



# 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 conversations**

- 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

**Ability to sustain over time**



An even-aged sugarbush  
(membership)

same old members with few new ones

- = NO NEW: growth, ideas, skills, energy

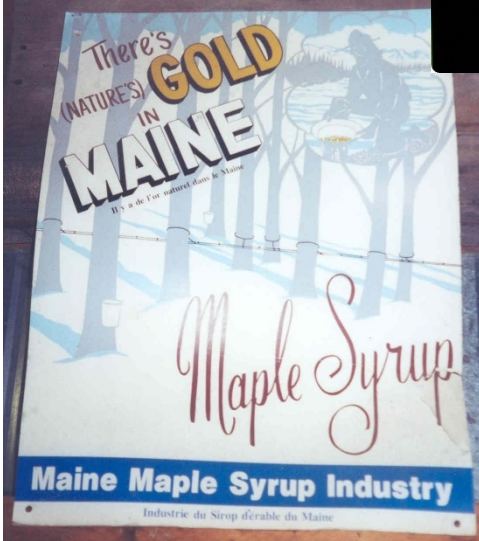
**Unable to sustain over time**



# Give Back- What are Members Getting from their Dues?



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*



Facebook is  
NOT  
a real Group

- **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



I am Bored

**“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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