

Fifty is Nifty!

Members are IMBA-SORBA's lifeblood, and we want to encourage mountain bikers to join. IMBA-SORBA kicked off a challenge to the chapters to either "get to 50 or add 50". If your chapter has fewer than 50 members, increase membership to 50 members! If you have more than 50 members, get 50 more!

IMBA-SORBA members make chapters strong. The more members you have, the stronger our organization is as a whole. Live the dream, and make mountain biking bigger in the Southeast!

Chapters will compare numbers at the November 2010 Board meeting, and those who meet the goal of 50 will be recognized.

You can do this! Set membership goals for each event that you hold, and work to reach that number.

The following outlines the ideas that presidents came up with help our chapters grow.

Vision

We want more!

- More people
- More voices
- More help
- More trails

We want trails in more areas. We want trails for all levels of users and a variety of riding styles. We want destination trails. We want gateway trails. We want neighborhood trails. We want pump tracks. We want long cross-country adventures. We want our sport to grow.

Ride Centers are part of this vision, as are existing trails. We want to build them, grow them, and sustain them. Imagine traveling throughout the Southeast, and having a trail to ride no matter where you are—that's the vision.

Elevator Speech

Develop a 30-second elevator speech, and practice using it, so that if someone asks you what IMBA-SORBA is all about, you can tell them, quickly and succinctly. Here are some talking points to ponder:

- Advocacy through organization
- Land managers like to speak to an organized group, not individuals
- Support the trails you ride
- Preserve the existence of a viable, long-term group.
- Members make us more efficient through the strength of combined efforts

Membership Drives

These are opportunities to add members, and they can be stand-alone events or incorporated into other events. Whatever the occasion, have membership apps on-hand, and ASK folks to join. If someone in your chapter has a wi-fi anywhere card, bring a laptop to the event, and sign members up online on the spot.

Time Trials

A Time Trial is a cross-country race, generally on a short course, that does not have a mass-start. Instead, participants start their runs at pre-determined intervals. Each rider's time is tracked, and those with the best times are the winners. Time Trials are usually held as a series, so that riders can come back and try to better their times.

You can have as many or as few categories of racers as you feel you can manage. Your categories can be as broad as Men, Women, Children, or more detailed to group racers by age or ability level.

Time Trial participation can be limited to IMBA-SORBA members, so holding a Time Trial is a fairly easy way to add members to your chapter. Work Parties (make it easy for folks to join at your work parties)

Chapters that currently hold Time Trials:

- Athens
- RAMBO
- Gainesville
- Paulding
- Northwest Georgia

Group Rides

Group rides are a great way for mountain bikers to socialize, improve their skills, or visit new trails. You can combine a mini-skills clinic with a group ride. You can hold group rides for one category of rider or for several categories. Be creative with the names, get people on bikes, and have fun!

Membership isn't usually required for group rides, but you can use a group ride as a membership-generating event, and make it for members only. Below are some ideas for types of group rides:

Bike Rodeo for Kids

Rodeos are held primarily for children. All activities are scaled for kids, generally up to the age of 15, but your chapter can customize the rodeo for any age range.

Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day is celebrated the first Saturday of October, and it's the primo day to focus on small fry. But, don't just hold rodeos on TAKMBD! Summers and school holidays are perfect, too!

Teens

Support organizations that promote cycling to teens, and hold rides just for their age group.

College Kids

Get college-aged kids involved in your chapter, and turn them into members. Many service organizations will help with work parties, and some of them just like to ride. Get them out to a ride, get their support and make them members.

History Rides

Create a guided group ride that visits historical locations. These rides are popular, informative, and a great way to recruit new members.

Poker Rides

Combine bikes, a scavenger hunt, and poker for a fun, competitive ride!

Festivals

Festivals can be open to the public or for members only. Offer fun activities, promote the event, and ask people to join. You could offer a discount on festival admission with membership, but you cannot offer discounts on the cost of membership.

Bike Shop Day (demos)

Bike shops are always hosting demo days. Join them out there, and get non-members to join!

Chapter Events

Use your routine chapter events to drum up members.

Chapter Meetings

Always invite visitors to join at meetings.

Work Parties

People who show up for work parties are interested in your cause. Turn non-members into members.

Clinics

Skills clinics are a great way to create new riders and attract members. Beginners, racers, kids, women, teens all appreciate the opportunity to improve their riding. Craft clinics to meet their needs, and ask them to become members, or make the clinics open to members only.

Weekend or Holiday Trailhead Drive

Set up your canopy at a popular trailhead on a nice, sunny day, and draw the members in. Offer a free water bottle or similar small gift to those who join that day. Sweeten the pot by also offering a raffle ticket for a more-substantial gift.

Merchandise Giveaways

People love free stuff. Just make sure that what you're giving away is of equal or LESS value to what you gain. For example, don't give away a tire set to someone who just signed up. The tires are generally more expensive than the membership. Use your swag judiciously when trying to gain members.

Bike Shop Promos

Cultivate your relationships with local bike shops, and keep them well-stocked with membership applications and brochures that promote events, programs, and membership.

Restaurant Promos

Cultivate relationships with nearby eateries, and ask them to display your promo materials. Create a special sign for restaurants that host meetings, so that all patrons know that SORBA meets here and when you meet.

