

Successful Planning for Recruitment and Retention

Getting New Recruits Through the (Virtual) Door



In previous articles, we made suggestions, with reference to possibilities created by the recent hiatus in ringing, for planning and initiating a successful recruitment drive. The next step is to consider activities or events that will entice potential recruits through the tower door itself. Many ringers are eager to return to their tower as soon as possible. However, a significant number may not, so it is more important than ever to recruit, and retain, new ringers. It may still be some time before most towers can hold open days or re-start

teaching bell handling. This article outlines possible *virtual* events and activities that could be used to successfully hook new recruits and deliver initial training.

By this stage in a recruitment drive you will be actively raising awareness of ringing within the wider community, have considered how many new recruits you're hoping for, and who you'd like to target. So, thinking about your target audience, what activities could you organise to convince these people to learn to ring?

Why not try organising a recruitment event using a web conferencing platform such as Zoom? Virtual events have the advantage of being able to reach a greater number – and a greater diversity – of people. How about training new recruits using *Ringin' Room* and other ringing software or apps? These can be used to develop listening and rhythm skills, and ringing theory ahead of learning how to handle a bell itself.

Consider issuing vouchers for virtual bell ringing 'Taster Sessions' to encourage enquiries. You could offer these as prizes in local fundraising events, or as gifts for special occasions. How about co-ordinating with events at your church as lockdown is eased?

A little creativity will encourage a steady flow of new recruits through the virtual tower door. Many people have time to try something new at present and like the idea of a 'different' activity. You could:

- Ask members of your band to introduce friends
- Arrange a taster session for members of other virtual interest groups
- Provide a virtual service ring - ask the minister to pop-in, and to advertise the event
- Target families with youngsters who are missing their school or college recreational activities
- Place articles in local magazines, newspapers and on-line newsletters
- Use social media

Use as many different channels as you are able, to draw attention to your message. Exposure to repeated communication will reinforce your invitation.

To encourage an injection of new recruits, or to build a band from scratch, try:

- Holding a virtual tower tour and *Ringin' Room* session
- Running a physically distanced hand bell workshop

Publicity

Many of the ideas for useful publicity when raising awareness of ringing, as discussed in Article 2, are equally valuable as publicity for recruitment. Some details and useful 'how to' guides can be found on the ART website. You may need to adapt these to use in a virtual format!

<http://ringingteachers.org/resources/recruitment-and-retention>

There are also useful publicity resources on the Central Council website:

<https://cccb.org.uk/resources/publicity-material/>



Virtual service ringing for the White Horse Team Ministry, Westbury – with a visit from the Rector and her daughter!

Some general pointers:

- Use positive language. Stress all the benefits of ringing, and the social side...which has been amazing during lockdown!
- Be specific in your message. You may hold a taster session to strengthen public interest, but if you also wish to recruit new ringers make sure you make this known.
- If you're targeting under-18s, remember to talk to their parents. Youngsters are often keen to try anything on offer, but parents/guardians may have further questions regarding religion, expense, future time commitments...
- Embrace new technology (there's a stack of it out there to choose from!)

