of fact, “overcoming adversity” is one of the most powerful experiences for a group of people to go through together. It would be foolish to schedule “adversity” into your program – unless it's something like a tough hike or a controlled challenge – but when things go wrong – buses break down, you get lost, all the luggage is lost, the speaker never shows up, the beer is warm – and they always do, if the group stayed together and survived – this is good. Just be positive, stay focused, and stick with it – it is actually great for you and your reputation.

I was once in Chile with a group of about fifty students. On the second day of the trip, we booked a bus to take the group from Santiago to northern Chile. The ride was supposed to take four hours, but it took our group about ten. We never went faster than thirty miles per hour and we stopped every hour to change drivers. (Our bus had two drivers,

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<sup>1</sup> I first learned about “bragging rights” from Rabbi Shalom Denbo, the director of the AEPi Jerusalem Road Trips. Budgetary issues are always a major concern, but stick in as many perks as you can afford.

when one driver drove, the other slept under the bus with the luggage). A few students told jokes and helped put a happy face on the situation.

At the time, the ride was a disaster. But looking back, it was a turning point of the trip. No one remembered how awful the ride was. They remembered the jokes and the driver who slept with the luggage.

To sum up: do everything in your power to make sure bad things don't happen – your program is your business card – just don't stress when they inevitably do.



## Relationships, Relationships, Relationships

**A**re you ready? Here is *the* secret to stimulating word-of-mouth recruitment, creating student loyalty, leadership, and student retention.

The only thing that matters – even more than running amazing, well-executed programs – is building real, lasting *relationships* with your students.

Your key to spreading the word, inspiring others to involve their friends, generating momentum, and getting talked about on campus, is relationships. It is that simple. The more people you have in your network who like you, feel connected to you, like to hear from you, enjoy spending time with you, and know that you care about them, the better your buzz and word-of-mouth.

Look at the business world – establishing relationships is a fact-of-life. Every salesman knows: if you want your customers to remain loyal, buy more, and refer their friends, then you need to have a relationship with your clients. And in the smaller businesses – especially mom and pops – you will find that the owners and key players usually have personal friendships with their top buyers that often go back for decades.

Campus recruitment is no different.

You run a small business and your customer base is your campus community. You want the students who come to your events to become your friends, hang out with you during off hours, enjoy seeing you out

of context, feel comfortable with you, and introduce you to their friends. You will not do this if you just sit in your office, work nine-to-five, and go home. You need to be at your events meeting the students and then implement a system to follow up and stay in touch (more about follow-up later). In other words, you need to actively invest in relationships.

So what is a relationship?

Defining a relationship isn't easy. It is more than face and name recognition, but not necessarily "best friends." A relationship is somewhere in the middle.

The tool I use to gauge whether or not I have established a relationship is as follows:

Does the student consider me a "the" or a "my"?<sup>2</sup>

Sounds crazy? I'll explain.

I am a campus rabbi. If you don't know me, you call me "*the* rabbi" (if anything). If we have a relationship, you tell your friends about "*my* rabbi."

Get it?

If a student considers you an anonymous "the" – you do not have a relationship. If a student discusses you with a personal "my" – you have a relationship.

Your mission is to give students a personal connection to you and what you do. You cannot be *the* campus activities coordinator, *the* Greek life advisor, *the* environmental activist, *the* rabbi, *the* student orientation leader, *the* student government representative, or *the* pledge master. You must become *my* campus activities coordinator, *my* Greek life advisor, *my* environmentally active friend, *my* rabbi, *my* student orientation leader, *my* student government representative, or *my* pledge master.

In other words, you play a specific role in a student's life: you have a personal relationship, you are on a first name basis, and you are the "go-to" person for the program, office, cause, or service you represent.

This "the/my" flip is something everyone experiences all the time.

Where do you go to get your oil changed (or coffee, hunting supplies, copies, cat litter, guitar repair)? How did it become your place?

Think about it.

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<sup>2</sup> I heard about this "the/my" relationship in a talk by someone who was quoting Bobby Gee, a famous motivational speaker. I do not know the original source he was quoting, just that Bobby Gee is the person who invented this concept.

You probably went the first time because it was nearby or a friend recommended it. After a few visits, you got to know the mechanic and the characters in the front office. You felt comfortable going there (and they did a decent job). Soon you are a loyal customer, you refer your friends, and you talk about “my” place. Are there better places out there? Probably. Do you care? Probably not. You aren’t interested in the best place. You are just interested in “my” place. (I bet you feel betrayed when they mess up too.)

I have an accountant and he is a good accountant. Is he the world’s greatest accountant? I don’t care. A friend referred him, he does good work, and he made the effort to get to know me. There may be better accountants – but unless I get so rich that he can’t handle my workload, or he does something really stupid that costs me a fortune – I am never going to leave him. He is my guy. I refer all my friends and I call him whenever I have a question about taxes or money.

He is not *the* accountant – he is *my* accountant.

Stop being a *the*; become a *my* to your students.

## Content Vs. Relationships

The only way you will become a “my” is by being relationships focused. To do this, learn to distinguish between the different types of programs you run. In my experience, most people run just two different types of programs:

1. Content-based programs
2. Relationships-based programs

Content-based programs are when the *program* is the thing you are giving the student (i.e. a speaker, band, discussion, movie, information). You want the student to learn something, have an experience, etc.

Relationship-based programs are when *you* are the thing you are giving the student (i.e. time to hangout on a road trip, hike, meals, or coffee). The programming is secondary to the time you spend together.

Every program – and I mean *every* program – has a relationships aspect. Even if your group is getting together to hear a lecture about fire safety, risk management, or sensitivity training – the group is still *getting together*. And getting together is when you and your students interact, bond, and deepen your relationship.

To become a “my” you must find the relationships aspects of even the most boring, content-focused programs.

For example, I run 3-week programs off-campus. To avoid anarchy and lawsuits, I have to begin these programs with a boring orientation seminar in which I run through the rules and program policies. Starting a program with this sort of talk could be a disaster: you have to lay down the law, be clear about what you will not tolerate, let students know how they can get kicked off – and yet I use this seminar as a key relationship builder.

How?

(Pay attention, this is the only reason you bought this book.) I make it my business to know everyone’s name.

### Learning Names

Learning names is the single most important thing you must do to be successful in recruiting, building long-term relationships, and keeping students around.

If you do not know a student’s name, in effect you are telling him, “I don’t care about you.”

How do you think a person feels when he thinks you don’t care about him? And what do you think is his impression of you? Your gregarious nature, charm, wit, and slick networking skills are not assets if the person you are talking to thinks you don’t care. He thinks you’re a phony. Or worse.

The rule: learn names.

When students come to your events – learn their names. When students sit and meet with you – learn their names. When students do your long-term programs – learn their names. When students join your clubs or organization – learn their names. When students speak up at your meetings – learn their names.

And then make sure you remember them!

People tell me all the time that they are “terrible with names.” So am I. So what? Get good at it and learn your students’ names. No excuses; just do it.

The way I do it is by making a fool of myself.

I find ways to repeat a name constantly until I get it. If I meet a new student, the first thing I do is ask him his name. He tells me and I probably forget it a minute or two into our conversation. So I ask again. I

say, “I am sorry but I am an idiot – what was your name again?” He probably forgot my name too, so I tell him. We are both relieved and we move on. A few minutes later I ask again, something like this – “Your name is Jim right?”

When another person walks by I ask, “What is your name?” Let’s say it is “Sally.” I say, “Very nice to meet you Sally, have you met my friend Jim?” And then I introduce Sally to Jim. Do you get it? I use every opportunity and distraction as an excuse to repeat the name and to reintroduce myself.

When Jim and Sally walk away, I say to myself “Jim, Sally.” A few minutes later I look around the room, find Jim and Sally, and note to myself, “that is Jim and Sally.” I then reintroduce myself to Jim and Sally or introduce Jim and Sally to a few new people I met.

I look stupid but by the end of an event I know a lot of names. That night or the next day I review the names I learned (reviewing the sign-in sheet and looking at Facebook are great tools for this type of thing).

On my trips, I do this introduction game at the airport. I repeat and review on the flight, take a head count and do a roll call when we land, and do a roll call again when we board the bus. And then I review the names again as we are traveling to our first stop.

By the time I do my orientation session I know almost everyone’s name. After I finish giving over the rules I go around the room, call each person by name, and ask him to introduce himself to the group. I work pretty hard at it and I usually get all the names (my groups are usually about 40 – 50 people). And do you know what everyone says to me?

“You are so good with names.” HA!

