

Appendix YARA Handbook

Last update: Feb 5, 2010

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Membership Development Guidelines

Introduction:

From time to time, most non-profit organizations are faced with the issues of declining membership and burned-out of executive members.

Periodically they will embark on a “membership drive” in an attempt to quickly bring new members into their organization. These membership drives are a lot like going on a crash diet to lose weight quickly. They may work in the short run, but they seldom have a lasting benefit.

Organizations that have a strategy to continuously bring new members into their organization are usually successful over the long term.

Successful Membership Strategies:

First, there is a common understanding about the value of bringing new members into the organization:

The responsibility for inviting new members does not rest with only one member of the executive – everyone is involved.

Members recognize that the organization grows, not by groups of 5 and 10 people, but rather, by individuals “discovering” the organization and finding that it has something they are interested in and want to participate in.

Although people sometimes join an organization for its larger appeal such as public service, or social benefit to the community, or alternatively for some immediate personal gain, they stay involved because the organization provides opportunities to meet personal needs such as developing friendships, learning skills, and sharing their knowledge and experience.

Second, healthy organizations do things that keep their members happy:

Membership growth happens almost automatically when members are enthused about being members in their organization and when they share their enthusiasm with other people who are not members.

The Executive “manages” the affairs of the organization so that there are variety of activities. There is something of interest for most of the members throughout the year, keeping in mind that not everyone wants to be involved in everything all the time. This helps keep members enthused about their organization.

The Executive “manages” the affairs of the organization so that there are opportunities for new members as well as friends of existing members and guests to be involved in activities.

The Executive shares responsibilities of running the organization with its members and includes

them in decisions affecting the organization and in developing new projects.

The Executive ensures that there are good communications amongst its members

A strategy for YARA (for all members, not just the Executive):

YARA can and already undertakes a number of initiatives and activities that promote a healthy organization and steady growth in membership. The Executive can be proud of this and should continue, and perhaps “fine-tune” some of the things the organization has been doing:

Initiate and provide a variety of activities that members can be involved in and where they will have some “fun” and meet needs that members are looking for – social, self-development, sharing information, “Elmering”, etc. YARA already does a lot of this – road relays, small projects, courses and workshops.

Look for activities where new people can be invited to participate to learn about YARA and its members. YARA does this as well.

Offer to be an “Elmer” to newer members.

Encourage newer members to get involved in projects and activities E.g. Field day, road races, Saturday breakfast, monthly meetings, tower-raising, clean-up, Salvation Army support, Canada Day, contests, etc. YARA does this too.

Encourage members to become involved in events that raise the profile of YARA. E.g. trade show, road races, public presentations, workshops, EMO activities, Salvation Army support, Canada Day, YARA brochure, news articles, etc.

Encourage members to take the lead or share the lead on projects they are interested in and encourage members to get involved on the Executive – this helps people develop new skills and take on new challenges.

Keep meetings useful and meaningful. YARA seems to do a pretty good job of this.

Share workload and responsibilities amongst Executive and project leaders so that it doesn't become a burden.

Keep communications open for all members: reports at regular meetings, use of the “reflector”, use of radio network, Saturday breakfast, public notices, etc.

Reach out to former members to let them know about things that YARA is doing and see if they would like to be involved in some of these activities.

Make a special effort to make contacts with people outside of Whitehorse and let them know about YARA.

Share information about the benefits of being involved in YARA with other organizations : E.g. YPSS, dog mushers, EMO, Yukon Rangers, CASARA, etc.