

Break-Out Group: Communications

Report of Discussion Group submitted by Jeanne Crouse and Phil Whitten on 10/2/98

Within the theme of "2000 and Beyond: Mastering Our Destiny," the group discussed how USMS should be communicating, who USMS should communicate with, and why USMS should communicate (what message should USMS be communicating?).

I. How Should USMS Communicate?

The general consensus is that USMS should explore the creation of a Communications Committee. (It was proposed that the On-line Computer Committee be expanded to Communications.) A Communications Committee could then provide the following services for USMS:

A. Devise a communications plan: establish a communications programs with specific goals and work with LMSCs and clubs to help them communicate more effectively. Within this communications plan, the following ideas could be implemented:

1. Create an electronic newsletter to which USMS members could subscribe. This newsletter would supplement information that members receive through SWIM.
2. Create a USMS infomercial.
3. Give guidance to locals and establish networks with newspapers, broadcast media (including public access channels), radio.
4. Encourage local groups to establish mentor programs.
5. Set up a support network and educational assistance for local newsletter editors (i.e., serve as a resource for newsletter editors for graphics design, content, story ideas, etc.).
6. Generate special publications (i.e., a CD-Rom of Masters history).
7. Suggest ideas for human interest stories.
8. Create press releases and USMS brochures.
9. Encourage coaches and swimmers to serve as Masters "goodwill ambassadors" to USS meets and meetings.

II. Who should USMS Communicate With?

1. Network with sports shops, health food stores (small businesses of interest).
2. Network with local health clubs.
3. Cardiologists
4. Members without coaches (much emphasis was placed on 4 and 5.)
5. Members who swim for fitness/health reasons, not competition.
6. Large corporations
7. USS and USS parents.
8. Chamber of Commerce.
9. Triathletes.

III. Why Should USMS Communicate (What Message Should USMS Communicate)?

The most important message for USMS to convey is the intangible emotional benefit that all of us receive through Masters swimming: a sense of belonging or family, fun, and good times and friendship. Not to be overlooked are the significant health benefits as well. Within this framework, many group participants believed that if we "build quality Masters programs, they will come."

A major reason for USMS to emphasize communication is so that we can retain our members and better serve our swimmers. A side benefit of improved communication will be growth of the organization.

USMS DISCUSSION GROUPS COMPETITION

MASTERING OUR DESTINY - 2000 AND BEYOND

- How can we, as an organization, create and inspire more members to participate - regardless of their ability?
- What "part" does competition play?
- What is it's role in the big picture?
- How narrowly do you define competition?

The group cited the following reasons why swimmers choose "not to compete".

Meets take too much time. You're in and out of the water - all day.

Novice swimmers are reluctant to use the starting blocks.

The swimmer is "not good enough". Being a "master" means you're really good.

The swimmer is out of shape.

The meet schedule isn't convenient.

Other negative comments about putting on meets were:

There's not enough LMSC support.

Facility cost and availability is prohibitive.

Volunteers are "overworked".

Suggestions were:

Get \$\$ support from LMSC or USMS

Many terrific suggestions were given to make competition more attractive to swimmers:

Offer a variety of meet formats.

Host a postal swim.

Single focus (erg. one event, all 50's)

Open water swims - easy? to put on. More \$\$.

Can be less intimidating and attract novices.

Novice only meets.

Multi- level meets (categories might be:

top ten+, attends meets, never competed)

Offer a clinic - followed by a small meet (limit events)

Include a social event with the meet.

Relay meets - team effort.

Team scoring - go "deep" with points and awards.

Include novice division.

1500 / postal/ open water for triathletes.

Mini meets - competition between teams or LMSC's.

Sr. Olympics - good entry level meet.

Evening (twilight) meet with social event.

Include 25's, kicking races, different events.

Holiday focus activities: Quadrathon (Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New years - different events each time - total at end)

Dual meets - at one pool - or can be postal.

Team "focus" ideas.

Everyone enter 1st 5 events - go play.

Goal - swim to Maui - calculate miles.

Coach - test for fitness - evaluate.

Special relays in workouts/build spirit.

Have competitive opportunities in workout.

Meets @ practice. Can combine results.

Involve significant others in activities.

Team challenge - to swim in 'X' # of events and get t-shirt when completed.

Holiday practices - special activities like (99 X 100 for the new year)

Rewards for attendance - meets/practices.

Goal setting workouts

THE COACH WAS MENTIONED OVER AND OVER. THEY HAVE A HUGE INFLUENCE AS TO WHETHER A SWIMMER IS COMPETITIVE. OFFERING COMPETITIVE OPPORTUNITIES IN A PRACTICE CAN ENCOURAGE SWIMMERS TO TRY OTHER COMPETITIONS. FOR SWIMMERS WITHOUT COACHES, THE LMSC NEEDS TO OFFER EXCITING AND INTERESTING OPPORTUNITIES TO "DIVE INTO" COMPETITION.