I play this name game at every event, program, or thing I do. You should too. If it is a controlled environment you can try a trick: hand out nametags and make everyone wear one. It will make your job a little easier (unless you get caught looking at the tags – cheater).

### Time is on your side

The final rule for relationships-based programming: remember that time is on your side. The longer the program and the more time you spend together, the better.

A three-week program is better than ten days. Ten days is better than a long weekend. A long weekend is better than a full day. A full day is better than a few hours.

The more time you spend together, the more time you have to let your hair down and be yourself. You get the chance to talk, unwind, and come together. I find that two days – especially if those two days include a long bus ride or a hike – is enough time to see a real transformation in the relationship.

My advice: if you want to build long-term relationships and stimulate word-of-mouth, schedule a few multi-day programs throughout the year, even if they are only for your leaders and most committed students. Nothing is better for building a bond and giving your people something to talk about.

I will talk a lot more in subsequent chapters about things you can do to build and nurture relationships. For now, keep in mind that relationships are your most important tool – if people like you, they will talk about you.

## Six Steps to Starting Relationships in Classes, Talks, and Boring Content-Filled Programs

Anytime you are in front of a group of students – it could be teaching, reading over rules, tabling, introducing a guest speaker, or anything – is a time to interact, get personal, and build a relationship. You need to think: “how can I interact and learn this person’s name, extend our conversation, and follow up with him tomorrow?”

Here is a six-step system I have developed. I use it all the time – especially when I am teaching – and it helps me achieve these goals and get connected.

### 1. Spend pre-program time shmoozing and learning names

This is so important – you must be one of the first people to arrive at any event you run, or at any event you are invited to join.

Get there at least ten minutes before the event or program begins and start talking. There are always a few do-gooders who show up early or on time – make it your business to meet them. Most students will come late and you will still be shmoozing with the early birds at the scheduled start time. Good. During this time, learn names, get acquainted, and make small talk.

## 2. Call on the people you talked to by name during your talk

Once you actually begin your talk, publicly interact with the people you spoke with while waiting – and call on them by name (you can ask for examples, give a shout out to home towns, joke about majors or the school mascot – it doesn't matter – just personally interact).

I do this. I call on people by name and involve them in the conversation. And it works. Like I mentioned in the previous chapter, you will be amazed at how impressed a person is when you remember his name – knowing a person's name is the single most important thing you can do to validate his importance and self-worth. Get good at learning names. (Should I say it again?)

It goes without saying that your talks must be engaging and interactive – do not read from a script or plow through your prepared material and ignore your audience.

## 3. Learn names of others as they ask questions

Obviously, you cannot limit your talk to the handful of people who you met before your talk started. If other students ask questions, ask for names before giving an answer. If no one asks questions, find an excuse to ask your audience questions and ask for names before letting them respond. As you learn more names, call on or mention those people by name as well.

You need to make a massive effort to engage as many people in one-on-one dialogue as possible. By remembering names and involving more students by name, you are achieving this goal and conveying a sense to each student that you are talking to him and that you care about him.

## 4. Always take questions when they come up

The biggest mistake I see educators and campus professionals make is not taking questions as they come up during talks, seminars, classes, and presentations. I cannot overemphasize how important it is to take questions.

Why?

Very few people ask questions because they legitimately don't understand something or need more information. Most people ask ques-

tions in public so you (the authority) will validate them or their opinion. Think about most of the questions you get – most are really just statements. The asker is not really interested in learning more; he just wants to show you that what he has to say is valid and important too.

I say, “Good. If it makes you feel good to state your opinion in my class, then go right ahead.” I actually try to “answer” the question/statement by demonstrating how we are really saying the same thing (even if I have to twist and turn). When I restate the point or sum up, I quote the student who asked the question and give him credit for the idea.

Validating your audiences’ opinions is not only an excellent teaching skill to learn – because no one wants to listen to a blow hard – it is an incredible way to build/begin a relationship. And this applies even in boring (but necessary) seminars and information sessions.

Please note: you obviously need to keep things under control. If one person has a lot of stupid things to say and is derailing your class, don’t let him get out of hand. Learn how to work an audience and respectfully get the troublemakers to save their comments for a discussion after class. But all things being equal, as long as questions are not ruining your presentation or driving other audience members crazy – by all means take as many as you can.

Too many teachers think making their point is what is important – not true – building the relationship is what is important. Very few people remember anything the first time after hearing a talk. (I challenge you to test your students a day or two later – you will be shocked.)

## 5. Shmooze after the talk

When you finish speaking, do not leave. Hang around and shmooze. Take questions from people who wanted to ask privately. Continue conversations started in class. And most importantly, follow up with the people who asked questions and the people you met before the class started. Make sure to use their names in the conversation and make the effort to continue the conversation.

## 6. Find ways to stay connected

You can be the greatest shmoozer and educator, but if you don’t find ways to stay in touch after your talk or presentation, then all your

great networking is useless. You must make every effort (without being obnoxious) to stay in touch and continue the conversations you started during your talk or event.

Always have a stack of business cards in your pocket and give them out like candy. Make sure to plug your blog or website and continually refer your listeners there. Print up cards for your site or blog and hand those out instead of your business card (make them fancy, full color, and with silly pictures).

If you still remember the names of people you met at your talk or event, when you get back home or to your office open Facebook and start friending like mad. (So you don't seem like a freak, mention that you will make a friend request, or tell the students to friend you).

Every opportunity is an opportunity to stay connected. Take advantage of it and build your network. The more people who know you and have a relationship with you, the more people you have talking about you and subliminally recruiting for you.

## Be Obsessed

**T**he fact is, no one cares about what you do as much as you do – and I mean no one.

You have dedicated your life to the cause. You eat, sleep, breathe, and live it. Your day is consumed with it. You are passionate about it. Don't get bummed out when your students don't share your same insane level of obsessive enthusiasm.

I say this because it goes without saying that if you want your recruitment to really take off; you have to be the driving force behind it. Don't think you can push a button and watch your recruitment sizzle. Buzz is real and students will talk about your programs without you, but you have to be proactive and great recruitment never gets easier – no matter how established and amazing you and your programs may be.

This is true for whatever it is you do: programming, activism, politics, outreach, organizing, revolution, Greek life, spirituality – and it doesn't matter if you are the representative for an on-campus office or you work for a non-profit that targets college students – I guarantee that you care more about what you do than your students do.

You will win a few converts from time-to-time – nut-case fanatic students who share your idealism and obsessive work ethic – but they graduate, move away, and you are stuck back at square one again.

But this is ok.

If you want word-of-mouth to spread, you need to be obsessed with your programs (cause, event, mission, whatever) and realize that you are the engine making it happen.

What this means is that whatever your “next” is, must be the focus and center of your universe. Your next program, your next event, your next trip, your next meeting – your next anything – must be all you talk about and think about. It must be on your mind, come up in conversation, and be a part of your psychic energy (whatever that is).

A word of caution: being obsessed about your “next” has nothing to do with “selling.” If you are constantly selling, hyping, pushing – i.e. in everyone’s face about your next program – you will be annoying, no one will listen to you, and they will eventually avoid you. Being obsessed with your “next” means that you have a healthy level of excitement about what you do, that you believe in it, that you really want it to succeed, and therefore it is on your mind and naturally comes up all the time.

Think about it: Your students talk about their lives all the time. If you have a student who wants to get into med school, as the time approaches for him to take the MCATs, the MCAT is going to be all he talks about. It will be his excuse if he is unable to meet with you, it will be what he talks about when you do meet, and it will be on his mind and a significant part of his day. However (and this is the point), he isn’t trying to sell you on the MCAT or med school, it is just something that he cares deeply about, is very involved with, and therefore something he is naturally going to talk about all the time. He isn’t annoying, pushy, aggressive, or even boring – he is just extremely focused and obsessed with what he is doing.

You need to be the same way. When you have your big “next” coming up, this next thing must be what you think about and talk about. For example, if you are planning a big trip and spent the morning arguing with hotels, it is perfectly natural and normal for “hotels” to be the main topic of conversation when you meet with students for coffee or lunch. You are not pushing or selling your program, you are just a normal person talking about the things you are very concerned and involved with.

In other words, your obsession is natural and normal; it is in the air you breathe.

I think it is important to mention obsession in a book about recruiting because being obsessed enables you to get the word out and create buzz about your programs, in an organic, natural way. And because you are excited about what you do, your excitement is contagious. Your students will pick up on your energy. You share your life with your stu-

dents – just like they share their lives with you – and in the process they get excited about what you are doing, and talk it up with their friends.

