

## Recruiting New Students to Your *FIRST* Robotics Competition or *FIRST* Tech Challenge Team

### Publicity – In School

- Have teachers promote recruitment/robotics in class.
- Promote the non-technical (non-robot) side of the program – contact Art, Journalism, and English as well as Science and Technology classes. Approach clubs such as Future Business Leaders. Students with art skills can help with logo, website graphics and t-shirts designs; students interested in accounting can work on real-life budgets. Students with writing skills can work on marketing materials, media releases, etc.
- Work with administrators and teachers and schedule a short recruitment presentation in some of the classes.
- Create a week of recruitment, presenting to classes, having promos on morning announcements, manning a demo booth at the Back To School Night or Open House. Follow up with an orientation day. At the orientation, set up the different sections with a team lead to explain and show examples.
- Align with the sports teams and demo the robots at pep rallies (t-shirt cannons, carry football, shoot poofballs into baskets).
- Work to actively get the team name out there in the school community. Examples: car bashes, community service, charity drives, pep rallies, fundraisers such as LAN parties
- Purchase advertising in the school newspaper, theater playbill, band/choir concert programs, yearbook, PTO/PTA newsletter, school website.
- Start recruiting in the spring. Make sure to keep contact with those interested over the summer. If the team is doing a carwash fundraiser, let them know about it.
- If your team is attending a nearby off-season event, invite prospective students and parents to join you and get a feel for what the program is all about.
- Take advantage of school's newsletters that go to parents and write the word, SCHOLARSHIPS, in big bold letters.
- Have a freshman teacher show videos of your team at regionals (from SOAP or your team's own recording) to incoming freshmen during the first few days at school.
- Wear team shirts on specific day of the week.
- Hold a “women in science and engineering day” presentation. Invite female engineers from your corporate sponsor come and talk about their experience in science and tech.
- Be sure to keep school administrators and parents informed about team expectations (including time and financial commitments), requirements and events.
- Mentor a *FIRST* LEGO League team. Get them excited when they are young and build a productive flow of new members.
- Create informative flyers and posters that appeal to high school age students!

### Demos

- Schedule robot demos at local middle schools and at freshman orientation.
- At the demo, have a shooting or driving contest. Anything hands-on will get people more involved and more interested! Allow potential recruits to try out driving the ‘bot.
- Show a video of this past season's competition. Get a match off of [NEED URL](#) soap108's website; show parts of the video from kick-off.
- Ask potential recruits to sign up for more information. Contact them and schedule a follow-up meeting for the following week. That will give you a good idea of how many people are \*really\* interested.
- Intrigue them with the most exciting parts of *FIRST* and don't drag them down with too much technical stuff until they're already hooked onto *FIRST*.

- Showcase trophies/banners.
- Provide lots of team members to talk to both boys and girls, and their parents. Coach the team in advance about “talking points” and “elevator speeches”.

### Publicity – In Community

- Check with local Chambers of Commerce for calendar of events in town; contact the event planner to see if you can demo robot and have booth space at no cost. Use your robot to “deliver” cases of soda for events.
- Hold robot driving contests at events.
- Participate in parades.
- Visit local community organizations, hospitals and nursing homes, civic organizations, school groups to do demos. Plan “photo ops” in advance (robot with mayor, etc.) and be sure to have a press release about your team (with all the correct facts!) to give to media.
- Prepare press release about team customized for each competition you will attend, along with a list of media contacts. You can easily update it on the spot if you win an award and fax it to the news desk. More media attention generates more interest in the team, which makes recruiting students, mentors and sponsors easier!

### Meetings

- All students and parents should be notified of financial expectations/requirements and time commitments and the team's tentative competition/travel schedule at one of the very first meetings of the year.
- If the team holds meetings over the summer, make sure people know about it!
- At the beginning of the next term, hold an orientation, get-to-know-you meeting. Do team-building activities to help rookies and vets mingle a bit!
- Make certain new sign-ups are aware of upcoming meetings and are registered on the team website and team email groups.
- Any kids from *FIRST* Lego League teams coming? Give them a special welcome.
- Let students make the presentations/do the demos. Mentors are in the background as back-up.
- Explain the season timeline (especially if you are a “year-round” team).
- Explore the school calendar so you know in advance if SATs or other mandatory tests may occur during the Build or competition season, or if another school group has an important trip happening at the same time. Be sure to bring to students’ and parents’ attention at an early team meeting to help avoid later conflicts.
- Show videos of competitions so they know what an exciting program *FIRST* is!
- Create a team brochure with pics of the team and robot and important stats and contact numbers to distribute.
- Handouts should include the website information, the general calendar/schedule for the team, travel expectations, and information regarding the team support such as the sponsors, the booster group and how parents can join, and what the meeting expectations are. Include additional team requirements such as volunteer service hours. Some teams may require students to perform community service hours or attend a certain number of team meetings in order to qualify for travel. If you distribute this information during your week of recruitment, you help prevent the shock of ‘oh wow, this is a big time commitment!’ – especially to the parents. Include information about car pools. If your team requires each student to supply a team meal during Build Season include these details also.

These suggestions came from Chief Delphi forum threads on **recruiting** from a variety of mentors and students. Visit the forums ([www.chiefdelphi.com](http://www.chiefdelphi.com)) for more ideas.