COACHES, TEAM(MATES) AND LMSC'S NEED TO "INSPIRE".

BREAKOUT GROUP: MEMBERSHIP

October 1, 1998

Action Items

1. Lap Posters (chart for keeping track of yardage). Jim Barber will work on developing a design. These posters/charts will be for pools in your community. Swimmers will record yardage. Local club will have names to contact. Awards for meeting certain yardage goals will be distributed..
2. Keep lists of workout groups. Registrars should have a list. Newsletters can print list.
3. Local USMS clubs can sponsor a triathlon team. This brings the triathlete into the local USMS club.
4. Make booklets, "Building a Successful Masters Team", available at no cost.
5. Check out practicing with a USS team until enough swimmers warrant a separate practice.
6. Become politically active in your community, recreation department, YMCA. Make these organizations aware of the impact of Masters swimmers.

The discussion included increasing membership and retaining members. Membership increases with new clubs or workout groups. The key is to increase the availability of pool time and coaching. See the action items above for ideas and suggestions.

USMS RELATIONSHIPS

Military	Open water
Red Cross	Media
Disabled/Paralympics/Special Olympics	I.G.L.A.
Sponsors/corporations	Red Cross
USA Swimming	NCAA
USS Coaches Association	AARP
University P.E. Departments	YMCA
Health Clubs	ISHOF
National Senior Sports	JCC
International Masters groups	YWCA
Triathlon	USOC
Other Masters sports	AMA
President's Council on Phys. Fitness	FINA
Recreation Departments	Swalk

RELATIONSHIP BONDS

Membership	Research
Facilities	Recognition
Financial Support	Acceptability
Credibility/Validity	Sociability
Masters Identification	Coaching

Wellness Breakout Group

The group discussed the meaning of wellness. The following definition was agreed to.

- Definition:
1. Absence of disease or disability
 2. *Quality of life*
 3. Energy and enthusiasm
 4. Optimal functioning – being the most you can be
 5. Balance – physical, mental, and spiritual

Wellness is more than health. It is an overall balance in life. Wellness involves prevention, preparation, planning and priorities. It requires motivation to plan and to change bad habits.

The group discussed projects that USMS can do to encourage Wellness. The group agreed that USMS should establish balance through a combined effort of several committees.

- Sports Medicine Committee can work to stimulate or collect research to recognize swimming as part of a healthy lifestyle. (Some health insurance companies with discounts for healthy lifestyles do not recognize swimming as an acceptable form of exercise.) Could also prepare a section for the Coaches' Manual on Wellness and Balance.
- Coaches Committee should encourage coaches to share this information with their swimmers.
- Fitness Committee could continue to develop clinics to teach non-swimmers how to swim and to spread the word on benefits of swimming, as well as the philosophy of wellness. These clinics should be open to the general public.
- Computer On Line Committee could have links from USMS web page to fitness and wellness pages or have a list of such pages.
- USMS could serve as a gatekeeper or databank for information and knowledge regarding wellness, aging, and similar topics.
- USMS could also join other organizations to promote wellness. One suggestion is the National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity. This is a coalition of organizations including the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Heart Association, the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, & Dance, the International Healthclub and Racket Sports Association and the President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sport.

**Money In, money Out
Break Out Discussion Group
October 1, 1998**

USMS, after years of fiscally conservative and responsible financial management is very healthy. Zero based budgeting and under expenditure of allocated budgets has resulted in retained earnings growth, to the point where the organization's balance sheet has the appropriate reserves for operations and insurance and approximately \$400,000 in additional funds. These are all safely invested in CD's and money market funds providing additional earnings.

Income is derived primarily from dues with sponsors and other program revenue making up the balance. Expenditures consist of the insurance, SWIM Magazine staffing and program costs.

The group's discussion centered on the attitude toward the management and spending of money. Are we too conservative? Are there more things we should be doing in support of members? How can we increase the resources?

On the income side, insurance costs are dropping due to our low claims history and a favorable insurance market. Sponsorships are growing as is membership.

Expenses continue to be held in check due to the fiscal responsibility of our committees and the budgeting process.

Is there more we should be doing with our money? The group posed a hypothetical question. What if we had a discretionary pot of money to spend in the best interests of the organization. Some of the ideas -

- seed public facilities through education and outreach to gain more facilities for Master's programs
- out reach program for more coaches through recruitment and training
- training of officials dedicated to USMS
- a national promotions and public relations program
- subsidize LMSC's and clubs with lower dues (they would keep the difference), paying for representation at convention and other revenue sharing programs
- allocate more money to health and fitness research and programs
- contributions to endowment fund.

We discussed defining the budget by mandatory operations costs and discretionary program cost. Encourage the committees to be inventive and creative in developing programs and think outside the box. Programs that have merits but which can't be funded through annual revenues might qualify for endowment grants.

All agreed that more money is better than less.