### Subtle ways to keep your “next” in front of your students

In addition to your “next” being a normal part of what you are about, talk about, and live, there are a few things you can do to get your message out to the masses – in a way that is natural, inoffensive, subtle, but ever-present.

#### Email signature

Put your “next” in your email signature. Every single email you send out should have a tag line about your next program and a link to the website. In my email footer, I almost never put my contact information or job title; my signature (after my name) is my next program and the link. No one thinks I am pushy or aggressive because it is expected that I will have something in my signature. It doesn’t matter what I am emailing about either, because my signature “just is” – and the message is there no matter what. I send out thousands of emails every semester and every single one has my message in it.

Most people ignore it – so what?

Just the fact that the message is there keeps the idea alive without your selling it. Without being pushy or aggressive you are prominently keeping your message in front of your students.

And some students do read it.

I was once recruiting for a trip to Israel and I made my signature, “You are going to Israel!” followed with a link to my website. This was in every email I sent out. I could be emailing a student about football, sushi, shwarma, or meeting for coffee, and he would see my message, “You are going to Israel!”

I eventually had to change it because a few students emailed me back, “Thanks Tzvi for accepting me to the trip, but I haven’t applied yet – do I still have to?”

#### Facebook

Put your next program in your Facebook profile status. Everyone does this about whatever it is they happen to be doing (“Burt is doing his

laundry,” “Jamie is so excited for the Twisted Sister concert”), why should you be any different? If you are bringing a big speaker to campus, your status should be something like “I am so excited to see the big speaker next week.”

Similar to your email signature, your status message is in front of your students. Though it is tame, unobtrusive, and inoffensive, it is there nonetheless and therefore another way to keep the idea alive without having to mention it.

Facebook is full of places to post information and your students check it all the time. Make sure your message pops up in your Facebook news feed, wall, homepage, or wherever. Automatically, when you update your Facebook status, your message pops up on your wall (the news feed from the old version), and on the homepage of all your friends. Whenever you update your status, the message goes out again. If you have a big event coming up, you need to be creative to find ways to keep this popping up at the top of everyone’s lists. You can do this by updating your status, creating the event, updating the event, or writing on the event’s wall.

I was once teaching this idea to an Israel advocacy group and they told me that their staff will update their Facebook status every few hours when promoting a new program, just so their message will keep popping up everywhere.

You need to be creative and come up with new and funny ways of posting so you don’t look like a geek, but this is a great way to stay in front of everyone, without being annoying.

## Fliers

Finally, you need to have fliers on you at all times. Fliers for your “next” need to be in your car, backpack, pockets, briefcase, computer bag, everywhere. Always have a small handful to hand out to students to give to friends. Give them out when you meet new people. And use them instead of a business card. I like to tell people I meet, “Oops, I forgot my card but... here is a flier for my next event – go to the site and you can find my contact info there.” Cute no? Or I write my email address or phone number on the back of the flier (“I am out of business cards, oh darn, take one of these.”)

In the trunk of my car I have fliers from the last few years’ worth of programs, I keep old ones around and use the backs as scrap paper.

They are everywhere. And this is how it should be – if you have a healthy obsession with what you are doing, you should have remnants, battle scars, and telltale signs all around you. Your students should see that you live and breathe what you do.

To sum up: Be obsessed. You don't have a "job," recruitment is not nine-to-five and doesn't end when you leave the office or start up again the next day. You have to be passionate about what you do, think about it all the time, bring it up with the people you meet, keep it in front of your students in subtle but pervasive ways, and share your obsession with everyone.

Be normal, don't become a freak or a missionary, but be obsessed.



# Interviews

I hate interviewing new students for programs.

Interviewing is a painful, tedious, mind-numbing process. It takes forever, is extremely repetitive, and will drive you crazy.

But you have to do it.

Believe it or not, interviewing students is one of the most important things you do and a very valuable use of your time.

Successful interviewing will enable you to:

1. Establish an initial relationship with your students
2. Create momentum and generate new word-of-mouth recruitment for your programs
3. Help determine whether or not a student is suitable for your program or event

Because these factors are so essential to running a good program or event, it is important that you personally conduct all the interviews. (If your job is to interact with students during a program and then follow up, you should select them too.)

## Setting up your interview schedule

Once students begin submitting applications and your database fills up with people eager to participate in one of your programs, sort the program candidates by university or region, pick a date, and assign the applicant an interview time.

A typical interview takes about twenty minutes. I schedule my interviews four per hour, in fifteen-minute intervals. I do this for two reasons:

1. Someone will always flake and miss their appointment. I do not want to sit around doing nothing, plus I can catch up with the people I have waiting.
2. Psychologically it is good for the program candidate to see that you are busy and to have to wait for you. If you accept him, he feels even better about it and is more likely to get the word out to his friends for what he feels is a popular program.

### Preparing for the interview

You should look over all the applications carefully before you show up for your interviews. I do this, but since I hate interviewing I set up as many interviews as I can in a 4-6 hour block and usually forget everything by the time I start meeting with people. Look for red flags (red flags vary depending on the type of program you run but most certainly include issues that could be damaging or disruptive to your program and conditions that you are not qualified to handle).

When interviewing over the phone, make sure to have the student's application in front of you and try to get a photo as well (some organizations ask applicants to submit a photo as part of the application – not a bad idea). There is so much you miss over the phone (I am big on face-to-face vibes), so the more info at the time of the interview, the better.

### The interview

The standard interview takes about twenty minutes. The first ten minutes are finding out about the student, the second ten are explaining and selling your program. In the last chapter I mentioned that you should not hard sell your programs, and that is true most of the time. The interview is different – sell, sell, sell!

*Part I* – this initial part of the interview is almost exactly the same as one of those seven-minute dating programs. You can tell a lot about a person very quickly. I usually know if I want to accept a person within the first two minutes or so of talking with him. And to be fair, the overwhelming majority of students you meet you will want to accept.

Most of the factors disqualifying the student are issues that came up on the application (no longer in college, does not attend a university in your region, etc.), but the interview will help to determine whether or not the student is a potential superstar (someone with obvious leadership qualities) or just someone you would like to take. When you have limited space on a trip, this can often be the deciding factor.

Your goal during the first phase of the interview is to get the student talking. Ask about his major, where he is from, if he was in his high school band, why he chose the school he is at – pretty much anything.

You may end up sitting next to this person on a bus for three weeks - talk, get him talking, and get as much of an intuitive feel as possible.

*Part II* – sell your program. I think this is easily the more important part of the interview (and the most draining). If you do your job well, the student will be psyched about the program, excited to get accepted, and will talk to his friends about the awesome program he is hopefully going to get to go on. I often see new students sign up for a program, listing as references people I recently interviewed.

You need to do an excellent job explaining. Present the history of your organization, your goals, and specifically the goals of the program. Speak about your goals honestly, accurately, and in a language that your interviewee can relate to. Explain what is unique about your program and how it may differ from programs he has previously participated in.

Explain the educational content of your programs. Do not undersell or be afraid to be honest. Not only is it misleading and wrong, but you will be surprised how many students actually find the ideas that you will be raising compelling and a major reason why they want to do your program.

Go over the major highlights and attractions featured on your program. If you are going to climb a volcano or repel down a seventy-foot cliff, make sure to hype this up during the interview.

Be explicit about your program's "free time" policy. On my programs I am very lenient about what the students can do during free time. At the interview (before they are even accepted), I let them know that because we give them free time and treat them with respect, we expect them to treat our program with respect and to plan on participating in everything.

Be sure to go over your programs' scholarship requirements, what their payment covers and what is not covered, and let the student know

when he can expect to hear from you. Also let the student know how to contact you in case he has any questions.

### Take notes

If you meet twenty people in an afternoon without a break, there is no way you are going to remember anyone – they will all be one big blur. (Not only that, but I find I forget in the middle of an interview what I said and who I am speaking to, it has led to some funny situations.)

To help, I created an “interview sheet” (see below) that I print up (one per interview) and bring with me on a clipboard. On the sheet, I have boxes at the top for:

1. Name
2. Interview date (this is important, when you are sorting through your stacks of sheets, sometimes remembering the context of the interview is very helpful)
3. University
4. Year of graduation
5. Major

There is a big box in the middle. In it I fill in information about the student including background, interests, my impressions – anything I want.

At the bottom I have a code “for office use only.” It looks like this:

MT | T | Maybe | ? | DT

The codes stand for:

MT = Must Take. These students are potential superstars. More importantly, we connected during the interview and were really able to talk.

T = Take. These are usually great kids but for some reason I wasn't sure. It could be that they are graduating at the end of the semester, or that they had something “interesting” I needed to look further into.

