

April 2013

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"Everything speaks." – *Walt Disney* (thanks to Corey Harrison in his recent [Camp Business](#) article)

Camp Song Super Source – It's the best I've used. All the words PLUS a video of each being sung at a real camp! MANY thanks to Roxie Cobalt, "wordsmith and classically trained grilled cheese chef," for compiling this! <http://campsongs.wordpress.com/song-lists/>



Look EXCITING – You need some colorful flags. For less than \$15 you can have 100 feet of "used car lot" pennants! <http://carrot-top.com/multi-colored-strings-100> I've used Carrot-Top.com for years as a "magic trick" for camp opening days. For very little money you can draw attention to the color and movement of flags and banners (and away from your faults).



Gary's Soap Box – While we're talking about flags, a big pet peeve of mine is camps with nice tall flag poles and itty-bitty American flags. (It's so obvious they bought the \$6 home-owners flag at Walmart!) Don't be such a cheapskate. Want to make flag-raising and lowering REALLY cool for the campers that get to help? Get a nice big flag, at least 6'x10' (about \$70) and it will last for years: <http://carrot-top.com/american-flags/outdoor-u-s/beacon-nylon-u-s> And look GREAT in photo!

Websites of the Month: There's a lot to learn from a few quick clicks:

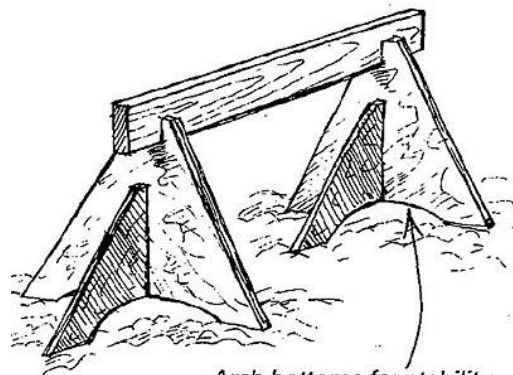
- <http://otyokwah.org/> -- A great example of making it easy for parents and leaders to find the information they need to make such an important decision.
- <https://campcody.com/> -- Click "about" and you get what most camps never show: what the camp really looks like, and as a result it looks extraordinary (recommended by Gerry Freitag of Camp Shadybrook CO). SHOW YOUR CAMP!
- <http://camparowhoh.com/> -- I repeat: It's about getting mom what she wants to know (and often what grandparents are willing to pay for.)

"But We Don't Have Pictures Like That" – That's the number one excuse I hear for why a website stinks. They only way you won't stay in that hole is to TAKE BETTER PICTURES. How I did it: Copy (right-click and save) the photos you think tell stories in websites you admire. This summer, select the locations, the campers and staff, even what they'll wear, and go get the exact photos you want. Each one WAY better than a thousand words.

Wagons-Ho! – Large 4-wheeled wagons for delivering luggage. They can be hooked together as a “train” and pulled by a tractor or Gator. http://www.tractorsupply.com/en/store/groundworkreg%3B-extra-heavy-duty-utility-trailer-1500-lb-capacity?cm_vc=-10005 -- (From Jim Sextone at Camp Wilson, OH)

DIY Camp Video? Copy Shots from a Good One -- Cory Harrison shares, “The cooler part of the video: it was 100% filmed and edited on my iPhone. If I can do it, any camp can. LoL!” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WyUAVBuBGU> – Contact Corey at Camp Benson (IL) charrison@srfymca.org and read his excellent supporting article on why these details matter: <http://www.northstarpubs.com/articles/cb/take-a-bite-from-apple>

On Belay? – Most camps are fastidious in following safety procedures when kids get up in the air on adventure elements. But how about your maintenance staff when they get up on high roofs? <http://www.gmesupply.com/catalog/product/view/id/4180/s/05013-50-ft-constructionplus-roofer-s-kit-with-reusable-anchor/?gclid=CNHCpI3nvrYCFQr0nAodSFkAsA>



Arch bottoms for stability on uneven ground.

Saw Horses with No Nails – (so your saw never hits one by mistake!) From a great daily idea blog by Fine Homebuilding: <http://www.finehomebuilding.com/how-to/tips/roof-framing-sawhorse.aspx>

Formula for Camp -- Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada has operated summer camps for more than 80 years. Each year close to 10,000 attend one of their 9 camps. I love the way their video takes the “numbers” that camps so often quote and “sums them up” into the really important outcomes: *Friends, Memories, New Skills*. And they

obviously chose music that parents would appreciate (rather than just being kid-focused, like so many camp videos are.)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASRt4VYPdQI&list=UUO470tk1CFzTvi35f_ZylAw&index=1

A Brand New Camp – Here’s a great story of a YMCA supporting resident camping. \$17 million raised to create a whole new camp on the site of their “old” camp.

<http://www.myfoxboston.com/story/21981462/2013/04/15/4-decades-old-camp-good-as-new-thanks-to-donations>

Let’s Get Sticky – Marketing is one of the most important things a camp leader does. But most have no training, and have read no books (even though I’ve BEGGED everyone to read “Purple Cow.”) So would you read a 25 page book that will give your camp a huge advantage AND focus your efforts? It’s by the author of “Duct Tape Marketing” and you can download it for free.

Here’s a sample of how he suggests you get started. “Define your ideal client:

- 1) Find your most profitable clients.
- 2) From the above group, identify those that refer.
- 3) From that even smaller group, identify common demographic characteristics

- 4) Take the time now to understand the behavior that makes them ideal.
- 5) Draw a fully developed biographical sketch to use as a marketing guide.”

Here’s the download: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/dtmtools/marketingguide2.pdf> and John Jantsch’s blog: <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog/>

The Future of Outdoor Ed – Former camp executive and current public school teacher Clint Knox writes: “How much discussion has there been in the OEE world around the Common Core Standards? They’re been adopted for almost every state. I’m still a teacher and I have to tell you if a camp is not directly meeting pieces of the Common Core Standards and can’t specifically show how they are, they are in trouble or going to be soon.” -- *Contact Clint at clintknox@spreeracing.com*

“... **In a Galaxy Far, Far Away...**” – If you haven’t heard yet, there’s a brand new site for *authorized* Star Wars themed camp activities: <http://starwars.com/camptoolkit/>. Thanks to Jeffrey Merhige and the staff of Camp Kern’s help for Lucas Films LTD. -- *Want backstory? Contact Jeff at JMerhige@daytonymca.org*

“Life isn’t about learning how to weather the storm. It’s about learning how to dance in the rain.” -- *Vivian Greene*

“I couldn’t wait for success, so I went ahead without it.” – *Jonathan Winters*

“There are only two mantras, ‘yum’ and ‘yuck;’ mine is yum.”
— *Tom Robbins, (Still Life with Woodpecker)*

Best wishes,

Gary

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