

## Introduction

Covid-19 presents a challenging and unique situation for Greek recruitment. As a social organization, your chapter thrives on meeting and interacting with students, classmates and close friends. Most importantly, your organization cannot survive unless it recruits and adds to its numbers.

This document reviews the 'Why-How-What' basics of recruitment in normal times, the expected challenges during this pandemic, and the phases of recruitment that may be considered to help chapters reach success. Ideas and examples are provided throughout. An outcome of this document is for your chapter to be prepared to implement Covid-19 safe practices in their recruitment to demonstrate they prioritize member safety in all of its chapter-related activities.

### Five Quick Take-Aways

- We first need to understand [WHY we recruit, HOW we recruit and WHAT we hope to achieve](#)
- We can learn from some [best practices used by other industries](#)
- When possible, [collaborate with](#) your city/town, host institution, chapter advisor and housing corporation
- Detailed preparation is essential, and there are a [variety of opportunities](#) we can consider
- Implementation requires [patience, flexibility and a positive attitude](#)

### **Recruitment Basics in Normal Times, and the Challenges during a Pandemic**

To best prepare for a new way to recruit, let's consider the basics first: Why we recruit, how we recruit and what is desired as an outcome

- **WHY:** Most Greek organizations recruit because they wish to share and promote their ideals with new people they want to make their lifelong friends.
- **HOW:** This is done by meeting people we feel we have something in common, and getting to know or understand if they may be likeminded and open minded. Then, we introduce them to our friends, to further gauge their interest. Introduce them to the chapter to cement their interest and visa versa. Finally, we ask them to join.
- **WHAT:** We obtain a person who is willing and able to share in our chapter's beliefs, add to our collective body of knowledge, and join us as kindred spirits.

Before the pandemic, recruitment was basically done in one of two ways

- The 'Traditional Approach' is more passive and 'catch what you can.'
  - Chapters set up information tables in high traffic areas,
  - Sponsor events with the chapter (some at the house, some outside of it),
  - Offer tours of the chapter house, or in 'get to know you better' smaller settings with chapter members,
  - Interviews on why they want to be in your chapter, and then are offered an invitation
- The 'Mastery Approach' incorporates a more active and targeted process, sometimes longer in duration (a few weeks, over a few semesters) to best engage and explore if the fit will be right, and yet still incorporate elements of the traditional approach.

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- It involves the entire chapter creating proactive lists of prospects from all of their daily interactions,
- targeted contact of those folks (usually appealing to something in common or a share interest),
- targeted interactions with members- usually small scale at first, to understand the fit and character,
- diverse meetings and events, widening and opening to more members to help display chapter diversity and find good recruit/member pairings to further get to know them,
- opening up the engagement to include other recruits and more members as well as discussing the fraternity
- interviews and bids



There are many challenges to both approaches, especially the Traditional Approach, during a pandemic, confounded by the situation and pandemic policies employed by the HI and city/town to keep everyone safe.

Covid-19 robs your chapter of both the present day socialization your need to thrive, but also your ability to grow and survive. Many students will be attending class remotely; taking a gap semester or year due to finances, personal or family illness, or other reasons; and many students may not return, as they will graduate find lower cost alternatives, or forego college altogether.

Host institutions (HI) are themselves in turmoil: many will face financial hardship and some may close, consolidate or otherwise change in way that could lead to a complete upheaval to campus life as we know it.

- Expect gatherings greater than 10 - 20 people prohibited
- Common areas, and traffic through them may be closed, restricted, or very reduced in allowed use
- You will have limited face-to-face interactions, if at all, in hallways, dining halls, libraries, lounges, etc.
- Staggered class times, classes off normal hours (weekends, nights) and reduced on-campus population via virtual learning mean less people scattered over longer durations of time
- On campus events, such as athletics, dances, theme nights, etc. may be curtailed or completely cancelled
- On campus transportation (i.e., busses) will have staggered seating, making it harder to communicate with new people
- Face coverings conceal facial expressions and other emotions, which are valuable visual cues that help you determine interest, and positive or negative feedback
- You may have limited contact with your own members for the reasons stated in this section

### How Recruitment Basics Can Still Be a Benefit during Covid-19

There are few bright spots: the basics still apply, you still can use social media, you will still have classmates (unless your HI goes out of business) and there are other industries with models that we can obtain some ideas.

The 'Why-How-What' has not changed. In fact, it is more important than ever as many people seek social support networks, want to make friends and navigate the 'New Normal' of campus life.

