

The Perfect "Get To Know Us" Night (GTKUN)

The "Get To Know Us Night" (GTKUN) is a long-standing, successful method for engaging new participants in your nonprofit. It cleverly employs aspects of sociological, psychological, and Total Quality Management (TQM) theories, it is the king of **BUY IN** and buy in equals new members.

I've personally used this approach since 1994, having learned it from the Human Resources Department at a phone company. It was originally designed to facilitate a 3,000-person layoff from an 8,000-person workforce in a way that made it feel like "**their**" idea. This demonstrates its effectiveness in motivating people to undertake actions they might not otherwise consider. We are going to have the SMEs tell you exactly what is missing from their lives and then offer to create a program that is exactly that, Think of it like this:

Parent: "Child, what do you want more than anything?"

Child: "Candy"

Parent: "Child, there is the holiday called Halloween where adults will give you all the candy that you can carry."

Child: "What?"

Parent: "Yes. But you will have to wear a costume and a coat."

Child: "I can do that"

Ok I'm having some fun with you here, but seriously we are asking potential new members to create their own **utopia** and then leaving it up to them to step through the door. And to get that **utopia**, they need to be members of the group, and do the group's stuff. (And yes they will gladly do that).

Players:

Facilitator: Let this person take the lead and direct the flow.

Secretary: Let this person write down the ideas on the easel pad and ask key questions, and ask if everyone understands what they have written.

SMEs: Everyone else who attends.

The GTKUN does operate on three key assumptions as follows:

Three Assumptions for Success

A. People want to do good things.

While it is true that good people can commit truly horrible acts when their environment dictates it, it is equally true that those perceived as "horrible" are capable of selfless acts if the right environment is presented. Our goal is to empower guests to create their ideal environment a place they can do great things—a group where they can be their best selves, a sort of utopia that will contribute positively to the world in many ways.

B. A Sense of Obligation.

Most people are uncomfortable with being receivers; they value self-sufficiency. When a balance of favors feels off, it creates a sense of obligation. Think of a first date where one person spends lavishly—an unwritten expectation of reciprocity forms. We aim to create a similar, positive sense of indebtedness, making guests feel they "**owe**" us something, and we will use that to ask them to be our Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). That is all. I am not a monster here, I just need some help.

C. Many hands make light work.

Most nonprofits exist to do good, and they can have a far greater impact than individuals acting alone. Everyone recognizes this potential, and we will leverage this understanding to our advantage to become part of our group. Even non joiners will want to join.

Executing the GTKUN: Your 5-Step Blueprint

To ensure a successful GTKUN, ensure every member of your group understands and commits to these five steps:

Aim to gather as many guests as possible; encourage every current member to bring one or two people. These guests will serve as **Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)**, and your primary goal is to solicit their advice—nothing more, nothing less. Schedule the event far enough in advance to maximize attendance, ideally aiming for 15-20 guests. Strategically "pepper" the group with your own members who have been rehearsed on the evening's flow.

I'll emphasize this now, and you'll hear it again: Remember "Fantasy Island"? Specifically, the beginning: "Smiles everyone, smiles!" **Now is NOT the time for disagreements, arguments, or negativity.** Maintain a positive and welcoming atmosphere.

1. Cultivate a Sense of Obligation.

This is achieved by serving a nice dinner. It doesn't need to break the bank, but steer clear of simple spaghetti and sauce. Plan a menu that is broadly appealing and safe; avoid seafood or pork, for example. The quality of the meal demonstrates your investment in them.

2. Integrate Them into Your Team.

Nothing fosters team integration like asking for help. Be direct: "I invited you here specifically to ask for your help." This disarms them, makes them feel valued, and immediately distinguishes the event from a high-pressure sales pitch. Introduce them as **Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)**.

Then, briefly share your organization's origin story. For instance, "Let me catch you up: our group was formed by our founder in [time period], and we've accomplished a lot since then." Conclude by honestly explaining your current situation: perhaps your group has "shrunk to fighting trim," is a "skeleton crew," or is "lean and mean." Crucially, highlight that your officers are repeating their terms and are "quickly running out of ideas." In this spirit, you need *their* advice.

3. Let the "Customer" Design Your "Product."

My first rule in sales, after 20 years in the business, is "carry a product the customer cannot live without." To do that, you must let the customer define what that product is. In our context, the "product" is a place where they can socialize, make an impact, solve problems, have fun, and feel accepted and supported.

To facilitate this, have an easel and a **BIG** bold marker ready. Appoint a secretary to record responses. Begin by asking: "**What local charity do you think needs help and is truly worthy of it?**" Emphasize: "**NO ANSWER IS A DUMB ANSWER!**" Write down every suggestion and ask clarifying questions about anything unclear. Explain that your organization does not have a bottomless treasury and every dollar given to a charity will need to be replaced, which leads to your next question:

"What is the most successful fundraiser you have ever seen, heard of, or attended?" On a new page, have your secretary note these down. Again, **ASK QUESTIONS!** (Even if you know the answers) Every interaction brings them closer to committing to or joining with the team, so engage, engage, engage! "What's a calendar party? How does that work?" "A Pounding? What's that? How does it work?"