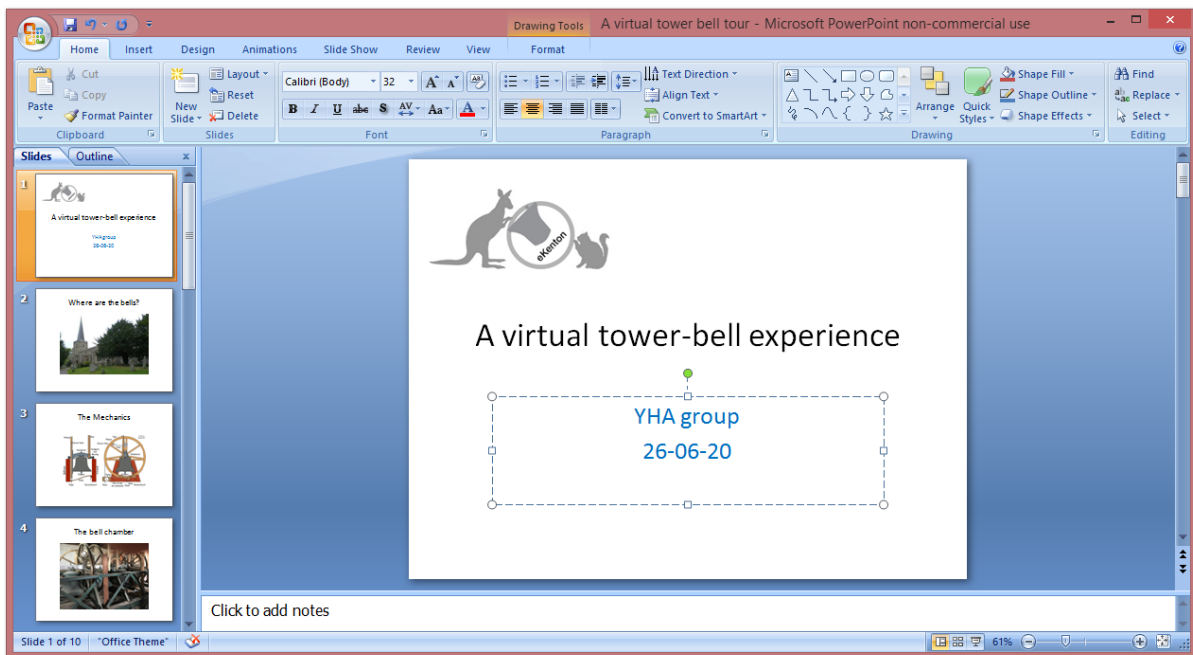
Whatever you do, make sure you provide a link to further information (e.g. your tower's webpage, a 'learn to ring' page on your territorial association's website, or an ART promotional video such as <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ely5Upy9NyQ>). Contact details (e.g. tower captain's phone number and email address) are essential to enable registering interest for further involvement.

Holding a successful event

It's all about PLANNING. And a virtual event requires a little imagination! If you want to run a virtual 'tower tour' then a PowerPoint presentation via Zoom works well. Assuming zero prior knowledge, and in order to facilitate a discussion, you may wish to include slides of:

- Your local church – where are the bells and what is their purpose?
- Bell mechanics – name and explain the parts
- The bell chamber and the ringing chamber; use video clips to demonstrate what happens

- Photos to highlight the fantastic social side and the privileges available to ringers



Preparing a virtual tower tour and *Ringin' Room* taster session...