Maybe = we had a boring meeting but no real reason not to take the student either.

? = A question mark means there was some serious issue that I need to resolve before I can say that this is a person we should have on our program.

DT = Don't Take. Something was wrong or socially dysfunctional with this person that would seriously ruin the program for the other participants. I have very rarely marked someone a DT.

Notes are essential and often very helpful when reviewing your program after the fact. It is interesting to see what you thought and to compare that to what the person is really like.

All that said, I usually only take notes if I am accepting all the participants at once (i.e. at a given specified date in the future). If I am accepting the students as I go (i.e. that night after I met everyone that day), then I don't bother (not the best thing if I have a lot of interviews in one day, but I manage).

### Odds and Ends

I used to bring a camera to the interview, but it was weird and I stopped doing it.

At the end of a long day of interviewing, you will be drained and irritable – although meeting great people will get you excited for your upcoming program. If you did a good job recruiting you are going to have to interview a lot of people – get used to it.

### Interview Worksheet

**Name:**

**Year in School:**

**University/Major:**

**Referred By:**

**Photo:**

**Date Interviewed:**

Yes    No

**Comments:**

**Code:**

MT    T    M    ?    DT

## Rotate Your Programming

Assuming you have a loyal, core group of students, you will need to do things to keep them interested. Rotating your programming is one of the best ways to maintain excitement.

Yes: certain programs become annual events – each year is better than the last – and they generate a healthy excitement on their own. But even these programs – and certainly your normal, less exciting programs – you need to keep changing to keep students interested.

For example, let's say you hire a band every spring. If the band you hired this year is incredible you will be tempted to bring them back next year too. And in theory you may bring them back next year and the event will be a hit again. But if you keep bringing the same band back year after year, by the third year the event is passé and your numbers will dwindle. This holds true for speakers, entertainers, and just about everything. By rotating themes, acts, venues, and other programming aspects, you can stimulate excitement and inject new life into your programming.

And I mean *rotate* – not constantly recreate the wheel. (Though you need to innovate as well – but more on that in a minute.) When you find a good thing, you can bring it back in a few years and there will be tons of new excitement. The problem is when it becomes routine.

I find this principle to be even more applicable when applied to off-campus programming.

If you run the same trip, to the same place, year after year – it gets old and soon you'll have trouble filling it. I know what you are think-

ing, “man, I tried this program last year and the buzz was unbelievable. I can’t believe that the excitement won’t be even better next year.”

I’m sorry, but not so fast.

If you want your core base of students to get excited and talk up your programs to their friends (and remember that your core base drives your word-of-mouth), then you need to change things up. They may be super-excited this year – hence your buzz – but next year, once they are “alumni,” the novelty of what they did is gone and they won’t be as excited. You have to do something to stir the pot and get them excited again.

Some students will recruit for you because they believe in what you do, but more often than not, they will recruit for you because they get something out of it for themselves.

Sad but true – but this is how the world works.

A student who came with you on your alternative spring break trip to Guam may have had a life transforming experience, but he is more likely to push his friends to join you on your next trip if it is to El Salvador and not back to Guam again.

Don’t misunderstand this subtle point. Yes – there are students who will be inspired by their experience with you and will want to give their friends the same experience. And yes – you will find natural leaders from time to time. But realize: you have a three-to-four year window to work with any given group of students and by the third year your programming is old news – the incentive/excitement of doing it again wears off.

If you rotate your programming, innovate, create, and maintain a cycle of different programs over the course of a few years, you will have enough variation to create momentum, keep up the excitement, and keep your core students talking about you. Obviously, if your first program was a hit – and your next one promises to be as good or better – your students are going to want to stay involved, do extra favors to be in on the new thing, and talk it up with their friends.

## Innovation

In addition to program rotation, be innovative, and creative.

A friend of mine once told me that your typical program has a four-year shelf life, after that it is stale and old.<sup>3</sup> I find this to be true.

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3 I heard this idea from Yitz Jacobs at Aish Los Angeles.

I am not sure why, but even the programs that were once incredibly exciting lose their luster after a few years. It could be because I get bored with them. It could be because times change and people and tastes change as well. It could be that the program has become “just another standard thing offered to students,” and not something anyone talks about anymore. (Did you ever notice how many amazing scholarships, opportunities, internships, travel, and exchange options are available that virtually no one knows about or applies too – why aren’t students talking about these things?) Whatever the reason, even great programs die.

Therefore, your mission is to constantly change, adapt, innovate or die.

Never relax and bask in the glow of a good idea because in a few years that idea will be dead. If you grow complacent, you will stagnate and others with better and fresher ideas will pop up and replace you. You need to constantly ask your students for input, experiment, take risks, and don’t be afraid to fail from time to time.

The best thing about innovating is that you will be excited about your new ideas. And your excitement will be contagious; your students will pick up on your energy and talk up the new programs and things you are trying.

If you are bored and are just going through the motions, your students will be bored and go through the motions too.



## The Student Leader Incentive

I mentioned earlier that offering your students money to recruit (per head, application received, or however you want to do it) isn't very effective. You can hire a student to recruit, and pay him an hourly wage plus incentives, but I think you are taking a big risk. (Unless, of course, you have tons of cash. I have a friend who runs a non-profit in New York. He budgets \$50,000 a semester for recruitment. He hires a team to farm names, cold call, mass email, and do every aggressive recruitment trick you can think of. He will contact over 10,000 students in a six-week period and end up with about 300 students for his programs, which is his goal. This is not a bad method if you have the money and a massive population to recruit from. For the rest of us, we need word-of-mouth and simple ways to motivate our current base of students.)

Cash incentives are risky because students – like everyone else – find recruiting difficult. A motivated student – who likes you and what you do – wants to help. He is probably sincere when he offers his services and is excited by the prospect of earning extra money if he is successful.

But then the long hard days of recruitment set in.

He isn't as confident when he speaks with his friends as he thought he would be. "No" hurts more than he thought it would. He wasn't prepared for excuses, promises to sign up that didn't materialize, or the malaise/apathy predominant on campus. His motivation wanes, he loses interest, and he can console himself with the fact that he isn't getting paid, that he never took your money, and that he tried his best.

## A different type of incentive

How do you motivate a student to recruit for you, offer an incentive, and be confident that the incentive you are offering is something your students really want?

Offer a leadership position on a future program.

This is what I do: let's say I ran a ten-day trip to England in the summer and I am planning a trip to Chile in the winter. My trip to England is amazing and a few of the students would do anything to be on my next trip. Better, once they find out I am offering a trip to Chile in the winter (a cool, "exotic" destination they will never go to on their own), they are going to beg me to be allowed to participate.

I use this to my advantage. First, I don't mention the Chile trip until the England trip has already started. No one knows about it in advance and no one knows to skip England and hold out for Chile (and England is usually a pretty hot destination too). Once I am in England, I start casually talking about our next trip – to Chile – and watch my students' mouths water. Inevitably someone will say, "I want to do the Chile trip too." I say, "sorry, but you are ineligible because you have already done our England trip." (And this is completely true – Chile and England may be very different places, but the educational content I offer on each trip is almost identical.)

"Boo, that is not fair."

"Well," I say, "I may be able to bring you back on the Chile trip as a *student leader*."

A student leader is junior staff on a subsequent trip. Student leaders take head-counts on the bus, help schlep coolers, set up barbeques, and do other grunt work that needs to get done.

I then add, "but there are a lot of students who want to be student leaders and I only have funding for three (you can pick any number you want, it depends on your budget and the size of your group). Therefore, the student leaders will be the people who can recruit the most students for the next trip."

Dig? The interested student learns that I am not subsidizing vacations. If he wants to come back on my next awesome program he has to show a commitment to my organization, stay involved with me during the semester, and actively recruit for my programs. Everyone wins:

1. I get new people for my programs and a loyal new leader.
2. The student leader gets to participate on my next trip, plus gets involved with my organization and the great things we offer.
3. The newly recruited students learn about an amazing opportunity they wouldn't have heard of otherwise.

Student leaders still have to pay (though I always give them the maximum scholarship I can offer) and they are usually happy to do it.

A lot of students express interest, most will flake, but a few will take it seriously. An inspired student leader who is taking care of his self interests (a trip he is completely ineligible for) can easily recruit twenty students. I have run programs where almost all the new recruits came from the student leaders.

### The student leader on the program

Beyond recruitment, the student leader is motivated to make sure that your program is a success. Since many of the participants (sometimes as many as half the group) are his friends, he will do everything in his power to look good. He will bend over backwards to make sure his recruits have an amazing experience, just like he did on his first program.

