

# MARKETING YOUR CHAPTER

HOW TO  
**REACH**  
POTENTIAL  
MEMBERS

# MARKETING IS BLACK AND WHITE

**Good Chapter Marketing can Make a Night and Day Difference in Your Chapter**

Students, parents, administrators and industry professionals all have choices regarding where to invest their time and resources. As a teacher and SkillsUSA advisor, you want to ensure that these key stakeholders consider SkillsUSA, as well as career and technical education as a place to invest their limited amount of time and resources. To that end, it's important to expose them to the program in a way that allows them to see just how impactful a CTE program can be.

**“How do I reach potential student members?”** is a question we get all too frequently. In order to reach potential new members we must first set some basic context around the marketing of a SkillsUSA Chapter:

**Reputation and marketing go hand-in-hand.** The stronger your program, the more marketing opportunities you will have. Building demand for your educational program will, in turn, build demand for your SkillsUSA chapter.

**SkillsUSA and technical programs are interchangeable.** Involvement in SkillsUSA is the leadership extension of the technical curriculum you're teaching in your classroom. Make it clear to students that SkillsUSA is an avenue that allows them to put their technical skills to work.

**Approach your program like a business.** Determine what makes it unique; put your students (your product) out in front; and whenever you have the chance to tell someone about your program, do it. Just as relationships make or break a business, they can make or break your SkillsUSA chapter's marketing efforts. Everyone likes being apart of something that makes them the focus, your students included.

**Marketing is an ongoing activity and there are always opportunities.** Even if your chapter is consistently the largest chapter in the state, there are still areas in which you can improve. Also, understand that marketing is a need, not a want. If you want your program to grow and your students to succeed, it's an absolute necessity.

## STEP 1: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

**Identify your target audience and foster relationships within that audience**

The first step in recruiting new members is to build a relationship with them. Take the opportunity to get to know your students and give them the chance to get to know you. Students are a lot more likely to want to join your chapter if they view it as a chance to interact with someone they already know. Some other ideas to build relationships within your chapter include:

- Participate in curriculum nights or similar events to showcase your program to incoming students
- Create a mentor program for existing students to support incoming students (*freshman, new students*)
- Host a breakfast or luncheon, with some of your students attending, for your school administrators and counselors at least twice a year (*The more you inform them, the sooner they will become allies*)
- Invite parents to various events and activities, and promote student accomplishments within your program to your students and their parents
- Invite guest speakers from the community on a regular basis (*Not only does this create a network for your students, but it also exposes the speaker to your program*)



# STEP 2: CREATE DEMAND

Supply and Demand is more than just something you learned about in economics class

Make your classroom the starting point for marketing your SkillsUSA chapter. Create demand for your class. Make it known from the beginning that your class is unique and exceptional. Not only will this benefit the class, but it will also present marketing opportunities. Some ideas:

- Create positive energy in your classroom by combining curriculum with life skills and leadership training, including study skills, interviewing techniques, writing thank-you notes, making proper introductions and creating an agenda. Build them up!
- Promote membership in SkillsUSA by offering extra credit or professional development points through participation in various activities
- Come up with unique classroom experiences based on your student's skills *(Using your students to produce a unique product for your school is a great way to build pride and community within your chapter and instructional program)*
- Provide opportunities for out of the classroom experiences. Promoting SkillsUSA conferences and competitions to students gives them the chance to experience hands on development in new and exciting environments.
- Give students a vision, and keep them focused on their career path. Use championships, community service and other opportunities as a way for them to build their résumés



# STEP 3: THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Staying creative and thinking outside the box can lead to successes

New and creative ideas can payoff. When marketing your chapter, always think about the items within SkillsUSA that students can most easily relate to. Relatable content and marketing creates a relationship, which in turn creates membership. Some outside the box ideas:

- When promoting the value of your class and SkillsUSA to students, find facts relevant to them (Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on the value of education, showing how much a high school diploma is worth vs. a GED vs. a college diploma. Show them skills needed for their career interests.)
- When talking to school officials, share the academic success and statistics of your students (I have students at Ivy League schools and military academies. Many are very successful legal and law enforcement professionals in the community. Nearly 100 percent have graduated and gone to college.)
- Promote the diversity of your program to audiences, not just related to careers, but also to the student population and anything else that sets your program apart
- Use language that everyone understands, and never assume anything — create messages for different audiences to reach them effectively
- Keep in touch with alumni by sending them updates via email; many will come back to help you

