

How do we keep you happy?

RETAINING MEMBERS: Previously I talked about acquiring new members in Northwest Region, SCCA. I need to take that one step further and briefly talk about keeping the members we now have. No venue (Race, Rally, Time Trials or Solo) can function without workers. In some instances we are fortunate to have competitors who will double as volunteer workers. That is not always the case. There is a core of faithful volunteers that keep coming back ... sometimes for decades as course workers. I applaud those folks deeply.

We lose a few of people every year ... both old-timers and newcomers. That's unfortunate. The issue is, how do we keep them for the duration?

Some of what I have written was reinforced by Char McBee who wrote "To Lead Is to Serve" (Library of Congress, 2002, TXU 574 712, ISBN 0-963860-2-2). I got my copy through the National Office, SCCA.

LISTENING: Whether we are a leader or a co-worker, it is very important to listen to what people have to say. That is actually an art. One gets more done by listening than talking. Many good suggestions have come from those working corners, road marshals, working registration, etc. Volunteers need to feel important. Every question deserves an answer.

ATTITUDE: Our attitude as leaders or as workers is all-important. A sense of humor is a great thing but flippant remarks and non-factual answers are really uncalled for. Even long-time volunteers who have not worked a position for a long time may need answers and should not be taken for granted no matter how well you know them or how dumb the question may sound.

PASSING THE BUCK: It is OK to pass the question, decision or request on to someone higher in the pecking order of the organization if you don't know the answer or if you're not comfortable making certain decisions. There is usually someone out there who can answer the question or resolve the issue. Making up an answer is unacceptable. Blowing off the question doesn't work either.

RETRAINING: There will always be some "know-it-alls" in your midst; those who use a lot of profanity, talk

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**FRANK HAMILTON,
REGIONAL EXECUTIVE**

very loudly when not necessary or those who come off as the source of all information. They may belittle the leadership or co-workers. They downgrade the system in front of others. That sort of behavior needs to be curbed. It disenfranchises newcomers and makes our regulars wonder why they are there. Fortunately, most of members are not that way, but one such person can do a lot of damage to the mission.

The blow-hard needs to be taken aside and retrained. If that doesn't work, maybe that person needs a different job.

In my view, we are very professional and highly organized institution. Bad attitudes and bad manners take away from that image. How does not being professional look to others? How do they perceive us?

SUPPORTING NEWER MEMBERS: We all need to treat each other with a great deal of respect. Most of us do. It is important to spend some time with the new people coming into our ranks so they understand what it is they are to do. They will go home with a feeling of accomplishment and usually come again. Pre-event training sessions are really good. We usually try to put new volunteers with experienced workers so the tasks are explained in detail. Longtime volunteers need to be clear on this issue.

The "team concept" is a good term. We all work together to accomplish the main mission. No one is any more important than anyone else. It takes all of us to make it happen. We all need to feel a part of the team. We all need to feel that the mission outcome was well done.

GOALS: Leadership at all levels must set goals. This concept must be passed on to the rank and file. Without that, the mission is not clear at several levels. The absence of goals leaves a lack of direction and frustration with membership.

FOLLOW-UP: When a good volunteer leaves it may be due to burnout or even bad public relations somewhere

along the line. Why not call them or write them and encourage them back into the club? Paying them a visit would be even better. Again, it is very important to listen to what they have to say and when they give reasons why they may have left. Maybe there is a simple fix that would solve their issues with us. Maybe we are doing something wrong. Maybe their feelings were hurt.

RECOGNITION: Everyone likes to be recognized for his or her efforts. Some don't like to stand up in a crowd. Whatever works for that person is important to them even if they shrug it off.

HUMOR: A good laugh is great. It lowers stress and breaks down walls and apprehensions, especially for newcomers. Make sure the humor does not take away from the message that was intended. It cannot be degrading or embarrassing to the listener(s). Profanity or off-color remarks are unacceptable unless all within earshot are known to be good with what you are saying. Be very careful with this as it can create problems for you, our membership, and the club. Best just to avoid sensitive remarks.

REWARDS: Everyone who works as a volunteer on any of our events needs to feel rewarded. That can be a Christmas party, door prizes, a T-shirt, a goodie bag, etc. Free things are good. Can we get sponsors for our get-together so that attendees don't have to pay to get in or eat? What about handouts on the track; i.e.: water, snacks, lunches, rain parkas, etc. Our annual awards are a really good thing. Tell the volunteers: "Good job?"

We talked about this last article, so I won't dwell on the subject. A verbal pat on the back is better than nothing.

CONCLUSIONS: Much of what I have written is based McBee's book but a lot of it has to what I have observed over several years in the sport. Bottom line: Treat folks as you would like to be treated. Remember when you first started out in this club? There were good co-workers and good leaders and then some who were not. Which will you be?

I would like to hear your comments. Please free to write or better yet e-mail me at rallyguy@comcast.net or call 360-352-3204.