HOW TO LAUNCH A SATELLITE

Want to make your club even more convenient, rewarding and attractive to both newcomers and current members? Then consider launching a satellite—or rather, a club satellite.

It’s hosted, sponsored and mentored by an existing Kiwanis club (host club) in the same or a nearby community, and serves members whose schedules or locations make traditional means of participation difficult.

The flexibility of club satellites strengthens Kiwanis by attracting new members who otherwise wouldn’t join. It also increases your club’s outreach, brings in fresh energy and ideas and introduces Kiwanis to new segments of your community. This toolkit explains how to start one and make it a rewarding experience.

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1. START THE COUNTDOWN

Club satellites are more likely to benefit their community and meet the club’s goals if the right foundation is laid. So, what does success look like?

How do satellites work? Though the structure can vary, many function as a committee of the host club. Some choose to have leadership positions (often members of a special committee created for the satellite), while others operate more informally. The host club maintains financial and administrative oversight. Satellites may forgo conventional meetings in favor of virtual gatherings via video link, meet less frequently (or on a different day and time) than the host club, or meet in a different location.

How many and how big? A club can create multiple satellites, with no minimum or maximum membership levels for any of them. However, a Kiwanis survey of 12 clubs with satellites suggested that at least five members are needed for the organization to function properly and effectively address the area it serves. If a satellite reaches 15 or more members, it can consider organizing as a separate chartered club. If the host club serves as its official sponsor, it will receive appropriate recognition from Kiwanis International.

Primed for success. The most productive satellites are given a specific purpose and clearly defined goals, such as attracting members from a particular employer or community, sponsoring a Service Leadership Program club or addressing a carefully focused need. Effective satellites enjoy committed support from the host club, which may set up a verbal or written agreement with the satellite regarding meetings, structure, dues and fees. Some clubs allow members to attend whichever meeting fits their schedule. The key is to maintain good communication between the two groups. To accomplish this, review the goals and achievements of the satellite regularly.

“My business takes me out of town,” explains satellite member and Iron Mountain Mayor Bruce Rosen, whose wife, Jackie, is also a satellite member. “I can’t make it to the regular lunch meetings.”

But once a month for pizza at 5:30 p.m.?

“That fits our schedules better,” says Rosen.
2. CHOOSE YOUR CREW

Before beginning the search for potential satellite members, your club should decide what sort of niche the satellite will serve. This helps to determine who to target and how to approach them.

Find candidates

Satellites create an opportunity for Kiwanis clubs to expand into locations that sometimes don’t support charter-strength clubs. For instance:

- Small neighborhoods or residence centers within a larger community.
- Employees from a specific business or group of businesses (for instance, in an office or industrial park).
- Community gathering places with prospective members, such as a church, community center, or school.
- People who are interested in Kiwanis but can’t attend the host club meetings.

Attract prospective members

**Get to know the candidates.** If they aren’t already members of the host club, consider inviting candidates referred to you by current members or community leaders. Work to understand their service interests and explain how Kiwanis can help serve those interests.

**Invite in teams.** Put together a small group to talk to potential members. Introduce yourself and your club and explain the purpose of the invitation. Keep impromptu sessions to between five and 10 minutes and scheduled sessions under 30 minutes.

** Invite candidates to a special guest day.** Ask potential members to an event that showcases the Kiwanis experience and the club’s community impact. Refer to the Achieving Club Excellence tool Hosting an open house for more specifics about how to organize an event.

**Survey your members.** Some of your current members may prefer to become part of the satellite. The Achieving Club Excellence tool Measuring membership satisfaction suggests several ways to learn their interests. Conducting a survey among existing members before you invite others can also ensure a good experience.

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**THE FORMULA FOR WELCOMING SATELLITE MEMBERS**

**Host club expectations**

The role of the host club is to help the satellite members reach and maintain a high level of commitment, activity and enthusiasm. Some ways to accomplish this include:

- Making sure satellite members receive new-member orientation, support and continuing education.
- Informing satellite members of all host club activities and encouraging participation.
- Developing a membership retention and strengthening plan for both groups.
- Supporting satellite activities.
- Processing all membership applications, reporting and financials for the satellite members.
- Fostering an environment of open communication and problem solving.

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Satellite perks and responsibilities

Satellites are informal extensions of the host club. Any members who join the satellite who were not previously part of the host club are added to the host club’s roster, pay applicable dues and fees and are inducted into the host club. They should be designated as satellite members by the club secretary in the KiwanisOne reporting dashboard.

Some of the clubs surveyed by Kiwanis reported that their satellite members were free to focus more energy on their service work rather than on administrative concerns.

Basic guidelines

• Club satellite members should receive the same new-member orientation and continuing education as host club members.

• The satellite and host club members will work together to develop a joint membership strengthening strategy.

• Any member is welcome at either the host club or club satellite’s meetings.

• The board of directors of the host club approves all bills, payments and deposits of the satellite and all service projects and fundraisers.

• Both groups will support each others’ projects and fundraisers.

• Satellite members are eligible to vote on club matters, hold club office and serve on the club board and will be expected to perform all of the regular functions of those positions, including attendance at relevant host club meetings.

“We started with socials and projects on weekends and weeknights to give people more opportunities to be involved,” —Chelsea Wells, Bellingham, Washington, Kiwanis Club satellite member.
3. DEFINE YOUR MISSION

It’s a good idea to outline key aspects of the host-satellite relationship. Your club may wish to put these in writing.

Host-satellite relationship discussion points

**Purpose.** Clearly define the reason or reasons for establishing the satellite.

**Membership.** Decide if the host club should establish a minimum number of members for the satellite and what should happen if its membership falls below that level.

**Meetings.** When and where will the satellite members meet? In person or virtually?

**Operations.** Designate someone as the satellite’s host club liaison. Determine if the satellite will exist as a committee of the host club and, if so, if there will be any subcommittees.

**Oversight.** Determine what level of oversight is comfortable for both groups.

Overseeing the satellite

**Finance.** The host club maintains all bank accounts and financial records jointly with the satellite. Determine how to account for monies raised and distributed by the satellite that are separate from those of the host club.

**Service and fundraising.** All Kiwanis club service projects and fundraisers must be approved by the host club board. Establish guidelines, procedures and timelines for bringing the satellite’s projects and fundraisers before the club board.

**Service Leadership Programs.** Decide if the satellite club will sponsor a Service Leadership Program club. The host club would be the official sponsor, but the satellite would provide direct support.

Launch!

A shiny new satellite makes a great vehicle for increasing a club’s membership and outreach. We’d love to hear how yours operates and profile its success in Kiwanis International communications. Tell us what works for you at loveit@kiwanis.org.

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Keep it positive

In a recent phone survey, the most positive satellite experiences were reported when:

- The host club had a target audience in mind when they started the satellite.
- The host club was accepting and supportive of the satellite.
- A formal communication process was established between the two groups.
- The satellite was used as a way to increase communication with Circle K and Key Club members to transition alumni into Kiwanis membership.