

October 2011

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"It's a job that's never started that takes the longest to finish."

-- J.R.R. Tolkien

Post Cards to Grammy – Scott Hall at Pleasant Hill Camp (OH) ran a genius ad in the only newspapers worth paying to be in: weeklies in the towns where you already get campers. (Moms read these; they are the right demographic for your camp; and they're much more likely to have already heard of you). The ads were the shape of a postcard, and in camper handwriting said, "Thanks Grandma! I had an AMAZING time at camp this summer! It was the best present ever!!!" Text at the bottom explains, "Help send your grandchild to camp next summer for 'an experience that lasts a lifetime.' Call 216-555-2267 or visit our website." –contact Scott at director@phoc.org

Customer Torture – When camp directors get together somebody asks, "Do you have online registration?" and a whole section of the group bend over in pain, shake their heads and say, "Our organization makes us use the same system as their other programs, and OMG is it horrible for parents to figure out." Here's a group of folks I give a TON of credit for creating a *10-page PDF manual for parents* on how to fill out their online camp registration. Rather than simply complaining, they did something about it. http://www.yogm.org/uploads/pdf/registration_daycamp_guide.pdf (*But hey, bosses out there, is this really the answer? Is there anything YOU purchase online that's this difficult?*) Pray for them.

Tattoo These Words on Every Counselor – "Almost every case of campers being inappropriate with each other happens when there is little or no direct supervision from staff." From [ACA Camp Crisis Hotline 2011 Review](#) (You knew I meant *Henna* tattoo, right?)

Web Site of the Month – <http://www.camptakodah.org/>

For When It Rains – Extraordinary camp fundraiser Michele Goodrich sends this link to some fun resources for when your staff have exhausted their creativity!
<http://www.dailygrommet.com/products/441-education-outdoors-nature-trivia-games-and-nature-activities-for-kids-and-adults> -- reach Michele at <http://www.donorbydesign.com/people/michele-goodrich/>

The Negotiator – According to the YMCA of the USA, 47% of YMCA resident camps offered "Tiered" or Income-based pricing in 2011. Kevin Casey, executive director of Camp Cosby writes, "Tiered pricing worked like a charm for us and followed the trends: about 70% choosing the new highest fee. We called it 'Flexible Fees,' trying to avoid misunderstandings. Thanks for your advice and leadership about this. It was a hard sell and I had to put my neck out. Sooooo glad that worked out!" -- Kevin Casey

KCasey@YMCABHAM.org. E-mail gary@garyforster.com for a paper on this growing “name your own price” movement and how it might work for you.

Great Girl Scout Camps -- Check out this web site and look at several of the individual camps. Go to “Select Property” to see photos of each camp. The really unique stuff is when you select one of the “Camp Profiles” lower on the page. Each has their own versions of the same documents. LOTS of camps could learn from this! <http://gsofct.org/participate/property-tours/index.php>

Money Raising Tips – My former boss Bob Neal was the most succinct fundraising coach ever. He said: “Them that asks, gets.” My other great boss Bob Hoffman had “Them that Asks, Gets!” printed on buttons for us all to wear. Here’s a worthwhile addition to print out, hang on your wall, share with your fundraising chair over a cup of coffee next week: <http://www.marketingfor nonprofits.org/2011/09/7-reasons-im-not-going-to-donate-to.html> Seem too simple? I was talking with a camp just this week, who said they’d found fundraising “Much *harder* than we thought.” I asked, “How many people have you asked in person?” “Well, none.” *What did JRR Tolkien say?*

Horse Sense – If you don’t have horses at camp (insert joke here.) If you do (insert another joke here). Eventually (or perpetually, in my experience) you’ll have to make decisions about sick horses. Best if you learn the basics now so you can at least know enough to ask the right questions and avoid “old mare’s tails” (I came up with that myself.) Worth spending 15 minutes reading here: <http://www.littlehawkfarm.com/doctor's%20notes.html>

Two Horses Walk Into a Bar... -- Instead of debating what type of floor to have in your barn and stalls, do some FAST research by seeing what’s been PUBLISHED. <http://www.horsechannel.com/horse-keeping/healthy-barn.aspx> (In this case from Horse Illustrated magazine).

“You give great info.” – so says Anne Weinberg of TN. “Makes me want to be back at a camp in Ohio! I take the ideas I get from these newsletters and use them in PTO at school. I wonder how many people apply these gems to their camps, and sign their staff up for your newsletters? Hopefully, a lot of them.” *Funny you should ask, Anne! Check this out...*

