

How to Start and Sustain a Women's Bike Club



**Women Bike Webinar
Tip Sheet**

Women Bike



Women Bike will empower more women to bicycle and become engaged in the diverse leadership opportunities of the bicycle movement through networking, knowledge sharing, resources and inspiration.

Events | Resources | Webinars | Community | Leadership development

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36%

of female bicycle owners said that “someone to ride with” would spur higher bicycle participation

American Bicyclist Study, 2012

42%

of American women said “people to ride with” would encourage them to ride — or ride more

Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2012

62%

of women bicyclists said “the social aspect” was among their top motivations to ride

Bikes Belong, 2010



The Power of Personal Connection

Photo Credit: Alliance for Biking & Walking photo library



How to **START** a Women's Bike Club

Liz Jose, founder, WE Bike NYC

Start #1: It's OK to start with low-hanging fruit



You don't have to start by trying to engage the most difficult population or the biggest group. Start with your friends, and friends of friends, and blossom from there. It's OK to start with people who ride bikes; you don't have to target those who are most difficult to reach at the beginning. This is not to say that working with the easiest populations is the best and only way to go, but when you're first getting started, give yourself a break. You're still meeting a need, even if you aren't able to give everyone a bike, or assist the most underserved people. The more of a base you have from the start, the more you'll be able to engage these populations in a meaningful and sustainable way in the future.

Start #2: Keep track of EVERYTHING!



Where did you publicize? Who showed up? Who gave you money? What bike shops have you visited? It doesn't matter if it looks pretty, just make sure you're able to go back and look things up. Knowing who signed up at different events will give you an idea of how useful that event is. For example, we signed up 200 people at the New Amsterdam Bicycle Show our first year, and six at the Bicycle Film Festival. Why did this happen? How can we adjust our approach to engage more people?

Start #3:

Don't go it alone. Ask for help!

Being able to relinquish some control over your new organization may allow it to go in directions you didn't expect. You don't have to give up your vision, just invite people into it, and respect their visions as well. WE Bike was originally going to be a youth program, but after talking to a lot of women, we collectively realized that it was important to start with adults! While I'm good at some things, like making spreadsheets and meeting deadlines, I am less adept at tweeting or making web pages. Lucky for me, there are other people in NYC willing to help out and they are so much better at it than I would be! Because of them, WE Bike is better and stronger! Additionally, most bike events want more women to attend their events. Ask for a free table at Bike Month events. Ask for help printing your t-shirts. Ask for help making a website. Do what you can to promote shops and people who help you out.



Start #4:

**Do what you can and
it will be enough.**

**Remember:
YOUR IDEA IS AWESOME!**

For me there was a thought that if I couldn't do it perfectly, then I shouldn't do it at all. What if no one shows up? What if no one likes the stickers? What if I don't have enough Clif Bars? Is this even a good idea? Do your best to be prepared, but at the end of the day, remember, if you weren't doing this, it wouldn't be happening — so what you are doing is enough! There's always room for improvement, but doing something and making mistakes is better than not doing anything. (And no matter what, you will make mistakes!) Someone made this picture for WE Bike and I look at it at least three times a day to remind myself- this is a good idea! And it's working!



This is one step of self-care that I strongly recommend. League membership is free your first year and gives you access to free webinars and also relatively inexpensive insurance that protects your ride leaders from legal action as well as provides supplementary health insurance to your riders. It's a win-win. WE Bike's first year we spent \$90 on insurance. It was well worth it.

