OPS not OOPS!
Laying the foundation for group motivation

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Many organizations struggle along doing what they have always done without a clear picture of why they have gathered as individuals into the group in the first place. They are "OOPS" toward whatever success they may find. Oops, there is a project we need to do. Oops, we forgot to do this or that. Oops, do we want to….

We human beings gather in groups to accomplish things we cannot do by ourselves, to enjoy the camaraderie of others, and to share our common lessons. Everyone comes to a group for her or his own reasons but there is usually an implied collective motive – you might join the ski club to meet other people but the ski club is organized to take ski trips. Capturing that Organizational Purpose Statement, herein after known as "OPS," provides direction as motivation for the group.

Just as each individual needs a PURPOSE to motivate decisions and actions, so it is with groups. Dr. Victor Frankel says that PURPOSE is the foundation of motivation. Clearly defined group purpose will lead to stronger individual relationships with the group.

The process of creating your "Organizational Purpose Statement" (OPS) is often slow and time consuming but the challenges you face working through this process together will smooth the working channels of communication and establish the relationships that will strengthen your organization. It is time well spent.

Set aside the time early on in your organizational meeting to work through this process. Use brainstorming techniques to include everyone's ideas and build a purpose that everyone in your organization can support. The more people included in the process of determining your OPS the better.

When refining your statement, use action words and energetic phrases that provide motivation and direction. Constantly check with the members to make sure everyone agrees. Be flexible and patient. All this work is providing the infrastructure for your organization. It will pay big dividends in the long run.

Most groups are organized around these objectives: Support of, or for, something/ someone; to represent member ideas and feelings; to establish and maintain positive working relationships with other groups; and to provide leadership for the efforts of our membership.

The final part of the OPS sets the goals and objectives necessary to facilitate the statement. These goals need to be **s**pecific, **m**easurable **a**ctivities which are **r**easonable and **t**ime-lined and contain **e**valuation tools and **r**ealistic desired outcomes. (SMARTER). They become part of the year-long plan.

As the year progresses, many things will change and be added to the plan but it is always easier to modify an existing plan than to take the time to invent a new one. It is also much easier to determine whether an event, project or activity is worthy of your group when your group has created a Organizational Purpose Statement. Simply put, if something comes up for consideration as an activity for your group that cannot be tied to the OPS, don't do it. Put it in a file for next year. Stay focused.

Since it is easier to cut and paste and fill in the blanks, below might help you get your OPS started. Good luck! It is important.

This is the Organizational Purpose Statement for _____

We have organized:

1. To actively encourage and vigorously support individual and collective involvement of our members (with/in/for the purpose of)
    _____
    _____
    _____

2. To actively seek and diligently represent the opinions, ideas, and concerns of our membership to
    _____
    _____

3. To establish and maintain positive working relationships with
    _____
    _____

4. To provide support for and to coordinate the efforts of our membership to
    _____
    _____

We will develop goals to achieve our purpose. Those goals will include the following programs and projects:
_____
_____
_____

We will establish a year-long plan that includes objectives, timelines and evaluations tools to meet our goals and to fulfill our purposes. Further, we will evaluate our existing projects to make sure they comply with the criteria stated above.