

*Improving the lives of women and girls
 through programs leading to social
 and economic empowerment.*

## Soroptimist International of the Americas

**Friends and Family: Communicating and Marketing Soroptimist**

In the book *Creating Customer Evangelists,* the authors speak to the heart of targeting family and friends for Soroptimist membership:

*You are an evangelist.*

*You tell others what movie to see, which computer to purchase, what restaurant to visit, which dentist you prefer, which cell phone to buy, which books to read, which clubs to join. Your recommendations are sincere. Passionate, perhaps.*

*Perhaps you didn’t realize that you are an evangelist—a bringer of glad tidings—but your sphere of influence, made up of friends, family, colleagues, and professional communities, realizes it.*

(McConnell and Huba, 2002)

Evangelizing is a powerful word-of-mouth strategy to reach family and friends who are potential Soroptimist members. Because we are bombarded with information and advertisements from the moment we wake until it’s time for bed, we tend to tune out and ignore most of these plays for our attention. But when someone we know, trust, and respect gives a positive review or recommendation, we generally pay attention and listen.

According to the “2016 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report” from Marketing General, Inc., word of mouth is one of the most effective marketing methods for acquiring new members. Additionally, an online survey of global respondents in 60 countries conducted by Nielsen found word-of-mouth recommendations from family and friends to be the most influential marketing tool—with 83 percent of respondents saying it’s the most trustworthy marketing.

Getting your family and friends involved in Soroptimist can be the easiest, most cost-effective and rewarding recruiting method. So get your talking points ready, and go for it!

Check out these tips to communicate and market Soroptimist successfully to your family and friends:

Before marketing to new members, it is important for a club to gauge its attractiveness to prospects by performing an assessment, or “health check.” Just as we sometimes take our own health for granted, clubs also tend to take their health for granted. An assessment can provide invaluable insights into a club’s health by identifying strengths and weaknesses—and opportunities for improvement. Be honest about the issues your club needs to fix, but also take time to recognize where you excel—and share those positives with prospective members. A sample club assessment is available in the membership section of the members area of www.soroptimist.org.\*

Another important step in preparing to market Soroptimist is to make sure you know what you are “selling.” You probably know all the goings-on within your club, but don’t forget we are an international organization and our reach is global. Make sure SIA headquarters has your most current email address so you’ll have the latest information at your fingertips when you are talking about Soroptimist. Review or update your member profile at www.soroptimist.org.\*

For Soroptimist, the foundation of word-of-mouth marketing is to have satisfied and happy members who can tell others about their experiences. Members should function as a team, support each other, and the tone of the club should be one of accomplishing the mission, but also having fun too. Make sure members spread the word to their family and friends by honestly communicating what Soroptimist means to them and how it’s improved their own life. Consider holding an informal “storytelling” meeting where members can share experiences and get used to talking about all the great times they have together, and then use those stories as material for talking with recruits. Also, use the resources at www.soroptimist.org\* to promote a happy, healthy, civil club atmosphere.

There are many ways to reach out to family and friends about joining Soroptimist. It could be in person, by phone, email or text. It really depends on your relationship, the physical distance between you, and even their generation. Remember to communicate with different generations they way they prefer. Use the generational resources at www.soroptimist.org\* to learn about how to best communicate with Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials.

Prospects—even family and friends—will research companies, brands, and organization they come in contact with. They’ll trust you, but still want to find out more on their own, which means clubs need to have a website that is up-to-date and visually pleasing. Need to modernize your website or create one? Try using SIA’s Website Templates for Clubs available at www.soroptimist.org.\*

Facebook is a popular form of social media that is full of “friends” who may also be part of your family too. On your personal Facebook page, post events and programs the club is working on and how your “friends” can easily get involved. In need of content? “Share” posts from SIA and LiveYourDream.org’s Facebook pages. Information, interesting facts, photographs, and videos relevant to Soroptimist and our mission are posted daily.

Volunteering makes you feel good! People who volunteer are happier and healthier people. Their mortality rate is lower, they have greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression than those who do not volunteer. Make a point of telling your family and friends that Soroptimist membership will benefit them as well as the women and girls we serve.

Are your family and friends spread out in out in other cities, towns, or even countries? That’s the benefit of being part of an international organization! Help find a club nearby to your family and friends and assist in making a connection. Alternatively, if there is no club nearby, you can plant the seeds to start a new club, or direct your family and friends to get involved immediately with our mission through LiveYourDream.org.

Coordinate a fun family and friends social night and use some themes to promote the event such as spending quality time together, having a girls night out, building and/or strengthening your family bonds, or creating a legacy of service.

Don’t take it personally or be afraid that your family and friends will say no. One of the top reasons people say they do not volunteer is because no one asked them! Just ask. If you get a “no thank you,” that’s okay! Realize it can be for any number of reasons like time or financial constraints. You know your family and friends best, so you may be able to cut to the heart of the matter and figure out why they are hesitating. It could be a simple misconception you can help to clear up.

Use the relaxed membership criteria to your advantage! Some of the systems that unintentionally divided members and hindered membership recruitment are no longer in place. Since breaking down several membership barriers, we have the opportunity to build and grow Soroptimist for the future. With membership no longer based on occupations and classifications, you can let your family and friends know as long as they support SIA’s mission they are able to become members.

It’s important to focus on prospective member values—family and friends included! Potential members have told us that friendship and fellowship is at the top of the list of what they value when looking to join a membership organization. Although this is a trait you should already share with this potential group of members, clubs should be committed to a friendly, warm and welcoming environment for ALL members.

Other top values in order of importance for this group were being with other like-minded women, personal connection to the mission, leadership and personal development opportunities, and volunteer opportunities. Demonstrate these values by:

* Honoring a woman with a Live Your Dream Award.
* Participating in Dream It, Be It.
* Inviting family and friends to join in hands-on projects and events.
* Using the Capacity Inventory resource available at www.soroptimist.org\* to find out what skills prospects are looking to use and develop.

Prospective members have told us the number one reason they are interested in specifically joining Soroptimist is to help improve the lives of women and girls. Again, it’s important to showcase how your club does that—through the Live Your Dream Awards, Dream It, Be It, and other women- and girl- focused projects your club participates in within the community. Talk up the great mission-focused work you’re doing, and show your family and friends how they could get involved!

Other top reasons potential members stated for wanting to join Soroptimist (in order of importance): to provide education opportunities for women (Live Your Dream Awards!), to mentor girls (Dream It, Be It), to meet people in their community, and to raise awareness about domestic violence. In your messaging, emphasize how your club addresses these issues.

Potential Soroptimist members who inquired about joining but did not do so said the number one reason was because after expressing interest, no one from the club ever contacted them. Hopefully clubs won’t ignore their very own family and friends! No matter how they were received or who they may be, always follow-up on leads. Make a call or send an email. Give prospects a day or two to respond—but don’t hesitate to follow-up again. Let them know they are important by telling them more about Soroptimist and then inviting them to join!

Finally, a great way to introduce the mission and goals of Soroptimist to your friends and family is to encourage them to visit, sign-up and become part of LiveYourDream.org. This is an effective way to establish a connection to Soroptimist where prospects can find more information and volunteer on their own terms. Our online community can set the stage for entry into club membership for the people you know!

**\*Need help finding the resources on www.soroptimist.org? Contact headquarters at siahq@soroptimist.org or call 215-893-9000.**

*Sources and references:*

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