

League of American Orchestras

Volunteer Council

Minutes of Strategic Conversations – Presidents & President-Elects

Conversation #3 – Membership, Social Media

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

3:00 EST

Facilitators:

Linda Weisbruch (president, Volunteer Council)
Debbie McKinney (president-elect, Volunteer Council)
Terry White (secretary, Volunteer Council)
Samara Ungar (manager of the annual fund, League of American Orchestras)
Caitlin Whealon (meetings and logistics coordinator, League of American Orchestras)

Participants serving orchestras in:

Group 1: (3) Midwest 2, West 1
Group 2: (2) Midwest 1, Southeast/Middle Atlantic 1
Group 3: (5) Midwest 1, Southeast/Middle Atlantic 1, South/Southwest 3
Group 5: (1) West 1
Group 6: (1) Southeast/Middle Atlantic 1

Guest: Melissa Woolf, Symphony Guild of Charlotte, Inc.

Conversation #3: Overview of Social Media

Melissa Wolfe, a past president of the Symphony Guild of Charlotte and a frequent presenter on social media in volunteerism, gave an informal overview of social media as the wave of the future and its impact on volunteer organizations. She asked how many organizations use some form of social media.

- Most groups indicated they use Facebook and post to it regularly.
- There was a mixed response to the use of Twitter and Instagram.
 - Group 1:
 - One organization had a Facebook but discontinued its use.
 - Group 3:
 - One tech savvy volunteer group uses both Facebook and Twitter successfully; they have a chair for each type of social media they employ.
 - Group 5 has a chair for their social media, which is tied to their symphony's webpage.

Organizations need to use social media to reach younger people - it is an absolute requirement for recruiting the next generation. Every group needs to find and recruit one or more volunteers who know how to use the different platforms. Volunteer groups need to learn how to share content and encourage the new generation to find their organization. There are many platforms, but Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are used the most. Recent studies show that, on average, users of social media spend at least 3 hours a day on that endeavor.

- Melissa encouraged everyone to leave their comfort zone and set up a Facebook page and maintain it. She suggested that everyone seek out the pages of other arts organizations across the country; there is a lot going on out there.
- Melissa did not have usage statistics on the different platforms, but Facebook is by far the most popular.
- Instagram is smartphone based (not computer based) and the downloadable app is free. It is communication through photographs. The user posts a picture with a comment or hashtag (#) about the picture. The Instagram-er can follow people, organizations, and symphonies around the world. By scrolling through various feeds, the user selects a picture to begin following that person or subject.
- Twitter is the form of social media that predominantly uses verbiage/text for information. It is limited to 140 characters.
- The people and/or subjects that social media users follow on Twitter and Instagram are usually different.

Several participants raised the question about the release requirements for picture usage, especially those involving children.

- Debbie offered that if the picture is taken in the public domain, permission to use it is tacit. If it is to be used for promotion, permission is needed; if used in advertising, a release is needed. That said, every state has different laws.

Successful organizations across the country see social media as the wave of the future and are embracing it.

- Melissa encouraged everyone to go to the app store, check out the various social media apps and download one. The next generation is using all forms of social media.
- A Group 3 participant asked how to choose a platform and limit unwanted random contacts.
 - Melissa countered that social media is designed to be open communication; it is a public forum and people want to interact with others.
 - For example, on Twitter, someone sees a post of interest and reaches out to continue the conversation. You might hashtag an orchestra soloist in your tweet; anyone who follows that soloist will see your tweet and perhaps might elect to also follow you.
 - Instagram is the same in that hashtags link people who follow the same person or subject.
- Linda asked all the participants to go to their symphony's Facebook page and "like" it.

Melissa then asked all participants if each platform had its own manager.

- Responses were varied.
- She offered that, in a perfect world, a committee would create a social media plan for the organization and/or specific events.
- Social media is a great, new marketing tool, and it is free.

- Once the platform is established, promotion activities on the platform should take about an hour a week.
- Samara said the ideal concept is a cross-platform.
 - She recommended we choose one type of social media, get it up and running, and then add another platform, instead of being overwhelmed with trying to get multiple platforms started at the same time.
- Melissa suggested each organization could reach out to their top 10 volunteers or donors and
 - find out what social media they use
 - explore how they might help promote these organizations.
- In addition, everyone should check out what their symphony is already using and what is generally being used in their area.

One of the Group 3 participants in the South/Southwest shared with the group their new fundraising event, whose committee was designed to be served by diverse age groups. The young people were very helpful, especially in using social media to promote the event. Next year's event will use the same committee and will employ even more social media.

The New Volunteer

What is the age range of your volunteers?

- Group 1: one group indicated that their members' age ranges from 50 to 80.
- Group 3: one group has members from 40 to 80, another's range from 50 to 80.
- Group 6: members' age ranges from 50 to 80.

There is a generation shift occurring. Where are we finding these new, younger members?

