

January 2011

Gary's Camping Newsletter

Continuous Improvement for Great Camp Leaders

"You can't get back on a horse without falling off" -- Phil, ABC's Modern Family

Powerful Pictures and Few Words = Emotional Connection – Camp Flaming Arrow is finding the talent that most of us don't know our coworkers have. One place it comes out is in their CFA Blog. This one page is an example of the strength YOUR WEB PAGES could have if you'd trust great photos of YOUR camp and find your creative forces (instead of doing it all yourself; or worse, just trusting in your web designer.) <http://heyheycfa.blogspot.com/2010/12/stuff-i-learned-at-summer-camp.html> Wow. MaryAshley, you've got talent! Contact exec Bill Hinton at billh@ymcasatx.org

How's Your Elevator Speech? – It's time to test your staff. See if *everyone* that answers your phones is ready to give a positive first impression. Here's an example of how Camp Speers-Eljabar in PA describes their summer staff: "Our camp counselors, a.k.a. **The Fun-gineers**, are outgoing, creative, positive role models who ensure that every camper makes friends, masters new skills, gains independence, is safe, and has FUN!" <http://www.campspeersymca.org/> For help creating descriptive answers to your most common questions, read "Elevator Speech" at <http://www.garyforster.com/articles.php>.

Write News – "Enrollment in South Bay 'Y' Winter Camps Surges -- Total enrollment in the day camps spread over three weeks is up nearly 43 percent from last year, rising from 343 to 489 kids. The first week saw a 70 percent uptick. Winter camp costs range from \$125 to \$200 per week, with discounts given to YMCA members. Officials say the reasons include expanded offerings and an economy that has improved from last year. New camps included [ice skating](#), [soccer](#), [basketball](#), gymnastics, [laser tag](#) and an "On the Move" traveling camp for younger [children](#), which includes a new [Microsoft](#) training day at the Microsoft store. 'Quality, affordability and safety have always been at the forefront of our YMCA Camp programs,' said Y spokeswoman **Rebecca Kelley.**" -- *Way to go, Rebecca! She didn't wait around for the "media" to notice her programs; she submits her own compelling stories! Weekly, local newspapers and regional newspaper web editions are hungry for good local content. Feed them! (Does it take you too long to write a story like this? Then delegate to someone who can do it quickly so you can submit LOTS of them; like your metro marketing department for instance. They're waiting for YOU to feed THEM so THEY can feed the Media! Taking credit is not the issue, getting CAMPERS is!*

Quiz Time – "Who do we work for?" (If you've been to my sessions, you know the answer)... We work for mom. Brian Rupe of Camp Fitch, *A Great Camp on a Great Lake!* writes: "This e-mail is from a mother of a brand new camper who found us on the web. Notice her comment on what she read on the longevity of our staff. My guts told me that this was something we needed to emphasize on our website this year. – It's great to actually hear someone tell us it matters."

- "Hi Brian, Thank-you for getting back to me so quickly, and with the information I asked for. I've already paid the deposit for this summer. We're all excited to see her spread her wings...okay, she is excited and I am nervous! :) I thought your website was really informative and well done. The employment longevity of your staff was quite impressive." (See what she's talking about at www.campfitchymca.org). Reach Brian at brianrupe@campfitchymca.org But she goes on, "My daughter and I have spent some time on the website and she had a few questions:

- What are the bathrooms like?
- Do the kids in Traditional Camp get to ride horses?

- If she doesn't like what is served for dinner, can she have a peanut butter sandwich? (she's a picky eater) Thanks again! –Ms J.” --

These should be easy fixes for Brian's web site. Is YOURS fixed? If not, don't count on all moms e-mailing you for answers. Most will just find a camp website that already HAS the answers! -- Gary

Get Your Marketing On -- Create a simple [nonprofit marketing plan](#) with this free template from <http://claxonmarketing.com/diy/> (Of course it's only free if you actually DO-it-yourself. But do nothing, and that will REALLY cost you!

Also, here's how to build a *Mobile* Web Site for smart-phone users --

<http://nonprofitorgs.wordpress.com/2010/04/29/how-to-create-a-mobile-website-for-your-nonprofit-for-8-a-month/>

Raise Money On-Line? – Nothing will replace the nurturing of major donors. But if you want to add on-line fundraising without taking your eye off the prize, here's a good place to start:

<http://www.diosacomunications.com/webinars/webinars/donatenowandenews/february15.htm>

A Great Newsletter Has Interesting Stuff – Like this one from Lake Wenatchee Y Camp. Scan down this newsletter to see how they're having new dining room tables built with historical photos of camp laminated into the table tops!

http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=hcoejcab&v=001vUitVcnL-0cuNn-AGSEQg0rbPKiCTv54mTD79w5d2iJT3Pg4oG9jQo6laRsN9wll3daWZGSWQeaECEZWvE9lQr707PRfiguDCxKHMRpEyve97dgmUq5_7w%3D%3D#article3 (Sweet little website, too:

<http://www.lwycamp.org/ymca/index.php?page=summer-camp>). Contact camp director Tim at tmcelravy@lwycamp.org

“We Can't Go to Any Conferences This Year” – Emotionally, that's a drag because it makes you feel like you don't control your own destiny. But you do. Form a book club with your staff or other friends. Use the time you *would* have spent going to a conference to actually read and discuss several of the books on this suggested reading list. <http://www.garyforster.com/articles.php> New energy, new ideas.

