

February 2013

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"The best way out is always through." -- Robert Frost

Poster for Counselors – "[Yoyojoe](http://www.yoyojoe.com)" generously created this poster for you to print. I think it would be a terrific gift for each of your 2013 counselors as you hire them. Imagine them looking at it in their dorm room until summer! <http://www.yoyojoe.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Camp-Counsellor-Manifesto-Poster-American.pdf>

Be Your Own Customer – This is important: Find a first-time camper mom that's willing to volunteer an hour of her time. (It's critical that she's hasn't had a child attend your camp before). Sit with her and ask her to investigate your camp's website while you watch. Don't guide her... just take notes. Then ask her to register for a session of camp. See how easy it is for her to figure it out, and how long it takes. You're going to be making some changes, and now is the best time to make them!

Website of the Month: <http://www.longacre.com/> Why? They've got pages for most any question; and I especially like the "testimonials." (Though I wish they had more photos of what the camp, farm, and tents look like.) -- Thanks to Curt "Moose" Jackson, <http://summercampprogramdirector.com/> who noticed it because they're letting campers bring "any device" to camp this summer for the first time: <http://www.longacre.com/anything-goes/>

Who Uses Pinterest? – Many more women than men. Who registers kids for camp? Same answer. Overlap=Opportunity? Beth Morrow wrote some great suggestions for Camp Business Magazine: <http://www.northstarpubs.com/articles/cb/pin-it-7-ways-to-use-pinterest-for-camp>

Cleaning Up Your Footprints – The town of Kaikoura New Zealand has a terrific way for travelers to offset the carbon footprint of their visit. <http://www.treesfortravellers.co.nz/> Through the 'Trees for Travellers' program, a visitor can purchase a native tree, and have it planted to help reforest the region. Can't you just imagine the camp possibilities? -- (If you do something similar, please share it with us? -- gary@garyforster.com)

Pooler the Polar Bear – "Connecticut Camp Guy" Mark Pooler writes: "\$24k in one hour...all for camp scholarships. I am not sure why every camp with a lake/pond/waterfront is not doing this?????" Here's a quick look at how he does it, year after year: <http://www.newbritainherald.com/articles/2013/01/20/news/doc50fb5db9871ad036954098.txt> -- Reach Mark at mpooler@sccymca.org

Sweet Staff Cabin -- <http://tinyhouseblog.com/park-model-homes/wheelhaus-wedge-cabin/>



Time for Some “Sincere Flattery” – As an industry, we do a really lousy job of describing the benefits of our product. I keep pushing that photos are the easiest way to get it right, but then along comes a really great example of written words that paint an emotional picture that parents are looking for. Jennifer “JD” Deasy, assistant director of YMCA Camp Coniston, wrote this for their year-end newsletter:

“The Power of Camp Friendships

Why is it that you can become closer with people you’ve just met at camp than with some people you’ve known for years at home? It’s about how much of yourself you allow people to get to know, and how much you listen. Camp is a safe place to do just that.

As a cabin group we work together and we succeed together. We realize the struggles others are going through, and we genuinely support people we’ve just met. We talk about the fun and laughter we have together, but overnight camp also allows people to be up-close, personal, and sincere; and to truly open ourselves up to the people around us. Camp experiences help people of all ages build character. These experiences give us tools to problem-solve and to cope – in work, in play, in family and in friendships.

So what do we learn?

- We learn that a smile is a great sense of support.
- We learn that every good friend was once a stranger.
- We learn that we want to be around positive people that it’s a contagious feeling.
- We learn that singing and dancing and cheering over big and little things makes our day better.
- We learn that life is not perfect, and our friends have gone through struggles just like us.
- We learn that opening up to others can help us feel better and more connected.
- We learn that living without internet, TV, and cell phones is easier than you think!
- We learn that trying new things is good for us.
- We learn to be ourselves.
- We learn that even though we often come back to Camp for our old friends, meeting new friends at camp is amazing.”

(Shouldn’t something just like this be on your web site right away? Oh.. and big pictures of campers learning from their counselors, featuring your unique facilities and beautiful surroundings! – Gary)

Trust... We Earn it Every Day – A recent Seth Godin post clarified something that has always bothered me. Some camp leaders don’t like their customers. They speak derogatorily about parents; are defensive when told of a problem; refuse to give refunds; deride fathers who bring their kids to a weekend campout. Godin says you can’t expect a customer to trust you if you don’t trust your customer. If you don’t trust them, you need to find different customers. Or a different job.

SEE GARY LIVE:

Annual Camp Maintenance Conference – March 19 - 21 on beautiful Lake George in the Adirondack Mountains www.campmaintenance.com -- A new keynote plus 4 workshop favorites.

ACA New England -- March 22-23, Manchester NH <http://www.acanewengland.org/education-training/conference> -- *POWER Hiring, This Old Camp, 100 Ideas Ready to Steal!*

"Trust because you are willing to accept the risk, not because it's safe or certain." -- *Anonymous*

"The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary." -- *Vidal Sassoon*

"Screw it. Let's do it!" -- *Richard Branson*

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

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