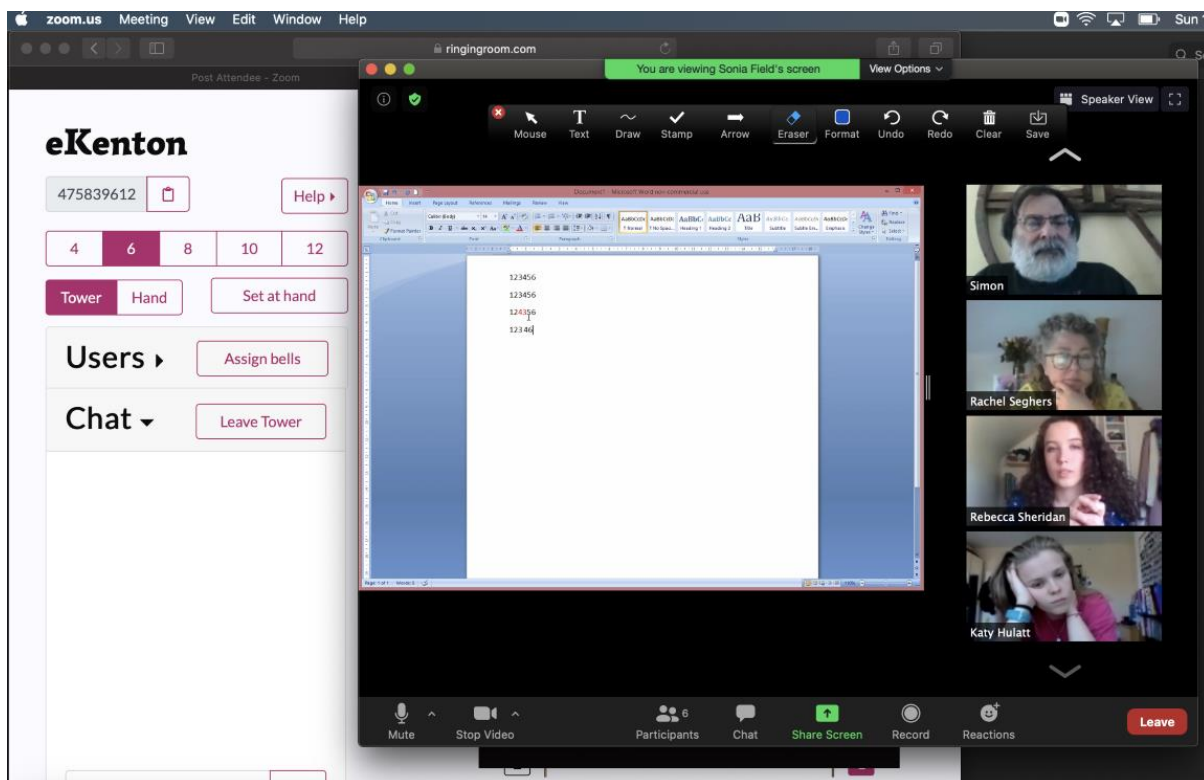
Then hop across to *Ringin' Room* and let everyone have a go! Make sure you have a helper or two and use their skills well. Take a screen shot (ask permission) for post-event publicity and send this to your guests as a follow up, together with the presentation that you used. Ensure you have recorded relevant details (name, email address, phone number) to facilitate this.

An advantage of online events is that it's relatively easy to obtain help – volunteers can join from anywhere in the world (time zones permitting)! Ringers from other local towers, your association, or from further afield may be prepared to assist. Those who have already held successful online activities may be willing to help you organise and run yours.

The follow-up

It is extremely important to keep the momentum going. Contact anyone who has expressed an interest in learning to ring as soon as you can and keep them informed about when this will happen. Be quick! People will have lost interest if you contact them weeks later, or they will think that you're not really interested in them. Be personal. Speak to people over the phone or even meet face to face if appropriate, rather than just relying on an email. Keep communication going.

If you have garnered interest through an online event, you could consider running initial lessons using a virtual platform. Some people have started training brand-new recruits using *Ringin' Room* to introduce initial theory alongside practical elements. Why not dust off the tower hand bells or purchase a set of boomwhackers (www.boomwhackers.com) to start training your new recruits?



Online training for new recruits using Zoom and Ringing Room to introduce initial theory

Just because it may not currently be possible to run a large-scale recruitment event, this is not an excuse to spend the foreseeable future gardening! Don't underestimate the time it takes to plan a recruitment campaign and organise physical events. Starting now means you'll be well prepared and ready to take advantage of any local opportunities as they become available. Does your church, town or association have a significant anniversary, or other high-profile event, in the next few years? You could begin to plan and build a recruitment campaign around this.

So, there are many things to think about and work on. To help with this use sections 4-7 of ART's *Recruitment Toolbox*, which can be downloaded from: <http://ringingteachers.org/resources/recruitment-and-retention>.

Finally, for now ... a forum for seeking help, advice or just chewing difficulties over with another person is often invaluable ... so, welcome to a new Facebook group set up to encourage recruitment and retention! Here folks can share ideas, difficulties, successes, answer questions and offer support: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BellringingRecruitmentandRetention/> Take a look and sign up.

In the next article, we'll be looking at *retention* – how to maintain enthusiasm and establish commitment in your new recruits; and how to sustain these qualities within your existing band.

This R&R workshop, with resources and supporting articles, has been produced by: Sonia Field, Matt Lawrence, Steph Pendlebury, Deb M-B, Lesley Belcher, Paul Lewis, Tim Hine; V&L and ART working in partnership.



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