The new recruits will be inspired by the student leader's example. Some will want to do a second trip too. They will ask the student leader how he was able to pull it off. The student leader will say, "I got to do a second trip because I recruited you!"

He recruits new recruits to recruit.

Being a student leader is empowering for the student who does it. He is a star in your organization, the new students look up to him, and he can wax nostalgic about "his first trip." (Even if the new trip is much better than the last one, in the student leader's eyes his first trip was the best).

Student leaders who step up to the plate and do a good job on the program are the future of your organization. A student you meet sophomore year, who is a student leader junior year, can easily be senior staff by senior year (i.e. student leaders graduate to a level of real leadership, help with planning, and have responsibilities on your trips). They will be your representatives on campus, help you recruit for more programs, represent you in student government, and offer you a whole range of services and skills you don't have and can't afford to hire.

The student leader role works for on-campus events as well. Any program you limit access to can be used as an incentive. It could be a private audience with a guest speaker, backstage passes to a concert, the opportunity to serve as a leader in a club or as part of a continuing series you are running – be creative, make some of your programming exclusive, and make conditions (like recruitment) the price for past participants to participate.

Better than cash, you are offering a future with your organization.

## Post-Program Planning

In an earlier chapter I mentioned that your programs must be amazing.

Obviously.

If your programs are amazing, students will talk about them (i.e. word-of-mouth 101). And running great programs is easier than getting people excited about something that has never been done before.

In addition to running great programs, there are other things you can do to force the word-of-mouth issue. Below is a list of things I have tried. This list is by no means exhaustive. I am sure you can think up other ideas, and many of them will be a lot better than what I am suggesting. I am only mentioning them to help you think differently about the way you get people talking about your programs. These ideas are not exclusive to post-program marketing either; you can use them to get people talking about new events or to generate general awareness about your organization.

### T-shirts

Word on the street is that t-shirts are really cheap. I am still looking, but I have yet to find a cheap vendor (maybe I don't order in large enough quantities or I am not looking in the right places). But whatever the case, t-shirts are a great tool even if you have to spend a lot of money. T-shirts work great for anything: a one-off one-hour event, a band or show, a three-week off-campus adventure – pretty much anything you do can be slapped on a t-shirt.

T-shirts need to look cool, they should be different, and they should draw attention. Most importantly, t-shirts need to be something your students will wear. If your t-shirt is lame or offensive, no one will wear it and you wasted your money. You are better off with a boring, nondescript, corporate looking t-shirt (someone will wear it because it is the only thing left in the drawer) than something crazy or cheesy that will never get worn.

Also note; many people design great t-shirts but forget to put their logo, web address, or contact information on them – DUH. T-shirts are great because people wear them. Your name is blasted everywhere. Make it easy for a person who sees the shirt to get more information for further investigation. Don't think that an interested person will start a conversation with the person wearing the shirt – people are timid and meek.

People wear t-shirts all the time. Someone may not wear it to class or even like it enough to wear it regularly, but it will get worn when he works out, goes running, cleans his dorm room, sleeps in it, or forgets to get dressed – and these times are perfect. Whenever it gets worn is perfect.

If you are running longer off-campus programs, do not make the mistake of having your students design the shirt. Yes – occasionally you will have an artist on the trip and the shirt will look great. But this is the exception – student designed shirts usually look bad. Also, don't make one of those shirts with everyone's signature on the back – similar to the shirt designed by a participant, it will look bad and no one will wear it (can you say “dork?”). Don't be fooled: the energy during the trip is very different to the energy after the trip. Things that were cool or memorable during the program are not necessarily what you want to wear or how you remember the program later. It is similar to sleeping over a friend's house for Halloween and wearing your costume home the next day. You looked great the night before but now you look like an idiot. (I did this once and took the subway home in my costume on the morning of November 1 – it was very embarrassing).

My advice: have a graphic artist professionally design your shirts way in advance. Give them out at your event. Use them as incentives to get people to show up or give you their email address.

When running a long off-campus trip (i.e. for a week or more), give the shirts out at the airport, on the bus, or at a pre-program orientation and get your group used to wearing them.

## Facebook photo tagging

Facebook is also a great tool to generate post-program hype. Take tons of photos at your events, programs, and trips. Post photos on Facebook and tag everyone in the pictures.

Simple? Yes.

But what happens is that the photos show up everywhere – especially in news feeds, profile pages, and home pages. Friends stalking friends on Facebook end up viewing your photo album and are exposed to your awesome event or trip. Hype abounds.

## Co-sponsor events<sup>4</sup>

Another way to generate incredible hype about your organization is to co-sponsor an event with other groups on campus. Look at the advantages of this approach: you get your name plastered all over campus, you get mentioned at the event, you look like a team player, and best of all – you don't have to do anything.

If you are a professional working for an off-campus organization, co-sponsoring is an excellent way to look great and get chummy with on-campus groups.

Co-sponsoring usually works like this: a student will approach you asking you to co-sponsor, you agree, give money, and in return get some of the benefits listed below.

If you agree to co-sponsor, the lead club/organization will typically ask for about \$500.

\$500 is a lot of money in the campus world. In return for your money you have the right to request the following:

1. Your name prominently listed as a co-sponsor on all posters, fliers, literature, etc.
2. If there is a printed program at the event, insist that your name is on the cover along with all the other co-sponsors, try to get a full page inside the printed program as well, and if you can push it, try to get a write up in the printed program about your organization and what you do
3. Insist that your organization is publicly thanked by the MC (when applicable)

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<sup>4</sup> I know this is not a post-program idea. But it is still a great strategy.

4. Ask for a copy of all contact information gathered by the event's organizers (whether in advance or at the door)
5. This is pushing it, but you may even be allowed to speak on behalf of your organization at the event
6. Also pushing it, ask if you can set up a table or booth at the event

Warning: do not forget to check out the program you are co-sponsoring to make sure it is in line with your organization and message, and that it conforms to the basic standards/ideals that you represent.

If a student is savvy enough to ask you to co-sponsor, he knows the score and will gladly give you what you ask for in return. Sometimes he has to deal with a committee and his hands are tied, but even then you can still push for the first three or four things on the list. Less than that is not worth your co-sponsorship.

Co-sponsorship is free advertising, but better, it links your organization with a popular cause or event on campus. It gives you clout and prestige, and it shows that you are happy to partner with other organizations – making you an integral part of the campus community. You want this. It will give you access to more resources, more students, and more pull with the student government. Co-sponsorship will give you name recognition and will link your name with trusted organizations on campus.

## Raffle

If you run off-campus programs – like ten-day or three-week trips during winter or summer break – raffling off a free spot on your next trip is an even better way to co-sponsor a campus event.

A spot on your trip probably costs a few thousand dollars. If you offer to give away a free spot, you are giving the sponsoring club/organization a massive donation for their event. You are also giving something that will help recruit more people to the event, and will make the event more exciting.

You earn massive benefits as well.

Your organization will be thanked at the time of the raffle, your programs will be hyped, and students will be legitimately enthused about whatever it is that you do. And this is in addition to the six things I listed above.

My organization did this once and it was amazing.

We were offering a trip to Israel. The trip cost us about \$2,000 (at the time we charged \$500 for our Israel trip and subsidized the remainder). Our name was on all the pre-program hype, we were thanked at the event, our program was hyped at the event, the winning student was thrilled, the students who asked for the sponsorship thought we were amazing, and we were given all the contact information for every student who showed up (about 150 people).

Not bad – we could easily have spent \$500 on an attention-getting event and who knows what type of results we would have gotten. In this case – our students did all the work and we were able to walk away with great energy and great results.

To sum up, there are a lot of things you can do to generate post-program hype – even before you run your program – and to build a good name on campus. Try my suggestions and think up a few ideas of your own.



## The Power of Saying, “Thank You”

**Y**ou have no idea how much mileage you can get from saying thank you, and more, how much saying thank you will enhance your word-of-mouth recruitment. I can ramble on for pages about the power of “thank you” – about the spiritual vibes you are pumping into the cosmos and the metaphysical bond you create every time you do it – and it is true. But for now it suffices to say that “thank you” creates a level of warm, comfortable fluffiness that brings you and the thankee together, takes your relationship to a new level, and gives you an opening for future connection.

### When to say thank you

Anytime a student does anything – and I mean *anything* – is an opportunity to say thank you. If the student shows up at an event, say thank you. If the student sends you an email, say thank you. If the student wanders into your office, say thank you. And if this is true when a student does a simple thing, it is even more appropriate when he brings a friend, does you a favor, volunteers, or does anything that shows initiative or effort.

