

Tips for Successful Recruitment

The elements of successful recruitment aren't complex, but they do take time and resilience. Engaging a potential partner requires careful research, relationship building, and a strategic pitch. But even with careful preparation, there will be times when your efforts don't pan out—at least not initially.

This tool presents some tried-and-true tips from seasoned prevention practitioners on “getting to yes” when recruiting potential prevention partners.

- **Take time to understand the *culture* of your potential partner.** Most organizations rely on an accepted set of norms that dictate when staff work (e.g., strictly 9-5, or also on nights and weekends), how they should dress (e.g., professional or casual), and preferred communication styles (e.g., email or face-to-face). Understanding these norms, as well as any words or phrases that are specific to the sector to which you're reaching out, will not only help you shape an effective pitch, but also lay a solid foundation for your continued work together.
- **Time your recruitment efforts carefully.** There are both good and not-as-good times to engage in recruitment efforts—depending on the sector you're trying to engage. Your primary goal is to reach out at a time when your potential partner is *most likely* to be receptive: when they are the least busy and most open to collaboration. For example, early August is often a good time to engage school administrators—when they are well rested but not yet inundated with other school responsibilities.
- **Lean on the expertise of “recruitment pros.”** Some people are simply more comfortable than others reaching out and connecting with new people. Identify the members of your team who are good at networking, comfortable asking, and have the “woo” gene—and then put them to work!
- **Prioritize your recruitment efforts.** If you are short on time and trying to recruit a number of partners, begin by recruiting partners who are either most likely to say “yes,” or whose involvement is most important to your prevention efforts. Then move on to stakeholders with less potential to influence your work.

- **Be flexible.** Instead of walking away when someone says “no,” find out why and see if there are other ways to work together. For example, a busy department head may not be interested in chairing a committee, but might be willing to serve as a technical monitor. Remember that there are different levels of collaboration; by adjusting your expectations (and meeting your partner halfway), you are keeping the door open to more involvement over time.
- **Remember: Every “no” leads you closer to a “yes”!** Don’t be disheartened if you receive a “no” the first (or second, or third) time you attempt to recruit a potential partner. Change can be scary—or at least uncomfortable—for many. People need time to get used to new ideas or ways of doing things. You may have to go back multiple times before you receive a commitment, or you may receive a commitment for a different type of collaboration than you originally envisioned.