

November 2011

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen." -- *John Steinbeck*

Delegate – How many of the ideas that you've read here over the past few months have you put into practice? ("Not enough" is the answer, eh?) Want to do better than just "clear your desk" before you go home Wednesday? Pick some of these ideas and forward them to co-workers/volunteers/family members (use what you've got!)

Website of the Month – Simply beautiful. Not a camp, but a camp. <http://www.whitepinesinn.com/>

"It's My Life" – Camp Coniston super-alumnus Catherine Johnson taught me a great technique she learned as a child that made her display for Coniston's Centennial Celebration this summer a snap to prepare. Since her earliest memories of family vacations, she's created three-ring binders full of sheet protectors. Then every brochure and postcard from the trip, every camp newspaper and photo, every concert ticket through college, have all been dropped right into pages as her life happened, (not left in boxes to be sorted out later... the rest of us know how that's been working for us!) For the Centennial, she pulled out her binders from her summers at camp and laid out the pages on tables for everyone to see (and photograph). And memories were re-born. -- *contact (and thank!) Catherine at catherineemail@aol.com*

Headache Relief – from all that hammering if you offer leathercraft. Tandy Leather now recommends getting a slab of granite to put under leather being tooled by your campers, and I can attest it makes a huge difference. (Idea: stop by your local kitchen countertop stone dealer and see what they do with all of those sink cut-outs!)

Perfect Parent Packet – If it's a PDF, include some color! Here's a very attractive and VERY complete guide from the Atlanta Girl Scouts: https://www.gsgatl.org/what-we-do/camp/Camp%20Welcome%20ePackets/Camp%20Misty%20Mtn%20Welcome%20ePacket_2011.pdf and it's sister camp: https://www.gsgatl.org/what-we-do/camp/Camp%20Welcome%20ePackets/Camp%20Meriwether%20Welcome%20ePacket_2011.pdf

Send Postcards Instead of Brochures – What do you spend for brochures? (The answer is "Too much.") Now is the time to start printing your targeted postcards. Pick each photo to GRAB a specific target (age, gender). Here's just one example where you can get 500 for 8 cents each; 1000 for 5 cents

each. <http://www.prinrunner.com> The goal is to invite people to your web site in the month THEY want to sign up for camp, not the month you want to mail a single brochure.

... and Why You Don't Drop Your Brochure for Post Cards --

http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2011/10/your-agenda.html Get off the merry-go-round. (Give me a call if you need help.)

Fundraising Failure – “According to [Donor Centered Fundraising](#), 46% of donors decide to stop giving for reasons that are tied to lack of meaningful information or to a feeling that their giving is not appreciated. That's a DISMAL statistic and so easily fixed. Here are some of my recommendations.

1) **Be personal.** Do NOT send form letters. Get your volunteers, board members, and staff to write a few thank you letters each day, in their own hand.

2) **Be creative.** Make a thank you video from your staff. Write a thank you song! [Watch this video from Charity: Water for inspiration.](#)

3) **Be tangible.** The other reason that donors STOP giving to nonprofits is because they don't understand how their gifts are used. Tailor your thank-yous to the ask or how the gift came in and let donors know they great work you are doing with their gifts.

4) **Be donor-centered.** Put your donors in the center of all of your communications, including your thank-yous. This is not the time to wax on and on about your organization. Make your thank-you about ME!

5) **Be fast.** This is SO important. Do your acknowledgements within 48 hours of receiving a gift, no matter the size. Think about it. If it takes you weeks or months (Yikes!) to thank me for my gift, that plants serious doubt in my mind about the efficacy of your work and does not make me feel valued.” – *This is a sample of what you can get from <http://www.marketingfornonprofits.org/2011/10/thanks-million-how-to-thank-your-donors.html>*

“No” to Video... Except – I tell folks to not waste their money on a camp video if they don't have a terrific web site with a powerful slide show first. Your money goes a lot further and you look good faster. But *after* you've done that, here's a terrific example of a talented filmmaker and highly-focused camp director answering our toughest question: “Why?” Why my child, why this camp, why this summer? http://www.camparowhon.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=91&Itemid=79 . Each shot tells a story that reaches out to first-time parents. (Contact director Leon Muszynski at leon@camparowhon.com). Can't you just see a “sneezer” mom sharing this with her friends? (And pointing at the screen?) If you don't know what a sneezer is, then you don't know why there's a violet bovine peaking over my shoulder at www.garyforster.com ... Read Seth Godin's “Purple Cow” before you spend another dime on marketing.