- Group 3:
 - One group scheduled wine & cheese member recruitment events, three of which will be in the early evening from 5 to 6:30. Their symphony musicians will play, and their conductor will also speak. For their first evening event, they have invited members of the Junior League and a senior organization. In February, they will do it again and invite members of different organizations.
 - Another group has friends recruit their friends. They see a challenge when recruiting younger members because if one of the young friends quits the other friend usually drops out also.
 - A third group has no experience with college age volunteers. They created an event to be appealing to all generations and enlisted young people to help plan it. They found these younger members have many more contacts than older volunteers have.
 - These new volunteers are also serving on the philharmonic associate board, but are not fully integrated into the Guild's activities.
- Group 6:
 - (members are 50 to 80) asked other participants how to go about contacting college age people and draw them in.

Linda presented an overview of where the 21st century volunteer can be found:

- Young emerging volunteers
 - Gen X, born 1961 – 1979

- Millennials (Gen Y), born 1980 – 2000
- Boomers – retiring professionals in their mid-60's, born 1945 – 1960
- Newcomers
- Working men & women
- Students
- Businesses & corporations
- Other target groups
- Volunteermatch.org

Select a volunteer group and tailor the volunteer opportunity to fit this group. Generations X and Y are not like the baby boomers who will do anything you ask. We must be conscious of how we look to the new volunteer. Linda gave the group an overview of the 21st century volunteer's characteristics and expectations:

- very busy, with many obligations – often volunteers for multiple organizations
- wants flexibility
- expects to be empowered
- won't tolerate working alongside incompetent volunteers
- is tech savvy
- doesn't want to simply make a contribution, wants to make a difference
- doesn't want to be micro-managed

Success with Millennials/Gen Y

- Group 5: one group has a 30-something member who is now recruiting her friends to join.
- Group 3:
 - One group has 120 new members, two-thirds of which are in the 30 to 40 age group. They created a fashion show with children as models. Everyone wants their children/grandchildren to model. The catch? Parents must be members to have their children model!
 - Another can't keep people in the 30 age group active. Money/dues can be a problem for some, and time is a problem for others. These younger members don't seek out volunteer opportunities but might respond if someone reaches out to them. In many instances, they are looking to add to their resume.
 - another has found that those seeking to build their resumes with membership don't have a passion for the organization and don't stay
 - This group's orchestra has a young professionals group, and a young staff member has just been hired to oversee these activities. The volunteers also have a committee chair who was just beginning to organize efforts to revive its young professional membership; plans are to put her in contact with the staff person to possibly collaborate.
- Group 2: One group has lower dues structure for any members under 35, and a growing number of young members who are serve with the young affiliates group of their symphony.
- Group 1: is not recruiting many young members but has targeted recent retirees with some success by:
 - Approaching local retiree groups.
 - Setting up a table in the lobby of their concert hall on the days they have older attendees and hand out brochures.

Leadership Development/Nominating

How does your organization fill the top leadership positions?

- One Group 5 has not had leadership change since its recent inception. They have trouble getting people to commit, as does one Group 3.

Does everyone work under a nominating structure? YES

- Group 3: one group has recently restructured but have not had enough time to realize the benefit. The restructure should stop the problem of job switching.
- A Group 5 has changed to have a president elect so he/she can be mentored to be president and always have a succession plan
- Group 6: has people who want to be on the nominating committee but will not chair it.

Linda offered that the nominating committee, in conjunction with the new member committee/mentoring, should partner to identify leadership early on – and communicate a possible leadership track to those identified. Oftentimes, a future leader will cooperate with his/her proposed development plan if they are in the loop from the beginning.

Nominating and Placement

Is your nominating committee chaired by the past president? And, is your president elect an active member of the committee?

- Linda suggested that an immediate past president might need a vacation after a very busy year as president. He/she might not remain fully engaged at the conclusion of such an overwhelming responsibility.
- Further, not every president is a great president, and a poor selection for the future might result if that person then chairs nominating.
- Another model shown to be effective is where the past president and president elect sit on the committee, but the committee is elected by membership to staggered two-year terms. The committee elects the chair from the group which has already served one year.
- In one Group 3, the past president chairs the committee. Their president elect does not sit on the nominating committee, and this could prove to be a problem.
 - Linda advised that if the president elect is not officially on the nominating committee, he/she should be in consultation with the committee throughout the entire process. After all, the nominating committee is filling the slate of officers who will serve during the president elect's term as president.

The Conversation adjourned at approximately 4:10 pm EST. The next Conversation (#4) is scheduled for **Tuesday, November 10 at 3 pm ET** and will focus on fundraising.

Additional thoughts from facilitators: Please be considerate of the young volunteer! These volunteers are probably volunteering for other organizations, and we don't want to spread them too thin, risking possible burn out. Consider placing a more seasoned member in positions requiring organization knowledge and know-how. Also consider creating a mentorship by pairing the more seasoned member with the younger volunteer as co-chairs of a committee.