Points – Collaboration is a key to business success, yet often only our “low ropes” are actually designed to reward this behavior at camp. (How many cabins win “cabin cleanup” each day? Lots of losers who tried hard, a few winners with counselors that did much of the work.) Check out this description on how to award points after their activities: “At the end of each meeting, gather as a group and announce that it's ‘Time to award points!’ Kids earn FETCH! points when they answer five questions from the Leaders Notes. Whenever you hear an acceptable answer, **award 50 points to the entire group**. This reinforces the idea that kids are part of a club that values teamwork.”

(This is an example of why you should order your FREE copy of PBS's “FETCH! with Ruff Ruffman Camp Guide” - a science activity kit with challenges for 6-12 year old campers. Each activity calls for easy-to-find, inexpensive materials that will keep your camp under budget. While supplies last! Send an e-mail to fetchnews@wgbh.org. Include your name, organization, and mailing address (please indicate work or home).

“You Are Not Your Target Audience” – Kivi Leroux Miller, a non-profit marketing expert, writes: “Putting aside for a moment whether we should call them ‘target audiences’ or not, it's always good to remember that as a nonprofit communicator or fundraiser you are very rarely the kind of person that you are trying to communicate with. Even if you match the demographics, the fact that you are employed by your cause sets you apart in major ways from those who are not. Therefore, what you personally think about your fundraising letter, or your e-newsletter's design, or what so-and-so wants to put on your nonprofit's Facebook page is not nearly as important as what *the people on the receiving end* will think

about it. Always, always, always do your best to put yourself in their shoes. It's tough. It takes research, and listening, and practice. But you can do it." – *This is a sample blog post from Kivi's Nonprofit Communications Blog. She's really, really inspiring. Have anyone that writes for your camp (including "Marketing Departments") sign up at: <http://www.nonprofitmarketingguide.com/blog/>*

Better Camp Fair Results – Most of us see camp fairs as having two choices: "Go...again" or "Don't Bother." Doug Ridley, Communications Coordinator for the New York YMCA Camp is very observant, and he wanted to try harder. "First time sleepaway camp moms want to know everything they can, but their child usually has no clue. When mom asks, "Johnny do you have any questions about camp?" They always shrug their shoulders. (We have a scrolling slideshow, but I've never seen anyone react to it). Last weekend I brought my Wii to the fair loaded with pictures of activities on its Photo Channel. As I started talking with mom, I handed their child my Wii remote. 'Know what this is?' (Not a child said no.) 'As I talk to your mom, I'd like you to look through these photos. Before you leave, I want you to pick 2 that you find interesting or want to know more about.' Best...conversations...ever!" -- *Reach Doug at dridley@ymcanyc.org*

Great Training and Teambuilding, Almost Free – Terra Lynn announces, "For 37 years, YMCA Christian Leadership Conferences have trained staff and volunteers in locations around the country. During a weekend training event, workshops on leadership subjects typically include the YMCA Rag/Leather Program, the C in the YMCA, devotions, storytelling, prayer, discipline, chapel, values education, and much more, without preaching a particular doctrine. To see if dates and locations for 2011 CLC's line up with your staff availability, visit <http://www.christianleadershipconf.org/>. (Please view the video on the website!)" – *reach her for questions on CLCs and the Rag Program at Terra.Lynn.Dearth@lbymca.org.*

Out n' About – I'd love to see you, your staff, boss, or volunteers at one of these events where I've been invited to speak and conduct workshops:

- NE Y Camp Conf at the NYC-Y-Camp – (Friday January 28th workshops) <http://www.facebook.com/northeastymcacampingconference>
- Girl Scouts National Training Center, NY (Feb 2 presentation; sorry -- Girl Scout only!)
- National Camp Maintenance Conf at Camp Chingachgook, NY – (keynote & workshops March 22-24) <http://www.campmaintenance.com/>
- ACA-NE in Manchester NH – (4 workshops March 25&26 – and I'm looking for a group to have dinner with!) <http://www.acanewengland.org/conference/>
- ACA Tri-State, Atlantic City NJ – ("This Old Camp" March 16) <http://www.aca-nynj.org/welcome.php>
- ACA Mid-States, Chicago IL – (Full day camp operations workshop on Thursday; keynote on Thursday night, Workshops Friday, plus new edu-tainment laughs for dinner on Friday!) <http://www.acamidstates.org/schedule.php>

"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug." – *Mark Twain*

"Of all of our inventions for mass communication, pictures still speak the most universally understood language." – *Walt Disney*

"You're dead if you aim only for kids. Adults are only kids grown up, anyway."

– *Walt Disney*

Most Sincerely,

Gary

Gary Forster, LLC

"Camp Solutions for Great Camp Leaders"

I facilitate effective Strategic Planning with many camps; but the reasons many initiate the process are actually ***tactical*** shortcomings that can be corrected almost immediately, and at low cost compared to the capital campaign many hope will change their fortune. Invest in one invigorating day to reach your goals -- *this year*. Take a look at www.garyforster.com and drop me a line.

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