

March 2014

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

[\(view as a printable PDF\)](#)

"A friendship bracelet is about its destination." – [Sarah Wright](#)

Myth: Email Has Replaced Print in Fundraising – According to a [Blackbaud report](#), online fundraising accounted for just 6.4% of donation revenue last year. Most of the rest was through paper-based channels. And the best *driver* of online giving is direct mail. (from [Future Fundraising Now](#)).

Of Lice and Men – Many schools are changing their policies on how they deal with kids with lice. Maybe we no longer need to embarrassingly "inspect" every kid while parents and campers watch, and it can wait until they go to their first swim-check. A quick and interesting article:

http://www.slate.com/articles/life/family/2014/03/lice_in_school_let_em_stay.html

You Can't Beat Them, So Bribe Them – "Front Desk Staff" or receptionists at your supporting organizations (churches, YMCAs, Girl Scout Councils, etc) are very often the "front line" of your marketing sales opportunities. They get lots of "Do you have a summer camp?" calls and SO often give the wrong answer. (Even if their boss agreed to support your camp, it's the people on the phone that need both the training and motivation.) And motivation is the key. My favorite tactic was to visit each one this time of year with a big platter of freshly baked "Congo Bars" (provided by our camp chef, or by me in a pinch), napkins, cups, and a half gallon of cold milk. The office manager her staff were literally "eating out of my hand" as I told them stories about camp, gave them laminated "phone resource sheets," hung a poster on the wall, and left a full display-holder of brochures or postcards. I never had to worry about my printed material being pushed aside! Here's a recipe to get you going:

http://www.rachaelray.com/recipe.php?recipe_id=4726

That Name Tag Guy – I was going out to dinner with several camp directors when they laughed that I hadn't taken my nametag off when we left the conference. (Ever happen to you? Ever been the one laughing?) In his book, [How To Be That Guy](#), Scott Ginsberg not only explains his incredible journey of wearing a "Hello my name is Scott" name tag every day for the last 5 years, but also why we all so badly need to break down the boundaries that separate us. I've just finished his second book, [The Power of Approachability](#) (which I bought used on Amazon for \$4 delivered.) Some incredible insights from a guy so young, and some sure-fire tips for personal success. Read it yourself, then pass it on to a young camp leader.

Ropes Course Inspection -- The Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) has set the industry standards for 20 years, and is recognized as *the* authority. All courses are supposed to be designed to their specifications, and inspected annually to show they still meet them. This is especially important for "High Ropes" elements. But for those that only have "low ropes" elements and haven't seen the need, PLEASE at least use the self-inspection standards for playgrounds, and keep records. They

cover things up to 10' off the ground. My favorite playground resource is a free download (best printed out in color) from the US Consumer Product Safety Commission:

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/325.pdf>. It covers playground safety for both design and maintenance, with clear illustrations and tables.

Pit Firing Pottery – I've mentioned before that I'm not a fan of having full-size kilns at summer camps (unless you have a qualified art teacher running it.) Too often the kids' stuff doesn't get properly fired, breaks, or isn't fired at all, so they can't take it home. But historic "Pit Firing" is a nifty option. Clay pots are fired in an actual fire, giving them beautiful earth-and-fire markings. They're left unglazed, like Native American pottery. And if any pieces crack in the process, the kids were included in the fun of building and lighting the fire and unearthing the results. Then even broken pieces make cool souvenirs of the experience. <http://www.robertcomptonpottery.com/Method%20of-Pit-Firing-Pottery.htm>

The Myth of "Our biggest problem is awareness." – Another Seth Godin gem of a blog post: http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2014/01/our-biggest-problem-is-awareness.html

Service Learning the Yellowstone YCC Way – We all say that teens grow a lot in our camp teen programs like trips, leadership training, and service projects. Here are some interesting techniques to insure they get the most out of their "service learning" experiences: http://repository.uwyo.edu/ycc_rec/ -- *(Thanks to Mark Young for passing this along)*

Best Camp Carpet – Interface Carpet is often admired as one of the world's most responsible companies. They recycle their old carpet, have zero-waste plants, and even some 100% solar plants. My favorite carpet-tile pattern is called "Nature Trail." It looks like leaves scattered on the floor! <http://www.interface.com/US/en-US/detail/Nature%20Trails%20II-1393010999G15S001#partNumber=1393010999G15S001&page=summary> Camp Crosley (IN) and Camp Tecumseh (IN) have both used this pattern in many of their cabins and lodges.

A Very Sweet Review – "As a way to review camp policies, healthcare procedures, and just about anything else that is in our staff manual at the end of training," writes the exec of Whippoorwill Farms Day Camp, "we play a life size version of Candy Land that we call Whippoorwill Land!"

1.) Come up with about 50 questions having to do with written material or policies that staff should have learned and retained throughout training.

2.) Create the game board. We use pieces of colored construction paper that match the colors in a regular deck of CandyLand cards. Tape them to the ground (we used one of our covered gazebos as the location) in a repetitive order. The paper should be weaved around like the game board. We then used equipment from activity areas as obstacles and decoration for the "game board." (i.e. kayaks, inner tubes, a bucket of sport balls, life vests, rope or harnesses, etc.)

3.) Split your staff evenly into teams of 5 or 6.

4.) Choose one member from the team to be the "pawn." I like to ask the teams to pick the person they think knows the most or "studied" the manual. Once they pick that person, *then* you tell them the pawn will not be answering questions! This always gets a great reaction. I give each pawn a silly hat or prop to wear as they traveled around the game board.

5.) One member of each team takes turns “drawing” a color card (the ones from the actual CandyLand game). Each color should represent a category from training or the manual. (ie. Purple: health care, red: staff policies, green: weather policies, etc.) Read a question that coordinates with the color and category. If that team answers the questions correctly, their “pawn” moves to that color on the game board. The team member who drew the color card is the one that should answer the questions. If they miss the question, the player stays where they are. For certain questions that were more difficult, I would allow the team to discuss and answer together. The “Pawn” is not allowed to help with words, only with motions.

6.) The first “pawn” to the finish wins! The team gets some sort of silly (non-food) prize. The size of your “game board” and staff will determine how many questions you will need to write. I created about 45 and had plenty to work with. The first time I did this, it was a little long and my staff got restless. So the next year, I made my game board smaller so they could get through it faster. If there were questions that were not answered or topics that had brought up a discussion, we would then still review them when the game was over. This is definitely a way we make reviewing fun and interactive!”

– Contact Shanelle at whippoorwill@starband.net; and see one of the best-ever “Elevator Speeches” on their home-page at www.whippoorwill.com.

“Identify your problems, but give your power and energy to your solutions.” -- *Tony Robbins*

“You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take” – *Wayne Gretzky*

“Cartoonist found dead in home. Details are sketchy.”

“Six months later we are still finding hidden gems in Gary’s follow up report. It rings as true today as it did during his visit. If you are a camp that is struggling to find your bearings, you can’t afford not to meet with Gary Forster.” -- *Scott Hall, Camp Executive*

Booking “Fill More Beds!” camp visits for summer 2014. www.garyforster.com

Best wishes for your best year ever,

Gary

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