And when I say, “say thank you,” I don’t mean thank the student and leave it at that. I mean that the “thank you” is something you do later, after a short time has passed (like that night or the next day). Saying “thank you” is not just as an opportunity to show your appreciation, you are creating an opening to continue the conversation. Depending on your style, the “thank you” can be a follow up phone call, an email,

an instant message, a handwritten card, or whatever you are comfortable doing (and you consider appropriate in relation to what the student did).

### The email “thank you”

For most things students do – like showing up or sending an email – I find that a simple email “thank you” is more than enough. By being in the habit of emailing a “thank you,” I guarantee that I will follow up at least once with every student I come in contact with. (And remember, every email I send has hype about my next program included in my signature.)

Students often come to my house on Friday nights for dinner (most students are so strung out on dorm food and ramen noodles they can’t resist a home cooked meal). They come to my house, my wife cooks up a massive feast, cool kids from other campuses are usually at the meal as well, and in general they have a great time and get to interact with a relatively normal family. I give the student a great experience – and it is for free.

And then, to top it all off, by the next night I send each student a “thank you” for coming.

Think about it, he came to my house, ate my food for free, and I thank him! Needless to say the student is floored and more often than not emails me back an even more elaborate thank you.

And I am sincere when I send my “thank you” – the meal is usually a fun time and I am glad the student came over – but more importantly, I have taken advantage of an opportunity to keep the conversation going, invite the student back, and ultimately generate more word-of-mouth.

If the student shows up with a friend, I thank him for coming and for bringing the friend too. I also ask for the friend’s contact information. I email a “thank you” to the friend and work on building a new relationship.

### The mass “thank you”

After a big event or a long trip, I send out a mass “thank you” to everyone who participated. (If I have a relationship with most of the students already, I decide whether or not I need to send out an individual “thank you” to each person as well.) I get one more chance to get my name,

message, or organization in front of a lot of people who just had a good experience with me. More importantly, some of the students in that mass group will reply to my message and thank me back. With this student there is now an opening and we continue the conversation, subtly, until we meet again or the email chain dies out.

As an aside, one thing I always try to do when emailing people is to be the last one to say something. This way, I always leave an opening for more contact. Sometimes it can get stupid and you end up with a chain of, "cool man," "thanks," "yeah," "you too," "you the man," and I will eventually drop it. (Some students have the same policy of having the last word too.) The point is, and it is true in most cases, is that I am using the "thank you" as a means to stay in touch and continue the relationship. By emailing, it is subtle, inoffensive, not aggressive – but still enabling me to stay in the student's life and on his radar.

Don't misunderstand me – you are not playing games with students. As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, you need to build relationships and those relationships must be real. You cannot fake it – a student (or anyone) can smell a phony. Don't be a phony, be sincere and take a real interest in getting to know your students – and thanking them is a big part of this.



## Constant Contact

If you are serious about word-of-mouth, you need a system in place that keeps you in regular contact with everyone you meet. You cannot assume that just because you run amazing programs that people will still be talking about you a few months down the road. Yes – you may be remembered fondly from time to time, but if you want to prolong the buzz and interest, you need to be proactive in maintaining the relationship.

College students are busy, pre-occupied, and easily distracted. I find that I have to constantly insert myself into their lives in order to be remembered (out of sight, out of mind). For example, if I set up regular meetings and make my presence felt on campus, my students are happy to see me, meet with me, and stay in touch. And if I don't – they may love me just the same – but unless they need something they will not make an effort to contact me. Sad but true.

Therefore – make it your business to stay in touch.

Staying in touch with everyone you meet gets more difficult the longer you are on campus and the larger your database is. You need to have some sort of system in place that helps you organize and prioritize in order to make it possible to stay in regular contact.

### Set aside time to stay in touch every day

I set aside an hour a day to email students. For a few years I kept an instant messenger program open during that hour, but I found it distracting and I didn't get anything done. Though to be honest, it is prob-

ably a good idea to set aside a chunk of time every day where you are available to chat too.

The first thing I do in my daily hour is reply to all replies I receive from emails I sent out previously. This is the system in action – past students were happy to hear from me and I am continuing our relationship.

I then move through various categories of students:

- There are students I need to contact because we have business to attend to – like meeting for coffee, volunteering, or brainstorming.
- There is my list of students from my most recent events – I send out my “thank you” emails and follow up our conversations.
- I have a list of students from my most recent off-campus programs. I routinely go through the list and try to hit everyone at least twice a semester. Some of the kids from this list are my regulars and meet with me regularly, others I see once a semester and this follow up contact is the most we have.
- Finally I have my list of past program alumni, some of whom have graduated, that I make it my business to stay in touch with. I try to reach them at least once, if not twice, a year. These students are an invaluable resource and oftentimes become donors, partners, and lay leaders down the road, as well as send younger siblings and relatives my way.

### Facebook as your database

As of this writing, Facebook is the best tool for staying in touch with past program alumni. I use Facebook as my database. At the very least, Facebook enables me to message everyone on his or her birthday. (Facebook will alert you a few days in advance when a birthday is coming up.) Try your best to be one of the first people to say “happy birthday” and don’t write on the wall – send a message – this way you are most likely to get a response.

I travel a lot. Before I go somewhere I search Facebook by network and contact all my students in the city I am visiting. I set up meetings for lunch and coffee and I am often amazed how many people come to see me.

Birthdays and travel alone help me easily manage a massive backlog of old contacts and alumni (and with Facebook I can flip through photos and see who is aging, getting fat, and going bald).

## Mass messages

In addition to emails and personal contact, you can keep your name and message in front of your student base on a mass level. A few options are a regular newsletter, monthly updates, MP3 classes about relevant topics, notes and educational messages around the holidays, articles you write or articles of interest you find – any excuse is a great way to stay in front of your database without being annoying (as long as you do it relatively infrequently – too much and it becomes spam).

Keep in mind: you are not mass-messaging your base to hype programs and events. Your only goal is to stay in contact and maintain the relationship. If you are visible, you will be talked about. If you aren't, you won't.



## Involve Your Students in Your Life

**Y**ou need to be a real person if you plan on building bona fide relationships with your students. Don't be a bore. Someone who only talks about his job, cause, ideals, mission, or whatever – is boring. And no one wants to talk to a boring person. Real people have real interests and hobbies outside their work life. If you expect your students to relate to you, you have to share your personality and non-work life with them, and there are many ways you can do this.

### Silly groups

One thing I do is to create silly groups on Facebook, usually related to an obscure topic or issue, and invite selected students to join. For example, when Hillary Clinton was running for president, I created a group on Facebook called “George Clinton for President” and invited all my funk hipster students to sign up. I used slogans like “Put the Funk in the White House” and “Will the Real President Clinton Please Stand Up.”

Ridiculous? Yes.

A waste of time? Not at all.

My George Clinton group enabled me to share an aspect of my goofy and idiosyncratic personality with my students. They posted silly messages on my wall. They sent me links about other related funk happenings. And most importantly, we talked and joked about the Facebook group when we met up in person.

You may not be as cool as I am, but don't worry. Your groups do not need to contain hip funk references. You can make groups about anything. The only rule is that your group is something that reflects your personality. Whether you like coffee, quilting, hand-held mobile devices, hockey, eighteenth century ceramics, motorcycle helmets, Spanish, anything – make a group about it on Facebook, or write about it, or email about it, or just talk about it. But whatever it is, make sure you are sharing it with your students. The group is a reflection of your persona, and ultimately an area where you will bond.

Creating groups and talking about your interests is not a waste of time. I think creating these silly groups is an essential part of what you do. You should dedicate part of your day, every day, to searching the web, reading the news, and finding interesting things that pique your interest and give you something unrelated to your work to talk about.

But make sure you avoid politics.

Unless you work as a political activist, or your organization is identified with a specific political issue, stay away from politics – especially in your writing and free time group making. You do not know what issues are potential hot buttons. There are a lot of issues that you may think are harmless, but are actually turnoffs with your students. Say the wrong thing and students will avoid you. (Most students are wimps and won't pick a fight – they will just write you off as a crazy fanatic and stop talking to you). I have inadvertently turned students away over the years. Harmless statements and speaking without thinking have left lasting scars in my student relationships.

If politics are not a part of what you do – then keep your political opinions to yourself. (This doesn't mean that you can't poke harmless fun at politicians, however).

## Blogging

If you are more tech-savvy, go beyond Facebook and start blogging. Make a blog – it is free, fun, and your students will read it. And do not make the mistake of making your blog an extension of your organization's webpage. Your blog is an extension of your personality and should be kept as a separate side project. Post everything on your blog. Write about the last cup coffee you had, your cat, your kid's haircut, the electric bill, meatloaf, traffic, the Duran Duran reunion, or anything on your mind.