Socials

Host informal get-togethers at local hot spots or trailheads. Emphasize membership, and ask non-members to join.

Bikini Bike Wash

Set up a bike wash at your trail, and ask for donations and recruit members.

Swap Meet

Recruit new members at a cycling garage sale. This can be a stand-alone event, or it can be combined with another event.

Cookouts

At your trail or traveling to visit another's, a cookout after a ride is a treat, and an opportunity to gain members.

Campouts

Many chapters host camping trips to destination trails. You can make them for members only, or encourage membership before and during the event.

Chambers of Commerce

Each chapter should belong to the local Chamber of Commerce. Use the services the Commerce offers to promote riding and membership.

Community Events

You don't always have to be the host of the event. Join in on health fairs, outdoor expos, beer tastings, charity events, and such.

Marketing

Get the word out about your work and your events!

- Create a cool sticker to promote your chapter.
- Get brochures and cards out where people can see them (bike shops, restaurants, trailheads, Chamber of Commerce, rest stops). Use existing ones, or create new ones.
- Create a trail map for your local trail system(s), and print an application on the back of the map.
- Use the Web and social media. Most SORBA chapters have their own Web sites, and some have facebook pages. Use them to promote membership! Keep your Web sites refreshed with current content to give visitors a reason to go there. Put the JOIN button in a prominent place on every page!

We're working on sorba.org to make it more exciting and informational for our members and future members.

Chapters with facebook pages:

- Paulding
- GATR
- Send out email reminders for renewals and to draw in new members.
- Place hangtags on bikes in local shops.
- Create a commercial for you community access or county government channel.
- Engage your land manager is promoting your chapter.
- Present to groups such as churches, home owner associations, and scouts.

How to Get Membership at Events

- Run a quality event. Simplicity can help your event run smoothly—fewer activities run well are preferable to an overload of activities. Start small and grow.

- Make the event for members only. If the event is run well, visitors will not mind joining so that they can participate. Strive to make your events popular, so that people want to be a part of them.
- Ask visitors to join. If the event is not exclusive for members, then ask for memberships. If you have a PA, use it to promote membership. If you don't have a PA, then put your booth in a high-traffic area, and have it manned with people who are not shy about asking for memberships.
- Place signs that promote membership in conspicuous places. Put some up on the trail (Like this trail? Join IMBA-SORBA today, and keep it open!), by the restrooms, at your tent, at the trailhead, by the donation box.
- Offer inexpensive swag, such as water bottles, as a gift for joining. A water bottle may not be the tipping point, making or breaking a membership, but it's a nice gesture. If you have more valuable gifts, offer them in a drawing for those who join during a specific time period (at the event, over a time trial series, etc.).
- Make joining easy. Have plenty of applications and pens on-hand. Take cash, checks or credit cards. If the event is for members only, make sure your promotional materials make that clear so that participants will be prepared to join when they arrive. If you have wifi access, set up a laptop so that people can join online at the event.

Renewals

Membership isn't about new members only. It's also about carefully tending to those who have already committed to your cause. Joining is just the beginning of what should be a long, mutually beneficial relationship.

Here are your ideas on how to get members to renew.

Contact

Keep in touch with your members during the lifetime of their membership. Stress benefits of membership, stress prompt renewals, ask why a member is or is not renewing.

Phone calls

Reach out and touch someone. This old advertising cliché rings true. Chapter leaders need to work to make sure that they know their members, that they are in touch with their members. Welcome new members, invite members to events, ask existing members to renew. Make calling trees a part of your chapter structure. Report on call progress at chapter meetings.

Email

Use email to follow-up on a phone call. Use it judiciously.

- Use the [Membership Management Service](#) to keep up with who your members are, and when their renewals are coming up.
- Improve response time to new members.
- Auto-respond to renewals.
- Overcome members' objections to renewing. Remind them of the benefits of keeping their membership current (elevator speech time!). If they complain of no time for participation, remind them that their membership still counts, as more members translates into clout. Have a response ready for the question, "What are you doing for me?" Be specific, and stress the projects your chapter has accomplished. Tell them where the money has gone.
- Host fun socials.
- Stress fitness and fun.
- Keep your kiosks up-to-date.

Bike Shop Memberships

Recruit the local bike shops in your area as members. IMBA-SORBA created the Retailer level of membership just for your LBS. Currently the annual Retailer fee is \$100, but shops are free to join with a higher donation.

Below are your ideas on how to recruit your LBS and foster a relationship with the staff.

- Visit the shop in person, application in hand, and ask them to join.
- Clearly explain the benefits of a shop membership. IMBA will help promote your store as a supporter of your local mountain biking community. Thousands of our members will know you help build, maintain and retain the trails they love. Remind them about the free *IMBA Supporter* window decal ... the retailer's badge of trail love!
- Hold your meetings at the shop.
- Host clinics at the shop.
- Ask the shop to be active in your chapter. Buying lunch for a work party is a good place to start.
- Ask the shop to sponsor group rides, and advertise their sponsorship.
- Direct traffic to the shop.
- Invite the shop to be a part of chapter meetings, no matter where they are held.
- Advertise the shop on your promotional materials.