



## How to be an Effective Contact Person

*When potential members call for information their first impression is often formed based on a conversation with the contact person. The contact person may also be involved in the provision of a hotline for members between meetings, or speaking with the media and community.*

*The group is often concerned with how to perform this role and how to ensure the contact person is not overwhelmed by the role. People seeking information (potential members) may keep the contact person on the phone for extended periods of time. A number of calls like this over many months can drain the contact person's energy*

*Some suggestions are*

- To limit the time and duration of phone calls, give brief information about the group and urge the person to attend the group to receive input from more than just the contact person.*
- Use an answering machine so the contact person can screen calls and return them when he/she is in the proper frame of mind.*
- Some groups have a policy of limiting phone calls to 5 minutes and making this clear to group members.*
- If calls become too frequent, some tasks can be divided. Members may call other group members dependant on the information required.*
- It may be helpful to have multiple contact persons who rotate being the first person listed on any publicity material for a predetermined length of time.*
- Note the best time of day to call the contact person/s.*

*The contact person plays an important role in educating potential members about what the group does and does not do for members. E.g. the contact may explain that the group offers emotional support, shares experiences and information, but cannot supply any quick or easy solutions to their problems.*

*Being a contact person can be a very rewarding experience. With the above suggestions in mind, common pitfalls may be avoided, thus increasing the longevity of group member participation.*

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