“We Card” – Retreats director Kyle Linback writes: “I loved your article Brochures NO; Postcards, YES from back in February. I find it imperative to stay in touch with my weekend groups on a year-round basis. One of the many ways that we do this is a Christmas postcard. Every November I snail-mail out a postcard to the contact person from every group that has been out to Camp Tecumseh over the past 2-3 years, plus Girl/Cub Scout Councils, various Y-Guide leaders, local organizations and vendors that we do business with, etc. I always get lots of e-mails after these postcards go out. Here’s an example: *‘Hi Kyle! I just got the Camp Tecumseh Christmas card and I have to say it totally made my day! Seriously, so funny I had to share it with others in the office. Awesome card idea and kudos to you all for the fun you have. I hope the end of the year is closing nicely for you all and that you’re gearing up for camp and groups in the warmer weather ahead! Merry Christmas to you and the guys! (Sent from a Girl Scout Council Leader)’*

Our next postcard will probably show the three of us with our tongues stuck to the camp flagpole with the caption "I Triple-Dog-Dare You!" Who knows! View the front of our 2010 Christmas card by clicking [here.](#)" – kyleL@camptecumseh.org

How much is Facebook Worth? – Jocelyn Harmon's "Marketing for Nonprofits" blog says:

"Regardless of the tools you use, it's impossible to determine the value of a new channel unless you set goals for success. Set goals! Analyze progress! Rinse and repeat!

There is an Opportunity Cost to using one tool over another. Choose your tools wisely or you will waste a lot of time and money. Facebook is not FREE! (This is a corollary to the point above.) Your time may be your most valuable asset and it's worth a lot. Use it wisely." – *see more at*

<http://www.marketingfornonprofits.org/2011/06/is-facebook-fail-for-nonprofits.html>

Who's Doing Good Camp Alumni Work? – "We are," says Bob Anderson, volunteer at Phantom Lake Camp. "I have recruited an Alumni Committee of 15 people and we have held two meetings. I will not bore you with the attachments I share between meetings listing the contacts I have made, but I have reached out to 326 people in person, with letters, by telephone or sent emails. We have identified 21 families that I will focus on to cultivate. Our 2011 alumni event was a wonderful building dedication this past July 16. Next year we plan a 3 day weekend reunion. We are organizing area clusters. We established goals and are having some fortune in those areas. Here's a really strong camp alumni organization, run by camp alumni: www.philstaff.com." – *reach Bob at* robert@phantomlakeymca.org *and see his camp's great work at* <http://www.phantomlakealumni.com/index.html>

"Check this list twice before sending outbound communications:

1. Does this sound like me?
2. Is this how I would talk to a friend?
3. Do I believe what I'm writing?

If not, rinse and repeat.

Every word you utter, every note you sing can lift people up or break them down or worse BORE them to death. In addition, every time you speak from your heart, you grow a little bit stronger.

Take care in how you communicate." – *Yet another reason to subscribe to Jocelyn Harmon's inspirational blog:* <http://www.marketingfornonprofits.org/2011/07/be-yourself-but-just-little-bit-better.html>

December 31st – "On that day, the main reason anyone is at your website is because they're thinking about giving. Don't make them jump through hoops. Just let it all hang out there where they can find it. Make your homepage a *giving page* on December 31." – *from* <http://www.futurefundraisingnow.com/future-fundraising/>

Just Stop Saying Just – "Please, just stop using just. You have no reason to apologize." -- *from* <http://claxonmarketing.com/2011/07/15/just-stop-saying-just/>

A Story from Camp Wakonda, OH – "On your visit this past summer we discussed our morning rituals, flag raising, morning devotion "word of the day," etc. You instantly brainstormed some 'what ifs' Paraphrase... 'What if you had these words painted on boards, and each morning a camper got to pull

from a treasure chest and hold up the word of the day?' Well... That night, I paint up the next day's word. Snag a pillow case from the health center's extra bedding closet, paint it also, and place at the bottom of the flag pole. The next morning I ask a specific camper look inside the sack (calculatedly selected, but asked at-the-moment) and pull out the word of the day, and hold it up for all to see. I don't remember what words I actually used, but our staff had begun to affectionately refer to it as the 'magic pillow case'. After the devotion was over, instead of leaving with her group to the next activity, she walked over to me. She said, beaming, 'It's my first time at camp and I got to be the one to hold up today's word! Thank you!' AND... (ready for this?) after the exclamation, she actually wrapped her arms around my waist and hugged me! Too perfect! It couldn't have gone better even if I had pre-selected the camper and scripted the entire scene. I was blown away. I already knew that it was a great idea, but I wasn't prepared to have such an immediate feedback or response. It was instant, authentic, and awesome! Just *one of many* good stories regarding changes we've made that have provided instant positive feedback! Thank you! Your visit was very important to us and we are taking action. (I think I now have to go register a copyright for 'Instant, Authentic, and Awesome' That's gotta be a great name for a camp or *something*. Maybe just oatmeal, or a really good oatmeal I mean. *Something* though.)"
-- Kevin Anderson, Camp Director kc.anderson@mac.com

"I have been up against tough competition all my life. I wouldn't know how to get along without it." -- Walt Disney

"I got a lot of ideas. Trouble is, most of them suck." - George Carlin

"42." - Deep Thought, H2G2

What say we be thankful ALL of next month? Put it on the calendar.

Gary

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