Preparing for new volunteers

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Why do we need new rebels?

For a movement that aims to mobilise 3.5% of the population, that seems like a daft question! However, it can be useful to think about why we need new people beyond just the obvious.

New rebels are the lifeblood of every team

We know we need numbers to win. We may think about it less, but we also need the energy, skills, ideas, community connections, diversity and fresh perspective new rebels bring us. Last but not least, we need our stretched coordinators to be able to occasionally take a break!

Sometimes it can seem like bringing new rebels into our groups just creates work. Maybe the team is very busy and has experienced inducting a rebel who quickly left again. At times like these, it is tempting to think "oh, we'll just do it all ourselves".

However, if we close ourselves in this way, it can easily lead to a downward spiral. Without a continual flow of new people, the team ends up consisting of experienced but very stretched people with no time to show others how to do things. Then, when one of those experienced people needs to step back, things can really go wrong. A healthy group has a mix of people of all levels of experience, with a steady flow of newbies learning, moving on to more complex work, showing others how to do things and relieving the more experienced coordinators of work.

Setting the tone

Before you even start recruiting or doing outreach, think about how you will look after the people when they arrive. New people will need extra care and attention at the start (typically for around a month). It is best that coordinating this work falls to someone who is not frazzled from doing a ton of other things and typically this will be the team's integrator.

This does *not* mean it is the integrator's job alone to make new people feel welcome! This is a job for *everyone* in the team.

Of course, no one can guarantee that your rebels will stick with you, but there are some things you can do to make it more likely. We had a People's Assembly and asked why people stayed. These answers came up the most:

- we felt **appreciated**
- we felt **part of a community**
- we thought XR was **effective**

And we really felt part of XR when:

- we **got to know people**

- we **worked together** on something
- we **got to know XR**
- we **gained a role** in our team

So, drawing from this, the kinds of things which encourage people to keep coming back include:

- A friendly, non-cliquey environment where group members avoid XR jargon, take the time to explain things, check understanding and listen to the views and experiences of the new person.
- A named 'buddy' who will look after the new person, answer questions and help them settle in.
- Asking if the new person has anything they need to take part or feel comfortable and trying to meet their needs wherever possible (see also Supporting your New Rebel and How do we genuinely welcome everyone?).
- A tangible project the whole group can work together on.
- A role, or maybe some simple task to start with, for the new person;
- connections to people, projects or training you know the new person will find interesting.
- Evidence of the impact of the things you are doing (e.g. getting your local council to declare a climate and ecological emergency, getting good press coverage, having a successful event where you bring in more people etc).

If you can provide these things, then you will have gone a long way to making a supportive and welcoming environment for the new rebels who arrive in your group.

To genuinely welcome everyone...

We must be inclusive

For guidance on Inclusivity in XR, start here.

More useful resources:

- Neurodiverse and disabled rebels inclusion pages of the toolkit.
- Inclusivity-disability Resources Pack

You can contact the Disabled Rebels Network via Facebook, their Mattermost Reception or you can email them at wellbeing+drn@exinctionrebellion.uk

Rare exceptions

There are a few rare cases where you might not be able to include someone, i.e. if their needs are beyond what you can reasonably meet, or if they risk causing harm to other people (see Supporting your new volunteers).

What does an Integrator / Recruiter do?

It can be slightly overwhelming joining XR - so much to learn, so many new faces, all that XR jargon and even a new structure to work around.

And this is on top of the anger, frustration or desperation we feel because we face the global catastrophe of climate change, a result of systemic injustice and racial inequality, the effects of which are already being felt all over the world. It can be a lot to process.

And sometimes we forget to welcome new volunteers into XR, simply because we are often so involved in a project which is taking all our time and attention.

For this reason, where possible we should have an Integrator in our groups - to welcome new volunteers and to make sure that existing Rebels are finding their way on their journey through XR.

Check out the Rebellion Academy Module: Working Group roles, for some videos about being an Integrator.

Standard Integrator / Recruiter mandate

View the template Integrator / Recruiter mandate on the Organism.

Purpose:
Team members are flourishing and productive in all roles, and the team has team members to fill its roles and support its workload.

Mandate:

- Inviting new members to join the team in alignment with this policy 'Criteria & Conditions for Membership of an XR UK Working Group' [scroll to the relevant policy]
- Onboarding, inducting and orienting new members into the team.
- Keeping a list of team members up to date, with the help of a Group Admin.
- Requesting a Group Admin to add new members to the Communications Hub, as required.
- Checking in with team members about their fit with roles, projects and the team generally, and offering feedback.
- Suggesting improvements to who fills roles, to improve the work of the team and its members, or when a role-holder has completed the length of their term (e.g, 6 months). (The suggested changes would still need to be consented to by the rest of the team. A full

election process should happen if requested by any team member.)
- If a transformative conflict process does not resolve an issue, asking someone to leave the team if in the team’s best interests.

In addition, if you have a group Volunteer Website and/or Reach Volunteering account, managing the group account on the websites, posting roles and dealing with role applications.

Different teams break this down differently (for example, you might have one person handling recruitment and a different one for onboarding) but someone will need to be responsible for each of the tasks listed above. Work out who will do what ahead of time so that everyone is clear what to expect.

Not got a team Integrator?

Then this is the first role to recruit for! You may think this person would need to know your team inside out in order to welcome others; but really the most important thing is for them to be friendly, empathetic and willing to learn as they go along. Sometimes, it even helps for the integrator to be relatively new so that they can use their own experience to help others. There are lots of resources on this toolkit to help them.

NB: If you haven't got an Integrator then it is the Internal Coordinator's job to do this work!

Cautionary note: if you are using the Volunteer website to recruit, it is important you get to know a new Integrator before giving them login details to your group account since this is a position of great trust and involves handling sensitive personal data.