



Strategies for Rebuilding or Revitalising Photographic Club Membership

By Russell McGeorge APSNZ

The following are a collection of strategies that have proved effective for photographic clubs in rebuilding or revitalising their memberships. One of PSNZ's largest affiliated clubs was in some difficulties in the early 1990's and implemented a number of these strategies. Today the club is thriving with a large number of younger members.

PR is paramount

- Give someone the job of co-ordinating PR for the club, don't leave it in a passive limbo
- Maintain a good website that is fresh and up-to-date, with your clubs programme for the next months and plenty of current examples of your members' work – use a cross section of your members' work not just the not just the “top” peoples work!
- Put club brochures everywhere - photographic shops, chemist shops, photo labs/processors, libraries, local information centres, council offices etc
- Put out monthly "what's on" fliers on your programmes and place as for brochures
- Send monthly "what's on" fliers to your local newspapers, radio stations etc
- Offer to be involved in local radio station interviews, "what's on" programmes, talk back shows on how to take good photographs etc
- Publicise your Camera Club at other clubs that you or other members may belong to, particularly those with shared interests – tramping clubs, Rotary and Probus, Gardening, Vintage car etc

Good programmes are a MUST

- Know what your members want in the club's programmes (from asking, not guessing) and deliver it
- Look at recent meeting attendance statistics and see what is working and what is failing to interest members
- Do more than just meetings - hold field trips, night shoots, workshops etc
- Do combined meetings from time to time with neighbouring camera clubs or with similar/shared interest clubs (painting, 4WD whatever) to be able to draw on “different” but stimulating speakers

Don't overdo the number of meetings

- Excellent monthly meetings are much better than many “so-so” meetings

Draw on PSNZ

- Use the PSNZ Recorded Lectures but critically review before using to ensure that a particular lecture will not bomb for/with your members
- There may be a PSNZ member or Councillor near to, or travelling through your area, who would be happy to speak to your club, run a workshop etc,
- Communicate/benchmark with other affiliated PSNZ clubs to get ideas for programmes and speakers that have worked well for them.
- Look at other affiliated PSNZ club websites regularly to get new ideas for your club
- Encourage your members to go to PSNZ Regional and National Conventions where they will be stimulated and inspired and pick up new ideas for your club

Use the Trade

- Ask your local Camera Shop(s) to run a “what’s new” programme for your club (with discounts for on-the-night-purchases of course!)
- Contact the main photographic equipment companies and ask if their travelers would come and speak to your club on what is new, trends etc, by coordinating their next trip with your meeting schedule

Do a Challenging Club project

- Do a useful, significant project, which will give your club local, profile and can involve all members in a variety of tasks in addition to photography.
- Get members doing PR, organising, transport, catering, sponsorship, writing...etc. – the aim is to get all members actively working together.
- Possible projects include “24hrs in your town/region”, “a typical day in the life of a fireman, the mayor”...etc, “a high country muster”, “life after dark in your town”, “the Show”, “the Scare Crow festival” etc...

Don't get hung-up on competitions

- Many new members find the competition environment threatening/daunting and feel inadequate or shut out – “A” and “B” members can be a real turn-off
- Run photo comment sessions rather than just competitions

Really look after new members

- Offer a “try before you buy” scheme to allow prospective members to attend several meetings before paying a sub.
- Appoint mentors for new members who will bring them to their first few meetings, do introductions, help with technical issues/training, track on-going attendance and find out if there are negative issues developing etc
- Run training workshops for new members

Look at your membership profile and actively target missing member types

- If you don't have many younger members, set out to attract several younger members to act as a nucleus for growing a young member group - free subs for the first five or ten etc
- Likewise target recent retirees - offer a new interest, fellowship, fun...

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