Summer Camp Cabin-of-the-Month – Sleep in a cave! <http://ondessonk.com/index.php/cabins-and-units/chabanel>

Who's Doing Good Camp Alumni Work? Part 2 – Former camp exec Stew Brown brags, “Camp Minikani (Milwaukee) has developed an awesome staff alumni association. I didn't have anything to do with it, but the ‘ring leaders’ all worked for me when I was there. You might want to check out the variety of things they do, including raising campership funds, work weekends, and alumni weekends for

enjoying the camp. <http://www.minikani.org/Alumni.php>.” Which proves that alumni volunteers are better at this than any staff person. But you have to ask. In person.

Another Good Web Page – A nice “top ten” list with a couple of quirky answers I especially like: <http://www.llyc.org/getting-to-know-camp/top-10-reasons-to-come-to-camp/>

A Sustainability Checklist – One of my favorite places, Sleeping Lady Retreat Center (named after a nearby mountain), won lots of design awards. From their first year (long before LEED certification) they’ve shared the environmentally friendly decisions they’ve made by posting them in every guest room. Here’s the PDF: <http://www.sleepinglady.com/pdfs/Sustainability.pdf>

Green Hospitality – “Frost Valley YMCA, a 6,000 acre residential camping, environmental education, and conference center located in the heart of the Catskill Mountain Park is the first to complete the necessary training and assessment to receive Tier 1 Certification from the Green Concierge (GC) Project.” Read more at: <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/6/prweb8600450.htm>

Want to Recycle Anything? – These guys tell you where www.1800recycling.com

Getting Better at Getting the Best Counselors – Keith Garbart of Winding Trails, CT writes, “I attended several of your sessions at ACA-NE last spring. I really got a lot out of Behavior Based Interviewing. I never had a handle on how to really utilize it, but after attending your session I understand it a lot better and felt prepared to use it more effectively. I did an interview Monday afternoon and man was I on fire, especially with the question about “What project or accomplishment are you proud of?” That candidate got the full effect of POWER HIRING!! The interview was great and the candidate was excellent; hired her on the spot (of course contingent on her background check and references come back satisfactory). I always love hearing you speak at conferences as it gets my juices flowing and fires me up for summer!” -- Reach him at keith@windingtrails.org (860) 677-8458 ext. 14 – **Coming soon as a new video at www.expertonlinetraining.com starring yours truly and the staff of Camp Coniston!**

The Marshmallow Test – *Jonah Lehrer writes in The New Yorker:* “In the late nineteen-sixties, Carolyn Weisz, a four-year-old with long brown hair, was invited into a ‘game room’ at the Bing Nursery School, on the campus of Stanford University. The room was little more than a large closet, containing a desk and a chair. Carolyn was asked to sit down in the chair and pick a treat from a tray of marshmallows, cookies, and pretzel sticks. Carolyn chose the marshmallow. A researcher then made Carolyn an offer: she could either eat one marshmallow right away or, if she was willing to wait while he stepped out for a few minutes, she could have two marshmallows when he returned. He said that if she rang a bell on the desk while he was away he would come running back, and she could eat one marshmallow but would forfeit the second. Then he left the room.

“Starting in 1981, Mischel sent out a questionnaire to all the reachable parents, teachers, and academic advisers of the six hundred and fifty-three subjects who had participated in the marshmallow task, who were by then in high school. He asked about every trait he could think of, from their capacity to plan and think ahead to their ability to ‘cope well with problems’ and get along with their peers. He also requested their S.A.T. scores.

“Once Mischel began analyzing the results, he noticed that low delayers, the children who rang the

bell quickly, seemed more likely to have behavioral problems, both in school and at home. They got lower S.A.T. scores. They struggled in stressful situations, often had trouble paying attention, and found it difficult to maintain friendships. The child who could wait fifteen minutes had an S.A.T. score that was, on average, two hundred and ten points higher than that of the kid who could wait only thirty seconds.”

Now *that's* S'more!

Read it all at http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/05/18/090518fa_fact_lehrer#ixzz1ZkOOMKKm

Gary's Reading List for Great Camp Leaders: <http://www.garyforster.com/articles.php> (Send it to Santa?)

“Ideas won't keep; something must be done about them.”

-- Alfred North Whitehead

“The history of the world, my sweet, is who gets eaten, and who gets to eat.” -- Sweeny Todd to Miss Lovett

“If you drink, don't drive. Don't even putt.” -- Dean Martin

Yes we'll all eat too much. It's a celebration of plenty, after all. At our table we'll be giving thanks for the simplicity of the greatest commandments – love God and love each other. Could we *keep* it that simple throughout the year? It's an idea...

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

“Camp Solutions for Great Camp Leaders”

www.garyforster.com

Add FREE subscriptions for staff and volunteers at www.garyforster.com

Please send comments and submissions to: gary@garyforster.com

(To unsubscribe, forward this e-mail to: unsubscribe@garyforster.com)