

P-Essay

Looking for a Few Good Men & Women

Hazel Meredith

We all know it takes many dedicated members to make a camera club or council successful. However, sometimes it can be difficult to get enough people to “step up to the plate” and fill the necessary positions.

Recently, this camera club news editor received an e-mail from **Joan Field**, past president of the **Northern California Council of Camera Clubs** (N4C), stating that they were unable to find a vice president for the upcoming year. And since the current president’s term was ending, technically they had no president either!

Joan stated, “We are trying to be as aggressive as possible about this. We just changed our bylaws to allow the vice president to be elected from the general membership instead of having to come from a club delegate or former club delegate.

“We talked about rotating that task on a club by club basis. We have twelve clubs as members, but some of the clubs are quite small and are having exactly the same problem that N4C has. We also have two or three clubs that are over 100 members. One camera club, *Contra Costa*, has supplied the vice president and president for the last four years as well as many other positions of importance.

“I know we are not alone with these problems, which is why it is so hard to maintain these organizations.” She concluded by asking for suggestions so that they may continue as a regional competition and program source.

After looking to **Elena McTighe**, Publications Vice President and managing editor of the *PSA Journal*, for assistance, the problem was directed to **Lynn Troy Maniscalco**, **FPSA**, **EPSA**, of the **Delaware Valley Council of Camera Clubs** as the council had faced the same issues.

Lynn has been a council delegate for 30 years and held most of the positions,

including president, several terms each. She stepped in again when the council president passed away, finishing the second year of his term. When she declined taking yet another term, it seemed the council might fold after 50 years.

The solution, she states, “We began eliminating. First the club vs. club contest and then our PSA-recognized Photo Travel circuit, then we agreed to go from monthly to quarterly meetings, and finally, someone agreed to be president!”

She continued, “Although we once had 30 clubs (some have folded), I contacted all of the other past member clubs and have gotten some to rejoin. Councils are really important for the smaller clubs that cannot offer a lot on their own. I represent a large club on the basis that we owe support to those others, but it’s hard to interest our members in council activities because our club already offers so much.

“The council has no new secretary, so we will each take a turn. And we’ve had no chairman for our annual all-day event for the past several years, so we split those duties four ways (programs, contests, facilities and publicity). But as long as things keep happening, everyone will take them for granted, and only once activities disappear, do people begin to miss them and start offering to help. But, if not, then they weren’t that important anyway!” she quips.

“However, our circuit will reappear next spring (all-electronic), and the club vs. club competition probably the following fall. We are also trying to put together a new judges and speakers list on the web site, since the old one hasn’t been revised in ages (no chairman). We are already looking at programs for our next annual all-day event.”

Lynn has some good suggestions. Maybe the council (or club) needs

to reevaluate their goals and what they hope to accomplish for their membership. If positions that aren’t needed any longer are eliminated, that gives the person holding the position the opportunity to move into a job that could be more productive.

I also discussed this issue with **Antoinette Gombeda**, past president and co-chair of the annual conference of the **New England Camera Club Council**. She had a couple of other suggestions.

“Possibly have co-presidents rather than president and vice president. This could give both people time to work on specific important projects. Or possibly have the term be for six months rather than a year (or a one-year term rather than two) if the problem is inability to get people to commit for a lengthy term.”

So, to recap, keep the following ideas in mind when looking for members to fill board positions: change bylaws as needed; change the format of a position—as in making president and vice president positions into co-presidents—thereby distributing the duties more evenly among members clubs (for a council), or among several members (within a club); split up the term of a position to allow less of a commitment for each person; reevaluate the council or club goals and eliminate a position that can be combined with another spot or done without; board meetings can be held less often to eliminate some time commitment.

The key is to be flexible, be creative, and be innovative in your thinking. Determine what your membership expects from the council or club and target the most important items. There are always a few good men or women willing to pitch in and make things happen. ■