

George Wittorff is a member of the Board of the NRAA, given the task of addressing membership issues facing the movement at a national level.

“This excellent article describing ways in which clubs and associations can enhance their Prize Meetings, especially in terms of attendance was submitted to me by Alan Patrick. Alan is a professional marketer, and we all would do well to read his ideas with the aim of implementing them for your next event.” George Wittorff - NRAA Director Membership.

“There is no such thing as a new idea. It is impossible. We simply take a lot of old ideas and put them into a sort of mental kaleidoscope. We give them a turn and they make new and curious combinations. We keep on turning and making new combinations indefinitely; but they are the same old pieces of coloured glass that have been in use through all the ages.” – Mark Twain

If this is true then how does a rifle club, DRA, State or National sporting body deliver more members or increase participation by existing members when there are no new ideas. Of course, the answer is we do as Twain says. “take a lot of old ideas and put them into a sort of kaleidoscope...and they make new and curious combinations”.

In the world of fashion, advertising and promotions a casual observation by anyone over the age of 60, of which there are many target shooters, will know that the new ideas of fashion whether it be wide ties, narrow ties, pointed toe shoes, mini skirts, long skirts, long hair or short hair the cycles of trends repeat themselves so why as a sport are we not applying the experience of past ideas, give them a turn and present them in a different and creative way to bring a new life to the sport?

One reason might be that change is something that takes effort and willingness to accept. But remember change brings life and happiness. Remember what a pacemaker does for those who have them, heart, lung and kidney transplants and antibiotics to name a few. These inventions and discoveries came about because the search for change and discovery to discover why and then why not were taken to a successful result which I suspect has delivered many a shooter further time to enjoy their sport.

So, to help the sport rediscover old ideas and present them differently so more people participate in this sport consider the list of what you can do to make successful change to your club.

1. Review your next prize meeting and consider what you are offering. If your numbers are the same each year seriously consider changing what you are offering. Add a component to spice it up. It does not have to be a change to distance, no of shots etc but how about mixing TR, FClasses or different club members together rather than the one club. This might well ensure there is a greater sharing of social and shooting experiences.
2. Review your graphics presentation of the event. My observations are that most clubs do not change their invitation except for the date and colour almost seems an unknown concept.
3. Do not rely on broad advertising through existing channels such as TR Magazine & State websites. Continue using them but develop your data base to all clubs and your existing range membership. Ensure you repeat your advertising at least three times when initiated by your club or organising committee.
4. Consider your promotional strategy if you have one. Have you changed what you offer competitors in terms of prizes. Have you included a special teasing prize which is almost too good to believe but unless a person asks or comes to the event they will never know if it is real or not?
5. Give a gift to every person who participates and promote it in your flyer. But maybe don't say what it is. Make it a surprise. Make sure the gift is related to your event and those likely to attend. Remember you must consider all ages and all classes of participants. Consider giving prizes to non-participants such as family members who always are left out. Reflect on just who your target market is and who has influence over the decision to attend a prize meeting if your objective is to get more people there. It might be a family, partner or business effect has as much influence as the competitor. All this helps make your place of sport be a welcoming and friendly place to visit.
6. Make sure the place you have your event at is presented in a welcoming, colourful and positive way. Ranges are usually mowed, tidied and made ready for BBQs, presentation and a drink after the event. But do you have a colourful welcome banner out. Do you have a welcome greeting group of people who are given the task of ensuring every attendee is made very welcome? Remember the last time you were given an unconditional greeting anywhere and what that made you feel and do. I bet you went back or at least gave it a continued good wrap to those closest to you for some time afterwards.

7. When you have an event make sure you gather the first and last name, mobile and landline number and address of each person. This is obvious but what do you do with this information after the event? Make sure you follow up with a quarterly or other time email informative flyer bringing your activities and future invitations to them.

Make sure you implement a personal email campaign next event and give the potential participant an offer to encourage them to come. Don't rely on the idea they came last time and they'll come again.

This says you care and are inviting to them to return and not just to the annual event. Your website, Facebook or direct email communication to participants is an essential vehicle to communicate.

8. Change your offer at each event. The shooting might remain the same but the way you present it and the social activity offers after shooting activities can and should change.
9. During the event interview competitors and visitors. Use your phone to video the comments from people. Get their testimonials. Some clubs have done this and in regional parts the local newspaper and TV will take it up.
10. Ask a professional event, PR or marketing person to help. They can make all the difference even if there is a small cost. Offer them a day on the range if they are not a shooter.

When all 10 to do's are implemented you are guaranteed to increase your event participation numbers. This has been experienced by one DRA with over 30% participation increase in their prize meetings when creative, colourful and well communicated information was delivered to a wide potential audience.

Whatever you decide to do you must **PROMOTE, PROMOTE, PROMOTE** to make it successful.