



How Business Champions Can Recruit Other Business Champions

The most effective “ask” is always business-to-business. The best approach? Share your motivations, experience, and aspirations. Here are 10 things to keep in mind as you recruit other business champions to your Next Gen sector partnership:

1. **Make Personal Asks, Champion-to-Champion.** There is no substitute for a peer who can share their personal experience. Do not rely on surrogates—like chamber or association staff, conveners, or public partners.
2. **Target Civic Entrepreneurs, Starting with Your Friends.** Not everyone in business is a good fit for a Next Gen sector partnership. You know that there are people you trust to work with you to get something important done, either in business or for the community. Target these people: we call them “civic entrepreneurs” and they are not only decision-makers in their companies, but passionate about their industry and their community as well. Start with your friends—and enlist your friends to tap their networks.
3. **Think Dream Team.** If you really needed to get something done, you would build a team of people who are committed and follow-through. As you think about recruitment, this is your opportunity to build your “dream team.” Don’t settle for representatives or unknowns, press for the people you want—and let them know you are building a dream team to get serious work done on behalf of your industry and the community.
4. **Share Your Own Motivations and Thought Processes.** Don’t be shy to share why you think being an industry champion of a Next Gen sector partnership is important. Think about it: if you were being approached, a critical consideration would be how committed and inspired is the person asking you to join the team. As important as sharing your motivations is walking through your thought processes—including how you worked through issues and questions you had about Next Gen.
5. **Focus on Practical Benefits.** Next Gen is not an academic exercise—it is about getting real results for your industry and the community. There are benefits that can accrue because of collaboration that is not possible any other way. If the industry can identify its collective priorities and exercise its collective influence, it can produce benefits for individual businesses, the entire industry, and the broader community at the same time.



6. **Explain How This is Different.** The reality is that many business leaders have had one or more experiences working with the community—and for too many this experience has been less than positive. Recognize that they will need to hear specifically how Next Gen is different—and how you determined it was not like other efforts in which you have participated.
7. **Answer the “How Much Time Will This Take” Question.** Let’s be honest—this question went through your mind too! Best to nail this one head-on. The answer of course is: the amount of time is what you choose it to be as a business champion. First, you get to choose priorities, then decide if you want to commit as a champion to work on those priorities. Every step along the way, you and your fellow business champions decide what to do next. The initial commitment is two hours for the launch meeting, an hour for a follow-up conference call, then a couple of hours for a follow-up meeting. At that point, you get to decide again if and how you want to continue as a business champion.
8. **Cite Examples, Emphasize That Other Regions Are Doing This Across the Country.** The Next Gen national community of practice can help in your recruitment efforts. There are examples you can cite, people you can describe, and results you can recount. People can check out the Next Gen website for themselves to see that this is a practical approach that is being implemented in regions across the country. And, get to know Next Gen business champions from other communities, who have been known to jump on a call to help share their Next Gen experience with other business leaders.
9. **Leverage Both Yes and No Answers.** If you get a “yes” answer, ask him or her to identify others who might also be civic entrepreneurs and be willing to join the team—including subordinates at their company. If you get a “no” answer, ask them if they can help with other civic entrepreneurs inside or outside their company. And, tell them you will keep them updated, because as your Next Gen sector partnership develops there may be future opportunities to get involved.
10. **Recruit with the Long-Term in Mind.** As you build out your team, remember to keep in mind the need to give emerging leaders a chance, to diversify leadership so that a wide range of companies and people have an ownership stake in the sector partnership.



Exercise: Develop Your Pitch Paragraph

Write a pitch paragraph explaining why another business leader should join your Next Gen team. Be sure to share why you got involved, what are the likely benefits of participation, and how Next Gen is different than current or past efforts in your region.



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