

Don't Panic

Don't worry that you only have a small number of members at first. Once word about the group gets around, you'll be surprised at the number of people turning up at events. Some will become regulars or even help to run the group. Some you will see only infrequently, but may still be valuable supporters. And some will show up once and never be seen again. Don't let this bother you. There may be a variety of reasons which have nothing to do with how well you are running the group.

Spreading the Word

Your new bisexual group won't get very far if no one finds out about it. You need as much exposure as possible to grow your group. Fortunately, there are a number of sources of free publicity:

*** Gay and Lesbian Newspapers**

Many cities have gay and lesbian newspapers which list events. They rarely turn down a bi event listing, even if they are not otherwise bi-friendly. Some will also allow you to write an article describing your new bisexual network.

*** Other Newspapers**

Some places have a weekly newspaper or a weekly pull-out section of a daily paper which provides free calendar listings.

*** Public Events**

Make an eye-catching banner with the group's P.O. box or phone number. March with it in your local Pride Day march. Bring it to civil rights demonstrations and other political events.

*** Joint Projects**

Sign on as a co-sponsor for events in your area, such as fund-raisers, marches, dances,

etc. This will get your name out in the community.

Spreading More Words

*** Posters and Fliers**

Post fliers in places where bisexual people are likely to be found. Youth centers, student centers, women's centers, community centers, laundromats, coffee shops, libraries, etc.

*** Computer Networks**

Someone in your group will have access to computer networks. Announce your group on the bisexual activists' mailing list (biact-l), on soc.bi on Usenet, and on any local gay/lesbian/bisexual bulletin boards. Some local people will see these messages. Local colleges may also have GLBT email lists.

*** Create a Web Site**

In most bi communities, there is a fairly high percentage of people who make their living in the computer field. Find someone who knows HTML programming to create a web site for your group. Let the major bi web sites know about it and they will create links to your site.

*** Word of mouth**

You probably know other bi people. Talk to them. Mention it to gay and lesbian people, too. Most of them have bisexual friends. You'll also discover that some of them are actually bi, but call themselves gay or lesbian because they never had a bisexual community to feel part of.

*** Embrace Diversity**

Be welcoming to transgender and intersex people, people of different cultural backgrounds, people unsure of their sexuality, straight or gay partners of bisexual people and everyone else

Confidentiality

The people who may be interested in your group will be at all stages of the coming out process. Some people will not be sure if they

even are bisexual. Others will display tokens of their bisexuality proudly as they walk down the street. However, don't assume that if it is safe for you to be visible, that the same is true for everyone. People have lost their jobs, homes, and families - just because they're bi.

In order to meet the needs of all your members, maximum confidentiality is the best policy. People who want to be out can do so in other ways. Points to remember are:

* Mailings - Don't put the name of your organization on the envelope. Use security envelopes for all mailings.

* Phone calls - If the member you're calling is not home, don't leave a message unless you're absolutely sure it is safe for them.

* Mailing list - Never give your mailing list to another group. If you want to help some organization like an AIDS group reach your members, ask them to provide stamped, stuffed envelopes which you can put your labels on.

* Newsletter - Don't print the full names of members in the newsletter, calendar, or newspaper articles unless you are absolutely sure it is OK with them.

Money

To grow, you will need money for postage, paper, envelopes, copying, and a phone line. Decide whether to have dues, solicit donations, have fundraising events or how you will raise the money.

Designate a reliable treasurer and make sure they provide an accurate, up-to-date accounting on a regular basis.

Maintaining Members

Most people will keep coming back only if it is fun to do so. This goes for organizers as well as regular members. Try to make even mailings and business meetings something people look forward to. Involving food is always a good idea.

There are a tremendous variety of events that can be planned. Accept that not everyone will be interested in every event you have. Some ideas are: brunches, dim sum, pot-luck dinners, bi video nights, discussion groups, parties, dances, movies, camping, game nights, swimming, hiking, apple picking, renaissance faires, miniature golf, whale watches, bi nights at a local gay bar, trips to museums, story telling, and so on.

Avoiding Burn-out

It is vitally important that the people who begin and organize the network avoid getting burned out. There are a large number of small tasks involved in running the network: buying stamps and envelopes, answering the phone, answering letters, making copies, maintaining the mailing list, doing publicity, keeping track of the money, publishing the calendar, etc. Ideally, you should have a lot of people doing a little work. That way, no one should be overwhelmed by the work. Also, if someone drops out or moves away, it is easier to take up the slack until a replacement can be found.

Also very important is recognizing and thanking the people who do the work. Nothing burns out leaders faster than feeling that their work is unappreciated or constantly the target of gratuitous griping.

Remember to spread the work around and incorporate emotional support. Taking a

deep breath, looking around, and appreciating yourselves every so often will go a long way toward keeping your group healthy, growing, and active for years to come.

Resources

Bisexual Resource Center

P.O. Box 1026
Boston, MA 02117-1026, USA.
(617)424-9595

brc@biresource.org

<http://www.biresource.org>

BiNet U.S.A.

4201 Wilson Blvd. #110-311
Arlington, VA 22203 U.S.A.
(202)986-7186

<http://www.binetusa.org>

Bisexual Activists E-mail List

To subscribe, send a message to:

listserv@listserv.brown.edu

To post, send messages to:

biact-l@listserv.brown.edu

Bisexual Resource Guide

Available for \$13.95 from the Bisexual Resource Center in Boston (see above).

Bisexual Book Store

<http://www.biresource.org/bookstore>

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Growing Your Bisexual Group:

A Brief Guide to Making Your Bi Group Grow

By Wayne Bryant



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Boston, MA USA
<http://www.biresource.org>