

Success Strategies: Insights from NALA

Overcoming Recruitment Challenges: 10 Tips for Seeking Committed Board Members

As leaders of NALA Affiliated Associations, you understand how essential a strong board is to fulfilling your association's mission.

Recruiting dedicated volunteer board members can be challenging but, with the right strategies, you can attract individuals committed to driving your organization forward. Here are some tips and potential actions for addressing common obstacles to recruitment and providing flexibility based on your association's needs.



1. Define Roles Clearly and Attractively

Challenge: Potential volunteers may hesitate due to unclear or overwhelming role descriptions.

- **Action 1:** Create simple, clear descriptions for each board role, detailing key responsibilities in bullet points. A one-page document can be useful for sharing at events or online.
- **Action 2:** Develop an informational flyer or video introducing each role's impact on the association's mission. Include quotes from current board members to make the roles more relatable.
- **Action 3:** Align each role with strategic goals, showing candidates how their work directly influences the association's growth. Create interactive infographics or digital brochures that can be shared on social media to attract potential candidates.

2. Identify Your Ideal Candidate Profile

Challenge: Without a defined profile, recruitment can feel like a search in the dark.

- Action 1: Identify general skills and experience helpful for each role, like finance, event planning, or community engagement.
- Action 2: Build a profile for each role that includes hard skills (like legal knowledge) and soft skills (like leadership) to guide recruitment.
- Action 3: Use data from past board members' performance and backgrounds to determine what an ideal candidate looks like for each position. Use this to guide personalized outreach and ensure a balanced, effective board.

3. Promote the Value of Serving on the Board

Challenge: Busy professionals may see board service as a burden rather than an opportunity.

- Action 1: Emphasize the opportunity for professional development, networking, and making an impact on the paralegal profession. Highlight these benefits on your website and social media.
- Action 2: Share testimonials from current or past board members on how board service has enriched their careers, either through short quotes or video testimonials.
- Action 3: Offer additional benefits like exclusive training resources or mentorship opportunities. Create an impact report that shows how board service contributes to personal growth and the association's success.

4. Build a Culture of Inclusivity and Belonging

Challenge: People may feel uncertain about whether they would fit in or be welcomed.

- Action 1: Proactively cultivate a welcoming atmosphere by offering open house board meetings, where potential volunteers can attend and observe.
- Action 2: Establish a welcome committee of current board members who reach out to interested individuals with invitations to informal informational sessions or social events.
- Action 3: Demonstrate a commitment to diversity by setting specific, visible goals to attract people from varied backgrounds. Host informal meet-and-greet events where potential board members can interact with current members.

5. Actively Reach Out to Potential Candidates

Challenge: Waiting for volunteers to step forward often leads to unfilled positions.

- Action 1: Ask current board members and association leaders to identify potential candidates and personally invite them to apply.
- Action 2: Use events and virtual meetings as networking opportunities to discuss board service with engaged members.
- Action 3: Implement a targeted outreach strategy using data from your customer relationship or member database to identify high-potential candidates with skills relevant to board roles. Personalize invitations to highlight how their unique background would benefit the board's mission.

6. Make the Application Process Accessible and Engaging

Challenge: A complicated or lengthy application process can discourage interest.

- Action 1: Keep the application process simple, using a short form or a quick introductory interview.
- Action 2: Hold informal one-on-one conversations to gauge interest and fit, making the process approachable and relational.
- Action 3: Streamline the recruitment process using digital applications or surveys. Consider virtual coffee chats with current board members to give potential candidates an inside look at board service, making the process more transparent and accessible.

7. Offer Support and Training for New Board Members

Challenge: The thought of taking on a role without guidance may deter potential volunteers.

- Action 1: Create a welcome packet that outlines board expectations, meetings, and responsibilities in a digestible format.
- Action 2: Implement a buddy system where each new board member is paired with an experienced member for mentorship.
- Action 3: Design a comprehensive onboarding program with quarterly training sessions, mentorship opportunities, and access to NALA's resources so new members feel confident and supported from day one.

8. Recognize and Celebrate Volunteer Efforts

Challenge: Volunteers may worry that their efforts will go unnoticed or be undervalued.

- Action 1: Acknowledge board members' contributions publicly with a volunteer spotlight for your newsletter or website.
- Action 2: Develop a structured recognition program with regular shout-outs, appreciation events, and personalized thank-you notes.
- Action 3: Implement a formalized recognition program that includes service awards, LinkedIn endorsements, or certificates for professional profiles. Highlight members' achievements on your association's social media or website to amplify their impact.

9. Create Opportunities for Light Engagement First

Challenge: Some members may be reluctant to commit to a board position without first trying it out.

- Action 1: Invite members to attend a board meeting or volunteer on a small project to learn more about board service.
- Action 2: Offer committee roles or short-term projects to allow members to ease into leadership roles and assess if they are ready for full board service.
- Action 3: Develop micro-volunteering roles like task forces or advisory roles for specific initiatives. Use these roles to identify high-performing members for formal board recruitment and maintain a steady pipeline of potential candidates.

10. Engage in Continuous Recruitment and Succession Planning

Challenge: Many associations only think about recruitment when there is an urgent need.

- Action 1: Start recruiting year-round, not just when there is a vacancy. Encourage active members to consider future board roles.
- Action 2: Create a formal succession plan to ensure smooth leadership transitions, and proactively identify future leaders from among engaged members.
- Action 3: Integrate succession planning into board governance by developing a consistent talent pipeline. Use this approach to build long-term relationships with members interested in board roles and establish a recruitment strategy that is proactive and aligned with the board's strategic goals.

Working Together with NALA's Collective Support

Recruiting dedicated board members can be a journey, and every nonprofit faces these challenges. NALA is here to provide assistance and support, ensuring your board has access to tools and resources to simplify recruitment. We can collaborate as part of the NALA network, sharing resources, strategies, and experiences to support each other. By working together as a collective of affiliated associations, you can overcome obstacles, share your successes, and celebrate the power of strong boards in advancing the paralegal profession.