When considering a new approach, let's consider some other industries and personal relationships with similar challenges and how, loosely speaking, are able to conduct business.

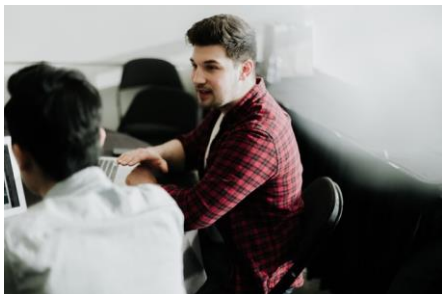
- Online dating services
- Job/internship recruitment and interviews
- Pizza and food delivery
- Social media use of old and new platforms to connect with friends
- Your major in college
- Online multi-player gaming

For the industries noted, as well as your personal relationships, have common traits and process.

- **WHY:** these industries provide a specific product that will meet your needs and relationships are built to keep you engaged and returning for repeat business
- **HOW:** These industries all start remotely- they do not know you.
  - They know and can easily define their brand versus competitors (their Why and What)
  - Their search employs many types of contact methods to find you: small and intimate, widespread/billboards, contests, games, designs, personalized (colors, catch phrases, etc.)
  - They come recommended from friends and other trusted sources, or because of something else they do well that you admire or relate to catches your attention,
  - Their initial contacts are usually remote advertising and 'hooks',
  - By word of mouth: you may have been given a referral to them or visa-versa using social media or other networks, sharing positive experiences
  - In many cases- it was clandestine: they knew who you were by their search methods and were sought out because you are desirable (and they will tell you that)
  - They offer easy to use support services and ways to get information about them (that favors them, of course)
  - Most of all: All of these are initiated at first by your smartphone (or other screen) and your couch
- **WHAT:** The industries have a satisfied customer, cultivated carefully using a variety of methods, and contact points, with some loyalty to the relationship (if they are successful), and who may vary from their other customers (which is fine - their product is diverse and robust)

### A Recruitment Plan for Covid-19: Recruitment Basics + "WHY-HOW-WHAT" = Your Edge

Your recruitment plan will still follow much of the same Mastery Approach formula discussed previously, as well as take lessons from the previous discussion on how virtual and limited contact industries have thrived and survived in their business model.



Before you get started developing your plan, you need to understand, and when possible, partner with your city/town, host institution, chapter advisor and housing corporation to:

- Understand health-related restrictions/changes and align policies and practices

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- Establish communication pathways (ex.; weekly update emails/calls on updates, changes in the situation)
- Seek opportunities to collaborate, which may elevate your reputation, campus visibility, and leadership
  - Do they need help with posting signs, offer community service projects specific to Covid-19 that aides them, such as blood drives, contact tracers (which may offer an income), mask/PPE drives (or creating them), shelter volunteers, elderly shopping/delivery services, etc.?
  - Does the campus need ‘Covid-19 Ambassadors’ to help deliver the message about proper hygiene and campus guidance, resources and policies, help advising other Greeks, being good role models, distributing pamphlets, co-hosting Covid-19 -safe events and help with policy development and feedback?

### Preparation

During this phase, you need to revisit your Why and What. Both should be clear, precise and understood by your entire chapter. Additionally, it is a time to explore your assets, limitations approach and create plan to mimic the same ‘How’ that made other cited industries successful.

- Review the ‘how’ from the previous section for the similar industries. In each case, determine how you can apply the Mastery Approach from ‘Recruitment Basics’.
- What steps will you take to create a list of potential candidates
  - Who will reach out and how will contact be made for these candidates. Consider researching how recruiters reach out to potential new employees for a similar approach
- What events you can do ‘live’. This could include community service events like collecting first responder equipment, making face coverings or face shields, creating lawn signs, etc.
- What are the various strengths, skills and talents/hobbies in the chapter? Gamers, honors students in various subjects, sports fanatics, card players, etc.
  - When you brainstorm how you will find potential new members, you will want to ensure you cover a wide arrange of interests and activities
  - Keep in mind: Students, especially younger groups such as freshmen, are going to be looking for things to do after months of self-quarantine with a new set of people.
  - Create a list with members and their assigned activities, to ensure reasonable coverage for all events
- Create (or have members join) small intimate activities- online gaming sessions (ex: Tabletopia, Yucata, Happy Meeple, Board Game Arena, Boite et Jeux, ‘Battle Royale’ style online games like Fortnite), supporting town/city and HI initiatives, virtual chat groups and fantasy leagues, fan sites for local/HI teams, chat groups for Covid-19 support or Q&A
  - Where and whenever you have your events, consider your hook to keep people returning for more information, even if they don’t join this event on this occasion. “Stay Tuned for more events”, or “check out my Facebook group for more ideas” etc.
- Consider the types of events that demonstrate your chapter’s philosophy and character, which is even more important during a pandemic
  - Clothing drives, lawn signs and elderly/disadvantaged family errands. These may be found on local social media or available through local charitable entities.