If you do a good job blogging, you will find a few of your students will become loyal readers. They will bookmark it on their web browsers and check it regularly. Most students won't leave comments, don't let this discourage you. You will know your students are reading your blog because they will mention it when they see you.

Blogging allows you to ramble endlessly about any topic you choose and to create an online community in addition to the people you regularly meet. Some students will be more comfortable establishing a virtual relationship online than speaking in person. For students on semester programs abroad, your blog may be their only link to you and what you do.

I go through phases with my blog, sometimes I update it every day, other times I let it slide for weeks on end. The only blog thing I consistently do is talk about it. I tell everyone to check it and I mention it almost every time I speak or teach a class. I will often reference my blog as an original source in conversation and I send people to it regularly. I also use my blog as a parking lot for everything me. My contact info is there, articles I write are linked to it, I post music I record on it, and my biography/resume is posted there. My blog is my online address.

Another great thing about blogging is that it provides you with an opportunity to be bold. Notwithstanding my warning about politics, blogging is a venue where being opinionated is expected. You can use your blog as a vehicle to say those things you are afraid to say elsewhere and then argue your points endlessly in the comments. But be forewarned: don't turn your students off and if you do offend, be prepared to defend yourself.

Blogging gives you the opportunity to link to other forums and ideas, and to expose your students to new ideas you are interested in but not expert enough to talk about. You can link to controversial ideas you may believe but are afraid to say – and link with a warning like “this is interesting, check it out, I don't know if I agree but, decide for yourself,” or something like that.

## Website

One step up from blogging is having your own web presence. If you have a lot to say, and a lot of things to offer, a website – preferably linked to your blog – is an incredible tool. But be careful and do not lose sight of

your goal: to involve your students in your life in a context outside of your work, in order to deepen and better build your relationship.

### Life events

Finally, if you are able to do it, involve your students in significant life events. If you have a baby, invite them to the party, reception, baby naming, or whatever it is you do. If you get married (or marry off a child), invite your students to the wedding. As a rabbi, I invite my students to life events and I give them honors that are appropriate (obviously I wouldn't give a student a role reserved for my dad or a community leader, but there are plenty of other honors to give out).

Quite frankly, if you are doing your job well your closest students will be your closest friends. You will want to involve them in your personal joys and significant events.

And when you involve them, this is the best sign that you have really established a bond – a bond worth preserving.

## What To Do If You Are New to Campus

I know what you are thinking, “this book is great and these ideas are amazing, but I am just starting out – what can I do to generate word-of-mouth?” Great question.

There are at least two things you can do.

The first is that you probably know *somebody* – at least one person – let that person be your starting point. You will be amazed how fast you can network and how many people you can meet just hanging out and being around.

When I first moved to Boston, I knew three students. They were all at Brandeis and two of them were roommates (actually suitemates, each kid had his own bedroom – or cell). I moved to town in mid-January and I was coming from Israel. I flew into Newark, NJ. My parents met us at the airport and my wife and kids stayed with them. I then got on the next plane to Boston. I didn’t have an apartment, a cell phone, a computer, or anything. The only thing I had were these three students at Brandeis. So I went and spent the night with them in the dorm. That night I hung out, met their friends, and one of their other suitemates helped me send a mass email (as described earlier), and away I went. Within a few weeks I had built up a little network of friends in and around Brandeis, and many of these students I am still friends with today – over eight years later.

My point is that just because you are new, don’t be discouraged, if you know someone – work that connection. If you don’t know anyone – meet someone and work that connection. Building relationships may be a slow process, but it is a real process and the relationships you

build will be lasting (not to mention that they will help you with recruitment).

The other thing you can do is use the twelve steps outlined in the beginning of this book. As I stated there, they may not be the greatest tools or best use of your time, and yes, they are greatly enhanced once you combine them with the power of word-of-mouth. But they are not useless. They do *do* something. They will generate some interest.

If you are new, then by all means, get out on campus and set up a table, hand out free stuff, do something crazy, get invited to fraternity and sorority meetings, print up fliers, take out ads in the school paper, do anything you can to generate an email list, collect phone numbers, stalk people on Facebook (ok, don't do this – it is freaky, but if you meet someone and you find he has friends or belongs to a group or whatever, make the effort to start meeting those other people), and do everything and anything you can to start meeting people. Even if you are an introverted, anti-social malcontent, for at least your first semester you need to make an effort to get out of your hole and interact with the world. Once you have a base of people, you can climb back in your cave and limit your interaction to your intimate circle.

I will add that during that first semester you need to work like an obsessed animal. You have to be everywhere and at everything. There is no other choice.

It is my opinion, that anyone, whose job is to recruit college students, is better off beginning in January as opposed to the start of the school year. If you start out in September, you spent the summer preparing, setting up shop, and working at a comfortable pace. When the students come back, you are in a daze and may have trouble jarring yourself from your summer slumber.

But if you start in January, you not only need to set up shop, you also need to get out there, meet people, and start recruiting. You will find that you don't have enough hours in the day and that you are slaving away like a deranged zombie – this is a good thing. You put yourself in a mindset of “work” and don't stop for anything. This energy will carry over and even after you are set up and comfortable, you will find it hard to relax. Your momentum will propel you.

I did this (and maybe I am biased because it was my experience) and I found it made all the difference to my success. I complained the entire time, but looking back I realize that if I took it easy, I would not have gotten anything done. As I mentioned above, I arrived in mid-

January, on the day the semester was starting. I knew three people. I didn't have an apartment, cell phone, or anything. The first thing I did was go to campus (and find a cell phone to call my wife). The next day I tried to get my bearings in the community and started looking for an apartment. Then I was back on campus meeting people. Then I found someone to let me use a computer and I went to work ordering one for myself. Then I had to find a car, and renew my license, and bring my family to Boston – you get the point – it was insane.

But it worked – I was simultaneously setting up shop, hosting events, moving, standing outside in the cold trying to meet students, helping my family adjust, shopping, and it was crazy – but I got into the habit of working like a maniac and by the end of my first three months I was on a plane to London with forty-four students – not bad for a new guy.

So do not get discouraged, everyone has to start out. If you work hard you will meet people. And if you follow my advice, you will turn those connections into friends, run great programs, and your word-of-mouth will start to work for you.



## Conclusion

If you got nothing else from this book, I hope you at least learned that campus recruitment is hard work.

Campus recruitment is time consuming, labor intensive, and requires planning. You need self-discipline and a solid work ethic. You need to budget your time and schedule periods for staying in touch, helping out, and nurturing relationships. You need to be patient and forgiving when students blow you off or don't follow through with commitments.

Unfortunately, there is no magic pill or secret formula to guarantee successful recruitment. Just work.

You probably started working on campus because you believe you have something important to offer college students. But like I mentioned in the introduction, it doesn't matter how important, amazing, or life-changing your ideas are – if students don't come to your events, join your club or organization, or sign up for your programs – they won't meet you, hear your ideas, or benefit from what you have to offer. Like it or not, recruitment is an essential part of your life. Take recruitment seriously and build recruitment strategies into your daily schedule.

But there is a bright side.

Word-of-mouth is about relationships. As I think is evident on every page of this book, the things you need to do to recruit well are the things you want to do anyway. You want your students to be your friends. You want them to ask you questions. You want them in your life. Building the relationships to drive your word-of-mouth ultimately has nothing to do with recruitment – it is the essence of why you work on campus in the first place.

There is no secret to great recruitment. In my experience, my students are my closest friends. If you have the same experience, your friends will drive your recruitment too.

# Appendix

## Two Essays: Insights About Recruiting for Off-Campus Trips

These two essays contain useful information about campus recruiting, particularly if you recruit for trips run off-campus during breaks and long weekends.

### *The Secret of Successful Recruiting – Start Early*

I graduated from college a long time ago. But in many ways I still think and act like a college student. I am laid-back. I like to hang out. I think I am cool. I like to talk about deep ideas.

Unfortunately, I also procrastinate.

Like most college students, I tend to push important work off until the last minute. When a deadline approaches, I have a minor freak-out, stress, and then stay up drinking tons of coffee until I finish whatever it was that I needed to do.

Unfortunately, procrastinating is terrible for recruitment.

The school year is only about thirteen weeks long and it is punctuated with breaks, exams, and study periods. If you wait until the last minute to begin planning and recruiting for your programs, you will miss the boat and only get a handful of people to sign up.

What is the hidden secret to successful recruiting? Start early. Set deadlines way in advance and train yourself to live within your early/artificial timetable.

