WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL VOLUNTEER MAPLE ASSOCIATION?

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Four Key Areas of Importance to any State or Provincial Maple Organization

• Strong Leadership
• Active Membership
• Quality Meetings
• Member Benefits
What is an Effective Leadership Team?

• Basically, a team is any group of people organized to work together interdependently and cooperatively to accomplish a purpose or a goal.
  • i.e. they have a SHARED VISION

• If a leader is driven by self interest or self gain and not group interest and group gain they are not helping the team
  • Stephen Covey has become very wealthy writing books on habits of an effective team, organization, person, parent, kid, teacher, etc.

• Having an Executive Director is important
  • Issues with competing ideas and power struggles
  • Helps keeps progress moving forward
    • Does NOT mean they do all the work

  “Effort and courage are not enough without purpose and direction”  John F. Kennedy
1-Strong Leadership – Officers, Board Members, Committee Chairs

- Board of Directors
  - *maintain a variety of age, experience, expertise, and regional knowledge*
- Establish & maintain job descriptions
  - *what is expected from your volunteer leaders*
- Provide orientation training
  - *for new board members and committee chairs*
- Identify and invite Champions to head committees
  - Take advantage of membership skills
- Plan association growth
  - Develop income sources to fund expansion
- Participate in maple at all levels
  - Local/State/Province – Fairs, Ag events, schools, etc.
  - International level - Provide delegate representation to NAMSC & IMSI
A Strong Leadership Team is the Whole Board of Directors Not Just the Officers

• Share leadership
  • The President is to keep the group moving, not to make all the decisions and do all the work for the group

• Clarity and purpose (Shared Vision)
  • If everyone is going in different directions you will get nowhere

• Open and honest conservations
  • Be Heard not just Herded
  • Openly express opinion without judgment
  • The worst case is a team member that does not speak nor participate

• Strengths and Values
  • Teams work best when everyone works to their strengths in the team flow

• Trustworthiness and Transparency
  • NO group ever becomes a team without holding itself accountable
Using a School Bus Analogy for the Leadership Team and the Organization/Association
Are you COOL Bus people want to get on
COOL Bus or STOOL Bus
No one wants to get on
What kind of Bus is your Leadership TEAM?

• Find your VISION (where do you want to go)
  • Go after that Vision
  • If you don’t have a vision you are destined to circle the parking lot never finding the road ahead

• Get the right people on the Leadership Team bus (those with VISION)
  • Don’t just fill seats because they are empty
  • Team needs to put personal gains aside and work for the betterment of all Members

• Never Think Small
  • But think realistically, what can be done with time, money, skills, etc.
What kind of Bus is your Leadership TEAM?

• Ignore the Naysayers
  • If not part of the solution then they are part of the problem

• Work very hard at it – effort with purpose can accomplish a lot
  • “Should have, Could have, and Would have never accomplished a thing” Paul Graham

• Take turns driving the bus
  • Term limits are a good thing
  • Keeping the same officers driving the bus because Board Members don’t want to do the work of an officer means they probably lack VISION or skills
    • make room for others with vision & skills
2-Active Membership - Recruiting & Retaining Members

• Attracting new and retaining old members
• Providing benefits for all members
• Reasonable dues structure that supports growth
• New member orientation welcoming new members
• Support hobbyist to commercial maple producers
• Recognizing accomplishments of individuals
• Celebrating accomplishments of the Association
• Get involved with or connected to the larger agricultural community advocating for policy that helps farmers, supports farm to consumer sales, etc.
“Think of the membership like a sugarbush”

An uneven-aged Sugarbush (membership)

- Mix of old and new members
- = growth, new ideas, new skill sets, new energy level, new outreach avenues

An even-aged Sugarbush (membership)

- Same old members with few new ones
- = NO NEW: growth, ideas, skills, energy

Unable to sustain over time
Give Back - What are Members Getting from their Dues?

Good Stuff

Or This Stuff

got maple syrup?
3-Quality Meetings & Events - Host & Enjoy Informative Meetings

- Provide members reasons to attend maple events
- Offer a variety of speakers and/or maple guests on all aspects of sugaring
- Encourage displays and maple equipment vendors
- Provide food & drink for breaks or meals.
- Provide discussions for large and small producers
- Encourage member and association participation in Ag Day at the Capitol, state and county Ag fairs, schools, farmers markets, legislation actions, etc.
- Encourage raffles, door prizes, syrup and confection contests at meetings and events
- Invite the general public to certain maple events
Competition for People’s Time

From a 2011 Pew Research Center report

• 75% of Americans are active in at least one group
  • Average American adult is involved in 4 groups
  • Spend 6.54 hours per week on or in groups activities

• 14% of adults belong to 8 types of groups

Top 6 Types of groups active in

40% church groups or other religious or spiritual organizations
24% sports or recreation leagues for themselves or for their children
24% consumer groups such as AAA or coupon-sharing groups
22% charitable or volunteer organizations such as Habitat for Humanity
20% professional or trade associations for their occupations
17% hobby groups or clubs

4% farm organizations
Survey the Membership – Needs Assessment

- Ask the membership what is on their mind
  - To find needs, wants, likes, dislikes
  - Types of materials to help them
  - What works and what does not
  - Also survey nonmembers to find out why not members and their needs

- If you ask for input, be prepared to accept it and act on it
  - Example: Ohio Maple Days Workshop surveys
  - People write some: funny, odd, mean and great things
    - Learn from it and move forward

If never asking for membership input how will you know if you are meeting their needs or not?
What kind of membership events do you hold?

Same old-same old or trying new things

“it’s always done this way” does not make it the only way

Mix it up try new things,
You can have fun without alcohol
4-Member Benefits, - Communication & Education

• NAMSC Delegates & Alt. Delegates represent member associations at the international level and report industry news to their local associations

• Publish a newsletter regularly, encourage members to contribute articles & photos to your newsletter, include meeting notices, articles, reports, for sale/wanted column, NAMSC & IMSI reports, etc.

• Maintain association website, use social media to promote membership & maple in general

• Publish “Sugarhouses open to the Public” brochure

• Participate in on-line “March is Maple Month”

• Offer a variety of “Good” speakers on all aspects of sugaring
  • Extension and University personnel are fewer and fewer
  • Don’t make them a one-sided industry sales promotion
Summary

Be a COOL Bus, Right Drivers with Vision – Not a STOOL Bus

• Must have a Shared Vision of where going or will go nowhere
  • Have to work hard and work together to get there
• Be a team or association people would want to be a part of
  • people of all backgrounds - skills - energy
• Be an Uneven Aged
  • Team – Association - Membership
• Develop funding to make the vision happen
• Survey/Needs Assessment
  • Ask your members what they need/want
  • Try new things
  • Have fun
Thank You

Questions?

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