



UPDATE

November
2001

FUN IN YOUR BOOTH

So far, we have been talking a lot about newspapers because publications are our most efficient method of promotion (more bang for the buck).

But newsprint isn't our most effective way for the public to get to know us. That activity lies in face to face contact with the public. The most effective face to face contact with the public is "Safety Booths."

Are you having fun doing them? Well, of course you are. But, perhaps too much fun. Let's face it, sometimes our booths turn into mini flotilla social or fellowship events. We enjoy talking with our friends in blue more than the boating public.

Here are some tips from some of the PAOs to make your next booth successful and enjoyable.

Planning

Decide on a minimum number of personnel you will need in your booth.

Get commitments from your members for at least that number and make up a duty roster. Add an extra one or two, but no more than that. Too many cooks make a picnic.

Arrange time for set up and take down.

Have all persons show up early for their duty shift, overlapping the shifts.

Everyone should be in the same and their best uniform; looking good counts.

ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**Nick
Nicholson**

dsopad7@ucnsb.net



Arrange for: backdrop, decorations, equipment, chairs, tables, literature, etc. well in advance.

Arrange transportation of the booth to the site. It usually takes several vehicles.

Give terrific directions to the location. Arrange procedures for parking and entry to the area.

If you plan on having electronics, make sure you have electricity.

Call the day or night before and check with your people and confirm plans.

Execution

Plan your booth, then work your plan. Don't deviate. If you did a good job thinking of all the things and people you will need, then all you need to worry about is the set up and folks showing up on time, looking good.

Get there early for the set up. Get a good crew to do that and then send them home or to a private place to change out of their, now rumpled, work clothes and into their neatly pressed uniforms.

Tips for success

Remember why you are there. That is, to talk to the public, not to each other.

Face the chairs behind the display table toward the front of the booth (backs to the audience look bad).

Assign on duty and off duty personnel. On duty folks only talk to the public. Rotate personnel frequently.

Assign a greeter to stand in front of the booth and greet those people passing by (ask questions, etc.). No eating or drinking on duty. If possible, not in the booth. Beware of sloppy foods and spillage.

If questions require long answers, take the person to the end of the booth so not to restrict access.

Never ever, EVER argue with the public, in public, no matter how wrong they are.

Arrange your handouts in logical order so they are easily accessible, or in packets.

Make sure all personnel know where everything is. Make a map of your and neighboring AORs. List phone numbers for VSCs and PE in each area.

Try to have an attention grabber such as videos, toys, equipment, art work, or model ships. Be creative.

Always remember that WE ARE the USCG in the eyes of those we meet and greet. Our demeanor and deportment reflect on the entire Coast Guard Family.

Send your ideas on this and any other subject to dsopad@ucnsb.net. This is your publication.

It's about content

We all receive newsletters, some from family members; others from groups and organizations to which we belong.

The question is what makes one newsletter more interesting than another? Why do you read one and not the other?

The answer is content! The same question and answer should be applied to our newsletters.

We are America's Volunteer Lifesavers! What is of interest to us? All aspects of boating, including but not limited to education, operations, training and what others are doing.

In your newsletter, try to remember the four cornerstones of the Auxiliary and address all four! Can you name them? They are Operations, Education, Vessel Examinations and Fellowship.

Don't get tied up into just one or two areas and ignore the others – they are ALL IMPORTANT.

Think for a moment about the various publications that you receive.

What type of articles do you read? If you are like most folks, short articles (two to four paragraphs) are first. Then those with photos and graphics.

Finally, if you have a specific interest, you may read one or two of the long articles. So, first rule

ON PUBLICATIONS

Derrick
Young

deyoung1@mindspring.com



of thumb. Keep it Short.

Next - ask for pictures.

This leaves the really big question - who should write for the newsletter?

Each newsletter should have something from your elected officers as well as each staff officer and/or committee that is in your unit.

Many times, there will only be one or two folks that contribute.

You then have to ask for assistance.

Remember what I said early on, this is a unit publication – it is your job to manage it and your elected officers are responsible to make sure that everyone gets information in on time.

What else?

Ask your unit secretary/recorder to provide a summary of the minutes. Put in a calendar to show what is planned for the next month or so.

Remember your newsletter goes beyond just the immediate membership so do NOT include

items of a personal nature (weddings, birthdays or someone going away for vacation, etc.).

You should include information on the passing of Auxiliary and area USCG personnel but exercise caution – remember to limit contact information to only that in the public domain (telephone numbers, etc.).

Remember the very basic rule – for something to be interesting you must first be interested in it.

Help each person to make his or her article interesting. Oh, and don't forget to remind folks that when they have nothing more to say – be quiet.

If you take an interest in the information and articles that are presented, you will have a lot of information to work with. Isn't that what you want?

A publication that your readership finds interesting – that folks read and contribute? That is the goal of every Publications Officer.

Now, in the last issue I mentioned the Joyner Library? Several of you have asked for the address. It is: National Coast Guard Auxiliary Collection/Joyner Library/East Carolina University/Greenville, NC 27858