I begin planning months ahead of time – for winter programs I start looking for flights in March and for summer programs I start in September. (A travel agent once told me that the secret number when booking flights is 300. Airlines release their schedules 300 days in advance – if you start looking for flights at this time you will get the dates and times you want, often at the best price). I then set my launch dates for recruitment months in advance. For example, for a winter program I will begin recruiting at the beginning of July and for the summer I start December 1<sup>st</sup>. Psychologically, I have my minor freak-out in June or November and run around like a madman building my website, making sure my online application works, printing up fliers, setting up a Facebook group, and doing whatever else it is I need to do.

Then I launch my campaign on time. I get it all done and still have six-to-eight weeks before the semester starts. (My stress level in June or November is no different then if I were to wait until September or mid-January – the difference is that when I actually launch I am still way ahead of the game).

In spite of the stereotype about lazy students (that I mentioned above), there are plenty of students (especially those at top universities) who plan out their lives in advance. If you start your recruiting far enough ahead of time, you will walk into a new semester with enough students to interview to fill half your program. You can set a target date for six weeks into the semester to close up recruitment and after two months you will already have your program filled.

Or you can wait.

### *Web Design for Campus Recruitment*

Online, via the web, is where all the action is these days – old news right? Yet I am shocked how many organizations have unworkable, old school, antiquated websites that drive students away and hamper recruitment.

Fact (or at least it seems like it): all college students have ADD. They are easily distracted and lose interest. Your students are simultaneously online, checking emails, doing homework, listening to music, chatting on IM, posting Facebook messages, while also maybe glancing at your site – if it doesn't instantly grab them, good-bye.

You can invest thousands of dollars in fliers, palm cards, table tents, carefully placed ads, targeted Facebook advertising, fancy word-of-

mouth marketing campaigns, or a host of other expensive ideas to drive students to your site to register for your programs. But if once they get there it takes forever to load, is difficult to navigate, or doesn't get straight to the point, you have lost their interest and they are gone. The typical student has an attention span of about half a second, if your site cannot capture a student's interest instantly; something else is just a click away – and click they will.

The first rule when designing a site for campus programs is to avoid any technology or gimmick that slows up the loading time (often a fancy flash intro, video, photo gallery, or cheesy music). Your web page must get straight to the point – fast – if it takes time to load, students will leave. A good homepage uses simple HTML and loads instantly on any browser (you can post links to videos or a photo gallery on other pages).

Second rule: copy is king – what you say is more important than any other aspect of the site. To keep a student's interest you must go straight for the kill – no introductory page, no history of the club or organization, no nothing – go straight to selling the program or event. Point out the highlights, talk up the perks, emphasize the price (or subsidy, or scholarship, or that it is free), and make it easy for your students to apply or register immediately.

This is especially true if you choose to forgo having a site and use Facebook as your exclusive web presence. On Facebook you do not have rich text, graphics, or options (anything you can upload is formatted the way Facebook wants it, and often relegated to a different page). You must say what you mean and sell your program. And get it done in clean simple language using real English (check spelling and grammar), short concise sentences, and avoid the passive tense (it is a good idea to read “On Writing Well” by William Zinser – the classic primer for all non-fiction writing).

Finally, you need to gather testimonials. Testimonials serve two functions: They “prove” all claims you are making about how great your program or organization is and they show your students that what you do is enjoyed by other students “just like them.”<sup>5</sup>

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5 This is something I hear over and over from people in marketing, direct marketing, and sales. I have seen it in a number of sources, though the person I heard it most emphatically from is James Malinchak. He is a motivational speaker and offers marketing seminars about speaking on college campuses. You can find more information at his site [www.malinchak.com](http://www.malinchak.com).

You should make it your business to collect testimonials from everyone you know. Get them from program alumni and have new students fill out post-program evaluations as your events are ending. Ask for one or two sentences max, and be clear about what you want them to say. Make sure they know that you will use their *full* name and school (e.g. Lisa G. looks bad and lacks credibility, get the full name). Make sure you mention this in your pre-program participant waiver (nobody reads it, but you can honestly claim you warned them – and they agreed to it – if they complain).

Whether or not you use a webpage or Facebook for your front line recruiting, you should have a page where you post everything related to your program. All important messages sent in pre-program emails should also be on the site as well as documents to download, forms to be submitted, and all program related info (including packing list, waiver, flight info, schedule, contact info, etc). Not only does this force your students back to your site (and see the other events you are running), but it is also a great resource for parents and helpful if problems arise during your trip.

## Word-of-Mouth Resources

*The Tipping Point*  
Malcolm Gladwell

Recommending *The Tipping Point* is almost passé: everyone has read it and talks about it. The reason *The Tipping Point* is so popular is that it does an excellent job explaining how trends start and take on a life of their own. I think anyone working on campus should read it. It will help you identify how different students will assist you in different ways.

*Word of Mouth Marketing:  
How Smart Companies Get People Talking*  
Andy Sernovitz

Definitely a book for marketing insiders and not the common man: it has an excellent system for understanding word-of-mouth, how it works, and is chock full of good ideas to experiment with.

*Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*  
Al Ries and Jack Trout

This is a classic marketing book by the people who invented the term “positioning.” While not directly applicable to campus, it is an invaluable resource that will force you to rethink your position – i.e. how students relate to you and what you do.

*On Writing Well*  
William Zinsser

This book is the bible of non-fiction writing. If you write (and you should) – whether it is blogging, articles, professional literature, or whatever – then you need to read *On Writing Well*. You probably make simple mistakes (I do all the time, especially with grammar, poor sentence construction, and using the dreaded passive tense), and sloppy writing makes it difficult to communicate your message. (Incidentally, I once taught as a visiting professor at a major university. I was shocked how poorly my students wrote. But this is no excuse for you to write poorly as well!)

*Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies,*  
Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras

This book has nothing to do with campus or word-of-mouth recruitment. It is, however, essential reading for any person interested in big-picture planning. The book looks at great companies and discusses why they are more successful than others in their industry. You will learn about BHAGs, core values, innovation, and why not to waste your time creating wordy, meaningless mission statements.

*No B.S. Time Management for Entrepreneurs*  
Dan Kennedy

Do not be a slave to your Blackberry – read this book.

## About the Author

**T**zvi Gluckin has been everywhere and done everything. His eclectic tastes and unusual life experiences render him uniquely qualified to discuss a wide array of issues and topics from a fresh and different perspective. His style is unconventional and humorous, his message is powerful and focused, and the experience is inspiring and transformative.

Tzvi Gluckin lectures extensively to English speaking audiences internationally on a wide range of topics. He has served in the Israeli Army, holds a B.M. in Jazz Studies from the New England Conservatory of Music, and received his rabbinical ordination from Rabbi Noah Weinberg at Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem. He currently lives in Boston with his wife and children.

Tzvi also loves blogging; visit his blog at [www.moretorah.com](http://www.moretorah.com) (and leave comments, it is good for his self esteem).





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If you liked *The Glue Factor*,  
You will love these other  
great programs.

Get Out of Town! - Run the off-campus program of your dreams (including weekend retreats, spring break get-aways, 10-28 day programs away, overseas programs, over-nighters, and more). No stone is left unturned - recruitment, budgets, logistics, follow-up, working with outside vendors, staff training, crises management, and so much more!

Talking Points - an interactive workshop that will show you how to effectively get your message across to college students, simultaneously stimulating word-of-mouth recruitment and initiating long-term loyalty.

Bring Tzvi for a full day training program.  
Save a ton of money and give your staff  
a great time, an awesome day,  
and incredible tools.

Visit [www.gluckin.com](http://www.gluckin.com) or email  
[tzvi.gluckin@gmail.com](mailto:tzvi.gluckin@gmail.com) to learn more  
and to book this incredible seminar today.

You read the book,  
now hear the seminar.

Bring *The Glue Factor* to your  
campus or community today!

The Glue Factor is a powerful, no-holds-barred seminar that will show you how to stimulate effective word-of-mouth recruitment campaigns, build long-term student relationships, generate student loyalty and commitment, and foster and develop leadership. This is **not** a fluffy motivational talk about the power of leadership and working together. It is a specific, results focused program, and you, your staff, students, volunteers, partners, student board, and everyone else will walk away with tools you can immediately put into practice to increase your recruitment and engender long-term student loyalty and commitment.

“Thank you so much for your talk. I’ve implemented so many new ideas within days of your coming to our campus. Your talk challenged me to reinvent and clearly define myself on campus with greater vigor and focus.”

— J.P. Katz - JEM University of Wisconsin, Madison

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