Oh, baby! Don’t let a colleague walk away

Word-of-mouth is the strongest motivator for new members.

STLE’S HEADQUARTERS OFFICE IS LOCATED IN PARK RIDGE, ILL., a northwest suburb of Chicago near O’Hare International Airport. While this site provides many advantages, the potential for attracting walk-ins as new members is not one of them. We honestly don’t get a lot of lubricant and tribology folks strolling down Busse Highway.

But for every rule, there’s always an exception. Ours occurred this past summer, when a gentleman just happened to be walking past the office, saw our sign and stopped in to fill out the membership application and join. His reason for walking by was also a bit unusual—he was out taking his new baby boy for a walk in the stroller.

Recruiting members is not normally as easy as, well, taking candy from a baby. Which brings me to the point of this month’s column. If you are a current STLE member, you likely are surrounded by technical professionals who could benefit from our organization but who have not yet been invited to join. You can find them working alongside you in your own lab, at a customer location or when visiting with a supplier at a trade show booth or company facility around the globe.

There is no shortage of these prospects waiting for encouragement to take the next step and join STLE. In round numbers, STLE’s database includes nearly 10,000 people who have interacted with the organization in some way, such as visiting the STLE Website, but who are not members. We have 2,724 participants that have joined STLE’s LinkedIn group, and many of them are not members.

There is growing interest in STLE throughout the international tribology and lubricants community. Within the past six months, STLE has approved new local sections in Latin America and West Africa.

Market research conducted for STLE in 2009 confirmed just how important this sort of member outreach can be. The study concluded, “A large percentage of current members were introduced to STLE through a colleague, supervisor or mentor.”

I’m hoping that all this will encourage readers who value STLE involvement to seek out a colleague or colleagues who also could benefit from being a part of the organization. For the past six months, we have worked to incentivize this process by conducting our second annual Member Get A Member (MGAM) campaign. Sponsors and new members qualified for all sorts of prizes, including a Kindle Fire tablet computer. The campaign exceeded expectations by attracting more than 100 new members, thanks to the efforts of nearly as many member sponsors.

MGAM-III will return in 2013, but why wait to share the benefits of STLE? Winning a prize is an incentive, but there’s a bigger and more long-lasting reward. Your STLE membership is one building block in creating a community of those involved with tribology and lubrication engineering. If you recruit another member, that makes the community that much stronger, robust and diverse, creating an atmosphere of learning, cooperation and camaraderie.

Good for you. Good for them. Good for STLE the organization.

So while walk-in new members are always welcome, please consider carving out some time to share your membership story and encourage colleagues to become part of the STLE network.