

FULL DAY SEMINAR

ConRunners Meeting
6/8/02

PUBLICITY

NOTE: Committee position should be re-named **MARKETING** since that is the scope of the work.

Methods of Dispersing Information:

- Flyers (see Flyer Make-up)
- Website
- Book festival
- Colleges (4-year, community, trade, vocational, etc.)
- Ads in major SF magazines
- Book discussions in libraries / bookstores
- Friends (word of mouth)
- News casts / local news shows (see Being Newsworthy)
- Newspapers
- Bookstores
- Radio Remotes (station reps come to site - must pay for them)

Flyer Make-Up:

- Keep to a minimum number of fonts and font sizes
- Do not put convention name at top of flyer
- Top of flyer area is for attention-grabbing things: catchy phrases, artwork, recognizable names
- Put all recognizable guest names on flyer along with a short, relevant bio
- Mention areas of interest - remember to mention a market place (dealers room) where stuff can be bought
- **TARGET** the flyers for where you place them; there should be several different flyer designs created for different interest areas (ex: Samuel R. Delaney, Author : bookstore : gay/lesbian community)
- Keep the front of the flyer easy-to-read with lots of "white space" and good flow of data - don't crowd it
- Remember the back of the flyer for more detailed information
- Remember the membership form and contact info

Being Newsworthy:

- If you are newsworthy, they will come
- There are several local news-related shows, all looking for something to show that is new & different
- When hard news is slow, the stations start looking through the events calendar for something to put on
- Be good community citizens - know what is going on year-round and be able to relate that information
- Create a media crew of those who are knowledgeable and can talk to the media (and videotape well)
- One person needs to be appointed at the corporate level to coordinate for year-round events with a consistent crew
- Suggestion of 5-6 costumed people who roam the halls at cons, greeting people, and able to talk to the media (create our own costumed freaks so that our representation on the local news shows is something to not be embarrassed over)
- Need to find names/faces that the media will cover

Why Do We Put On Conventions?:

- Social : to meet up with our friends or to find those who share the same interests and form a bond
- Educational : learn new things in panels and conversation
- Work : work behind the scenes voluntarily (also work for resume-padding)

Avenues Open For Use Due to Being 501c3:

- Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on Radio and TV
- Donation soliciting (from general database)
- Federal Grants (normally for specific usage)
- Need to have a Vision to be able to work the non-profit angle consistently
- CASFS Missions Statement: "We are a charitable, non-profit organization that exists to further science fiction, fantasy and science fields in Arizona."

Reasons For Making Conventions Grow:

- There is concern that growth should only be with the “right” people to keep the spirit - not necessarily true
- Cons need/want more people - new, different people, constantly
- Cons provide a sense of community - a feeling of “home”
- More ‘sheep’ (those who don’t share the community feeling) provide money and statistics that help maintain the core community
- Need diversity to have growth - program a core SF con, but also have areas that aren’t actually SF but of general interest
- Need to stop living in the Problems and start living in the Solutions
- Consider the demographics of the Phoenix area: Families with kids, and young professionals (25-35)
- Offer services to the local demographic and publicize it, increasing numbers; pay attention to why those people don’t come
- Reasons people don’t come: kids, money for food, etc.

Promotional Ideas:

- Offer services for kids who have a **full** (not youth) membership (i.e. X hours in daycare; can pay Y per hour for more hours)
- Arrange with hotel for cheaper food than regular restaurant (like the pool grill), then ADVERTISE IT (signs in ConSuite, etc.)
- VIP service for more affluent members (offer services and gifts for those who pay more, like DarkCon 2 did: gift basket in the room with drinks, classy munchies, toys, and themed promo items; VIP dinner/banquet; etc.)
- Reduced rates for group (5 people) or family (2 adults and 3 kids) pre-registration memberships: \$5 off per member
- T-shirt sales (CopperCon Tour shirt: list past Coppers thru today, with a teaser for future cons)
- Bumper stickers / static cling stickers : Ask Me About.... ; www.casfs.org ; Follow Me to...; etc.
- Massage therapists (could get through a school - offer free membership and hours to count towards their training) offer massages to those of colored ribbon levels (red, blue, black, rainbow). For those of white ribbon status (general volunteers), for every 4 hours worked, offer a 15-minute massage and a meal.
- Offer writing competitions to local schools and colleges - winner gets printed in ConNotations (same for art contests)
- Con Virgin Tours - make intros and show newbies around
- Pre-printed shopping bags (promoting the con) - distribute to stores where fen shop (give to store owner for free if used)
- Bookmarks for library distribution
- Annual membership in Phoenix cons (LepreCon, HexaCon, CopperCon). Agree on a price, and the percentage that would go to the conventions for the memberships. Problems: who would oversee it? (one solution: WesternSFA) logistical nightmare for most people to handle (it was determined that Kim Martin could keep track of it, but not many others could)