The second-to-last question: **"Helping all these people can take an emotional toll, and we need to have some fun in the process. So, what are the best, most fun group activities you've ever seen or been to?"** The devil is in the details here: "A cruise? Okay, are you thinking car, ship, or train?" Encourage them to expand on their answers. Ask for examples and if anyone else in the group has heard of it.

Next, introduce the person who will be planning the upcoming term. Show them the collected results from the Subject Matter Experts and let them engage with questions about the three lists. Remember, the SMEs do not need feedback, so avoid any negativity like, "We tried that, and it failed," or "That's not going to work."

Finally, ask the term planner: "Can you plan a term supporting as many of these charities as doable, employing as many of these fundraisers as you can fit, and planning as many of these activities that make sense?" When they agree, turn to your guests and ask: **"WAIT. ARE YOU GUYS SURE that if a group featured a plan to support these charities, with these fundraisers, and did these activities, that *you*, as an average person, would want to be part of such a group?"** They will, of course, answer "yes"—because they just created their ideal "utopia"!

4. Show Them You Value Their Time.

Conclude by genuinely thanking them for their time. Offer coffee and cake, and wish them a safe journey home, reiterating how much their help meant.

5. The Assumption Close.

DO NOT ASK THEM TO JOIN. Instead, have a stack of membership petitions easily accessible, or include one in a "swag bag" along with some small gifts. Following this process, you should convert at least 50% of your guests into new members. I just did one and got 110% (wife went home and asked husband to come in too!)

A Note on Follow-Through: It is absolutely vital that you follow through on the plans discussed. If you say you're going to support a particular charity, make it happen. The fastest way to lose someone is to ask for their advice and then ignore it—or, at the very least, you need a very compelling reason not to use their suggestions (e.g., "skydiving for charity would be frowned upon by our insurance").

There you have it. The best method I've ever used to recruit new members. Go with God and make it work for you.

GTKUN Timeline: Preparation is Key

Members should be strongly encouraged to bring guests to dinner. You need their in-person help at the event. The only determining factor for a guest should be whether they either need the group in their life, or the group needs them. Character, of course, is implied. Do not worry about whether they want to join or not; this is a zero-pressure event. Do not try to "sell" them.

60 Days Out:

- * Plan the event date, time, and menu.
- * The GTKUN should be the **only** event for the evening. Do not drift off script or link it with other activities.

30 Days Out:

- * Get a rough estimate of guest numbers.
- * Encourage members to seriously pursue invitations to their guests, emphasizing the need for a headcount for food.
- * If desired, the team can conduct a run-through of the event during this meeting. This often doubles the guest list. If you need us to come out, that's fine, but stress the following points for members to convey to guests:
 1. There are no bad ideas, only unspoken ones.
 2. No "negative Nellies."
 3. You are simply seeking their help that night—nothing more. There will be zero pressure, and they don't need to "presell" the group.

15 Days Out:

- * Finalize the menu and guest list. All plans should be in place.
- * Discuss retention strategies and what you'll do with your multiple new members. This is a good time for mentor training, which we can assist with.
- * ****Suggestion:**** Consider a "learning scavenger hunt" for new members. Name it something engaging, like "The Constellation Contest," with "7 major stars" to be completed in the first year of membership, each representing an objective, culminating in a certificate. For example:

1st Star: Memorize the obligation and/or describe what each paragraph means.

2nd Star: Visit another subset of your group.

3rd Star: Pick a committee to help with a task.

4th Star: Plan and execute a fundraiser with proceeds dedicated to a charity.

5th Star: Discuss in an article what one of the group's moral lessons means to them. Submit it to the group's magazine or website, if applicable. If not have them present in front of the group.

6th Star: Learn a piece of memory work from initiation that resonates with them or impressed them.

7th Star: Invite a friend or two to the next GTKUN.

Hand out a certificate for hitting all seven. Or invent your own contest. Do whatever it takes to keep them engaged!

7 Days Out:

* Make phone calls to reassure guests and finalize the list. If 40 guests attend, you could gain 20 new members. Don't stress the exact number, but you need a firm estimate at this point. If someone needs to bring an additional person, be flexible.

1 Day Out:

* Call your members to confirm attendees.

Day Of:

* Prepare and serve dinner. Let the program work its magic.

NOTES:

* Ensure the incoming president is present to actively receive feedback from the SMEs.

Follow-through is vital. While you clearly won't be able to implement every recommendation, there must be strong, justifiable reasons for not doing so. (For instance, "skydiving for charity would be frowned upon by our insurance" is a good example of a valid reason!)

The members and guests will sit together as a group, fostering connections, building teams, and developing relationships.