Start #5: **Join the League and take advantage of club insurance**



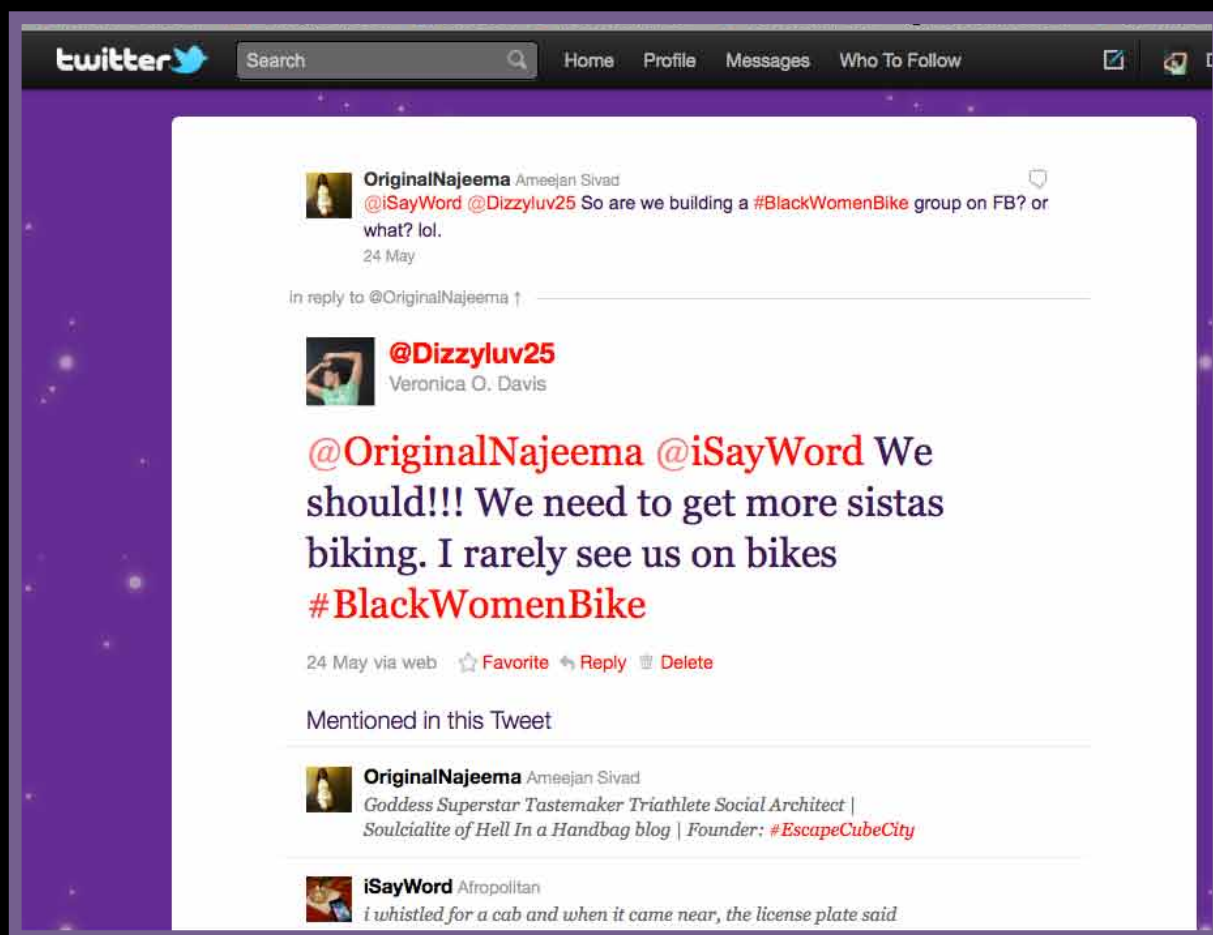
How to **GROW** a Women's Bike Club



Veronica Davis, co-founder, Black Women Bike DC

Grow #1: Create an online community through social media

Once you have a base, take your mission online through social media. Black Women Bike DC went almost two years without a website -- it survived and thrived with only Facebook and Twitter. In fact, the entire group evolved from a single hashtag. Use hashtag that grabs peoples attention. Black women bike was in your face and very defined in our target audience.



Grow #2: Craft a story and pitch it to the media.



(Astrid Riecken / FOR THE WASHINGTON POST) - Anica Allen, right, and Arnetta Davis study a trail map before a ride with fellow members of Black Women Bike DC, a newly formed group that now has 60 members. The women met in Northeast D.C. recently for a Saturday morning ride; the nearby Metropolitan Branch Trail is a popular route.

