



HOW TO START A Y'S MEN'S CLUB

(Note concerning our name: We who are members of a Y's Men's Club know well that women can be full members of our movement and this is a very important selling point in many communities. Since 1995 local affiliated clubs who wish to emphasize this openness can opt to call themselves "Y's Men and Women's Clubs" or "Y Service Clubs". Members are known as Y's Men or Y's Women.)

You want to start a Y's Men's Club but you do not really know where to start. Well, here is a proposed "step by step" approach which you may want to use after adaptation as you see fit. Its basic philosophy is that the creation of a Y's Men's Club should be firmly based on the needs in the community and the YMCA (if any) it is to serve.

1. Identify needs in the YMCA and/or the community which so far are not met by any group in the community. To get the most comprehensive list, you could contact, over and above the YMCA (if any), the police authorities, city authorities, health authorities, university/school authorities, etc. You may be sure that there will be many needs identified. Select a few of them - and do not be afraid of selecting those with high visibility.
2. Identify a group of people within and outside the YMCA who might be interested in working on meeting the needs identified under 1. above. Meet with the YMCA Secretary/Director/Executive (if any) to develop a list of potential members and also meet with the parish authorities to develop a list from there. Also try and develop a list of potential members through other community involvements.
3. Call a meeting of the people identified under 2. above to discuss the needs and possible approaches for meeting them. In the course of such discussion it can be mentioned that there are several groups of people like the one meeting for this discussion. These groups have formed Clubs, which are called Y's Men's Clubs, because we were started as a "Club of men of and for the 'Y' (short for YMCA)".

This approach is what I would call a "soft sell" of the Y's Men idea in that the group is dealing *first* with the needs in their community and/or YMCA – which is something close to their hearts – and only *later* is the Y's Men idea introduced.

At the first meeting we have to be very careful not to overwhelm the audience by trying to tell all the good things about Y'sdom, such as international fellowship, unforgettable experiences through our Brotherhood Fund and YEEP programmes, etc. All this is true, and we should certainly use all of that as a "sales argument", but not during the first meeting. We should probably mention more about the possibility which membership in a Y's Men's Club gives for *personal development* - Y's Men offer "Service - Fellowship - Personal Development". A suitable pamphlet to hand out at this meeting is "This is YOUR Opportunity for Involvement and Growth".

No matter what is discussed during the first meeting, it is very important that it should end with decisions on when the group will next meet, who will be responsible for calling the meeting, etc.

For the first two steps mentioned above, the YMCA Secretary is a key person as he/she has knowledge of the needs and of potential members. It is, however, important to make it clear to him/her that the responsibility for forming and running the Y's Men's Club does *not* rest with him/her but with the volunteers.

It might be helpful to emphasise that Y's Men can be seen as a *complement* to existing YMCA programmes in that we can attract people of an age group which does not normally find appealing programmes within the YMCA. This is another "selling point" in contacts with a YMCA Secretary. You might want to give him/her a copy of our "Principles of Partnership" signed by the World Alliance of YMCAs and Y's Men International in 1981 and later by YMCAs and Y's Men at other levels.

It might also be helpful to point out that the main support given by a local Y's Men's Club is to its local community - either directly or via the local YMCA if one exists. On average, over 90% of what a local Y's Men's Club raises goes to projects and programmes in the local community and only 10% to international projects. This is a very important selling point, especially for a local YMCA Secretary, who normally struggles to keep his/her YMCA on a sound financial basis.

We have lots of printed material available here at IHQ, but you should first try your Region or Area as material produced there is better adapted to the conditions in your locality. Make sure you have available all the material you might need but, please, also remember not to "over sell" Y's Men with all our programmes and projects and abbreviations which can confuse even quite seasoned Y's Men.

Good luck in your work of starting a new Y's Men's Club! I look forward to receiving the "Charter Application" with necessary documents via your Regional Director.

Y'sly and cordially,



Rolando Dalmás



Help us grow!