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- Use social media to spotlight local medical, first responder and science ‘heroes’ during the pandemic. Those in your community, at your campus, and even your alumni that may not be local. There may be local fundraisers or drives that your chapter can rally for and promote.
- Consider focus on the needs of student support (to compliment the HI) during this time
  - Advertise and host study sessions and tutoring (you probably have many majors covered in the chapter, especially suited for honors students among you to lead as host). Consider award certificates for those who pass a major exam, or improve on their grade from the last semester
  - Set up an awareness campaign to direct students to HI health and wellness services, as well as those available in the city/town. If you have any nutrition, yoga, mindfulness, crafting/art or even exercise majors that are well-trained persons in your chapter or alumni ranks, sponsor/host/arrange for virtual sessions open to the campus.
  - Students will probably need financial support after a summer with a lost job, lost internship or reduction in either. Are your alumni willing to sponsor the pledge/initiate fee for at least one new member? If your alumni have a fund already for your current chapter members for Covid-19, or a long term chapter education fund, ask them if they would consider/are able to set aside some of that for at least one new member.
- How you reach out and advertise in a variety of ways, big and small: on campus flyers, social media posts, word of mouth. Use QR codes, URLs, etc. to attract attention and curiosity. Develop mailing lists (there are many services, some free) that you can sue to email friend, supports and potential new members with regular news, updates and information about your overall activities (and a tag line somewhere in there about recruitment)
  - Update and monitor your existing posts and content on your social media sites and websites to be fresh, consistent with your values and aligned with HI and Covid-19 messaging and information, as potential new members will be looking.
  - Domino’s Pizza reaches a wide audience with lots of social messaging. Consider “Meet the brothers” campaigns on Instagram, Snapchat and Tik Tok. Have each brother record a short clip showing something about them that differentiates them from other members.
  - If you are posting Public Service Announcements around campus (on your own or with HI endorsement) consider adding QR codes that take people to these clips. When you advertise for gaming night, fanatic roundtables on sports teams, etc., also use it to introduce the members.
- Each of these small events should have only one or two member as facilitators /hosts. Do not have more members than guests.
  - Do not over promote your chapter at this time. Consider instead just promoting yourselves. Good people make friends first, and join organizations later. Consider not wearing letters until the third or fourth time you are hosting an event or are in contact with someone.
- How you incentivize participation and/or ‘level up’: consider add on activities, invitations to closed virtual socials and other events, score, bragging rights, etc.



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- For example, gaming could be done by the less experienced members hosting, and winners get to face a more experienced member who is in reserve at the next session. Note: Adhere to HI policies on recruitment events.
- For video clips, a specific QR code that has to be sought out by those interested, and the start and end of each clip may inform the viewer that there are more clips to find
- How do you target the people you want: these are in parallel groups that you host. If you want potential new members who are interested in media and film, join an online group- or start one- that specializes in film discussions. Joining these may also give you some ideas to host complimentary virtual events
  - If you join a group sponsored by the campus- be genuine, do not join just to drop out once recruitment period ends. Consider joint/partnered events that could benefit you and the other group.
  - Consider attending community sponsored events with potential new members, especially if held outside.
- House tours can be conducted live (using the housing corp. visitor policy) or via portable camera. A pre-recorded tour that can be accessed at any time offers flexibility for potential new members as well as a time for creatively and fun by the members.
  - Consider breaking up the recorded house tour into sections, with each section accessed by a specific QR code
  - Apps such as Pariscoppe, Facebook Live, and Instagram Live allow you to field questions in real time, or have members present in the chat answering questions.
- Contact other area chapters and find out what they are doing- share best practices
- Review online resources for recruitment practices. PhiredUp is a great resource for many recruitment items (including an excellent blog), and have published a blog post about recruitment during Covid-19 that is well worth a review. (Note: The author is not receiving any compensation for this endorsement- but has seen their work first hand)
- Find ways to get your faces out there (so to speak) with HI endorsed and unendorsed by approved means of Covid-19 Public Service Announcements. Your chapter logo should not be prominent, as you are there to be helpful first, and get your name out second.