Once you're online, take your story to the media. The creation of Black Women Bike was picked up by the Washington Post, and from there the message spread, not just throughout the metro region, but across the country, too. Membership grew by 300 people online virtually overnight and soon, we were on radio shows and in other publications, as well. Each time a story ran, we saw a significant bump in women joining us on Facebook and Twitter, or showing up on our rides.

Grow #3: Define your target member and market accordingly

A large group of cyclists is riding on a paved path in a park-like setting. The cyclists are wearing various colored clothing, including pink, blue, yellow, and black. The path is lined with green trees and bushes. In the background, there are streetlights and a tall antenna tower. The sky is clear and blue.

Our message in the media and on the streets was effective because we defined our target audience and marketed it accordingly. From the beginning, Black Women Bike was very clear in what we were doing. We aren't just a touring club. We create an atmosphere that is welcoming of all desires, whether women want to ride one block or 100 miles. We created an environment for people to connect to, regardless of age, fitness level or riding style.

Grow #4:

Help people overcome barriers to biking



Ladies, I biked to work for the first time today! So excited! So liberating! I took advantage of the gorgeous, mild weather and gave it a try. I shaved 20–25 mins off my usual Metro bus commute. Am definitely going to do this more often. Thanks, BWBDC, for helping me see how safe and possible it is to do.

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Make sure your members feel supported and empowered to overcome barriers to biking . One way we've done that is holding classes and clinics. Black Women Bike has hosted workshops on things as simple as how to buy a bike. In so doing, we're able to empower beginners. It only takes one bad experience in a bike shop to turn people off from biking for good. These workshops -- on things like how to lock a bike or place it on a bus -- give women the opportunities to ask questions and gain the knowledge and tools to ride with confidence.

Grow #5: Find partners and develop mutually beneficial relationships



Stay focused on your mission and goals. We considered incorporating as a non-profit, but determined that our energy was best spend on our programming and instead sought fiscal sponsorship from another 501(c)3 organization. Finding partners not only helps build your club; it also gets other folks in the community talking about your efforts.



How to **SUSTAIN** a Women's Bike Club

**Sarai Snyder, founder
Cyclofemme | Girl Bike Love**

Sustain #1: Create a mission and vision



To sustain your women's bike club, you must create a mission and vision to see it through. This helps your club stand apart from other and sets the standards for your goals as an organization. It also provides a basic roadmap for your efforts and helps in planning events. While drafting your mission and vision is also a good time to think about talking points: Make sure everyone involved knows how to describe the group and encourage others to come along.

Sustain #2: Plan for succession



In looking to sustain your group, you must plan for succession. Women are busy and have a lot of responsibilities. To ensure the future of the club, you have to make sure others are on tap to take responsibility down the line. Share the responsibilities of the organization to lighten the load and train replacements for lead roles. Don't try to control everything; empower others to take personal ownership, too!

Sustain #3: **Think big, start small**

in moving forward with your club, think big but don't be afraid to start small. Being overly ambitious can cause burn-out. Successful small events are a springboard for bigger events down the line. Your club will develop more organically if you don't try to accomplish too much too quickly. Your base will develop a greater sense of purpose if you take small strides —and achieve goals early on.



A person is riding a bicycle on a paved surface. The bicycle is heavily decorated with pink streamers that have white floral patterns and the words "Dirt + Bikes" written on them. A yellow water bottle is attached to the frame. The rider is wearing a black top, a pink skirt, and black shoes with pink socks. The background shows a paved area and some greenery.

Sustain #4: **Be innovative**

As you grow, be innovative. Change up your routes and challenge the group with new goals. Host a variety of events; If you usually ride road, try a cruiser tour or mountain bike excursion. Create events that appeal to different communities and engage in non-cycling events together.

Sustain #5: **Support one another and get involved**



in your events and programs, support one another. Building camaraderie and support systems within the club is key to making it stronger and long-lasting. One example is offering a shared babysitting service for rides and events. Beyond your immediate membership, building partnerships with local bike shops and businesses is key to promoting your club. Working with bike shops, for instance, gives you the ability to use the space to host clinics and workshops.

Find out more...

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Women Bike

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