### Implementation



It's time to put you plan into motion. Remember, this is new for everyone- all Greeks, the HI, your members. Be patient, flexible, willing to shift quickly as needed, and most of all, stays positive

- Layer your events and spread them out over time. Start with smaller and more introductory events, ramp them up to add a member or two; members can pair up or swap out with nonmembers for various events, games and chats. If you get large turnout for an event, consider adding more sessions and different times to accommodate more people and spread out the crowds
- You want to find some commonality between potential new members and within your membership; this will take time and the handoff will be slower and more methodical than at a live event
- Keep track of what events, groups, situations are the most productive. Have more members get involved where you are having success. Do not have events too heavily aimed at current

members or only potential new members. You should drive interest and traffic as much as it is finding potential new members

- **Do not expect fast results.** Plan on several events where small groups of potential new members are meeting and mixing with a small number of members. There may be cases where you will move from those small group chats or social circles right to a large event or the chapter interview/meet and greet.
- For events that may be held live, collaborate with the HI and your housing corp. on how events could be run safely.
- The CDC has guidance on gatherings, dining and other topics which may generally align to your plans.

### Follow Up

The transition to this phase will not be typical at all. You may have to conduct individual or waves of introductions and interviews over several days.

- Invitations to return/attend and follow up should be personalized, to show your interest. This is especially important with remote events, a smaller campus population, and less in person contact opportunities.
- Consider an open group chat, or find other opportunities to connect several members to the potential new member for an FAQ/information night session. There may be more than one session!
- Conduct house tours using a head mounted camera to walk the house and meet the members in their 'natural habitat'. Have some fun with this- humanize the members.
- While your interview process is probably formal, ensure it is fair and with an understanding of the limitations of conducting them remotely or physically distanced. Background noise, bad connections etc. should be forgiven.



### Assessment and Adjustment

- After each week of Recruitment, take an honest look at what is working and why as well as what is not working and why. Keep focused on your 'What' and determine if you are seeing the types of prospects what could fit your goal. What events are the most effective in findings these people?
- After this critical, honest look and feedback form the chapter, consider how you can revise your plans, events, participation, etc. as needed. Invest more or less time I areas based on success. Try new things if nothing seems to work. Ensure there is patience with a longer, drawn out process.

### Repeat

- Ensure your plan consider long term strategies to keep guys interested and loyal to your brand if they do not want to join this semester. or perhaps if they want to join later in the recruitment process. Keep mixing in small and larger virtual and live events as the HI allows. Mix in different members into each situation where possible to add fresh faces and a new dynamic. Be flexible and try something new.

### **Sudden Disruption**

It is very possible that your recruitment season will be cut short if there is an outbreak and the campus closes, or other changes are made even to how the HI conducts its Covid-19 practices. Fortunately you can continue the virtual events remotely (even if you have to take a pause) and continue to build friendships even as recruitment may be paused for some time.

Keep good records and notes on the events, attendees, status of potential new members, contacts made, etc. This will enable you to quickly pick up where you left off, whether campus life continues or has been paused. Be sure you understand your limitations with the HI, city/town and housing corp. before you begin in depth continuity efforts. If possible, consider issuing bids and taking them in as pledges (even if on a 'rolling' basis as you continue over time)

### **Closing**

Recruitment is always a challenge in regular times for many reasons for many chapters. However, by focusing in on the basics of recruitment (why we do it, how we do it and what we expect to gain) as well your strength in technology, socialization and social media, you can both survive and thrive. You must be willing to pay the price of performing a lot of preparation, without any short cuts you may have used in the past, and everyone must be on board with the plan. Furthermore, you must see this pandemic as an opportunity: Greeks have an opportunity to be leaders and ambassadors of doing the right thing and protecting their fellow students. And, you must be in alignment with your HI, city/town and chapter house policies regarding Covid-19.

**About the author:** *Ed Levesque is a Certified Industrial Hygienist by the American Board of Industrial Hygiene and a full Member of the Business Continuity Institute. He has practiced emergency response, recovery and business continuity for over 15 years with a global pharmaceutical company. He has led local, regional and global planning initiatives, and has conducted exercises on all scales, including pandemic preparation and response. Ed is a former long-time local and regional advisor and former international board member of Sigma Pi Fraternity. He has presented on and assisted with chapter recruitment at the local regional and international fraternal level for several years. The views expressed in this document are based on Ed's personal opinion, experience and research, and do not necessarily reflect those of his company or Sigma Pi Fraternity.*

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