Corporate (CASFS) Actions To Make This Work Smoothly:

- Develop a CONTINUITY PLAN - a generic promo plan that can be tailored for specific conventions
- Script a phone spiel to be used by contact people before the con and by those handling at-con phones
- Consider making corporation membership available for the annual fee PLUS 12 hours of community service in the name of the organization (this will help the organization be recognized by the community, gaining free advertising)
- Become an active entity in the public eye; not only service, but fun (social) events that show we are a community
- Appoint an Activities Coordinator to arrange group gatherings and social events (technically a Vice-President’s duty, but hasn’t been done for a long time) - Jo Levee (she-Jo) suggested for this position
- Appoint a Corporate Promotions Coordinator to be in charge of the continuity plan for Publicity - Joe Levee (he-Joe) suggested for this position (this position needs an infrastructure of support people, which Joe already has trained due to RenFaire work). The crew should be involved in mentoring, spreading the knowledge with as many people as possible.
- Appoint a Do-Gooder Coordinator to arrange the community service activities (re: 12 hours service requirement for membership suggested); in the early stages, this can be handled by the Corporate Promotions Coordinator
- Meld all the different databases (member, art, dealer, pro, etc.) into **one** database to avoid duplication and to expand efforts
- Create press releases and press kits
- Get canned footage - pre-edit footage with suggested voice-over for use in news shows and PSAs

Publicity Action Items:

(this is a summary of the most important, highly actionable items that look most promising for CASFS to start undertaking)

- **Con Tour Tshirts**
- **Ask Me About CopperCon 23 Tshirts**
- **Pre-printed bags for store promotions**
- **Create 2 new positions in CASFS: Promotions Coordinator (publicity) and Activities Coordinator (social events)**
- **Bylaw change: add 12 hours community service to requirements for active membership**
- **Script phone spiel**

VOLUNTEERS

Attracting Volunteers:

- Call people you know to help
- Create a sense of ownership / belonging
- Make it easier to track their hours: 3x5 card, punched, hung behind badge and set up for tracking hours; label on back of badge for tracking; new badge; back of ribbon; etc.
- Volunteers : those who volunteer for 12 hours or less, generally decide to do so at-con, and usually not for a specific area
- Staff: those who work for generally more than 12 hours, often before the con as well as at-con, are arranged for in advance of the con and work in the area that recruited them
- As conventions increased in growth, there is need for increase in volunteers
- Differing views on casual volunteering (<12, sporadic timing) - too much paperwork and tracking vs. gives everyone a chance to taste involvement
- Let the volunteer coordinator know how many volunteers your area needs and what they are for and what skills are needed
- Install a sense of wonder: be inclusionary: create a more diverse “us”

Things Volunteers Can Do (partial list):

- Door-sitters
- Cooking and other areas of food prep
- Count programming attendance per panel
- Prep (various)
- Room watching
- Fill bowls in ConSuite
- Computer networking
- And much more!!!!

Keeping Volunteers:

- Create a feeling of ownership
- Make child care assistance available (see Kid's Programming)
- Debriefing with pizza on Sunday for staff & volunteers (feed them, thank them, get their opinions, keep the attitude positive - this is separate from the only concom dinner later, which is a closed meeting that discusses problems in the open and can get negative as well as positive)
- Raffle for donated prizes based on hours worked
- Volunteer Tshirts
- End of convention (volunteers only) time with GoH
- Follow up later

Kid's Programming:

- Babysitting for concom, staff, programming
- Outsource to limit liability (like a regular daycare center, or a licensed caregiver, etc.)
- Parents can volunteer one hour for X hours of babysitting during limited hours (closed for meals, age limitations, etc.)

Volunteer Supervisor's Job Requirements:

- Responsible for making certain waivers & logs are filled out properly and are reported fully after con
- Recruit volunteers
- Train / Find background skills that are usable
- Organize the volunteer process
- Distribute / Allocate volunteers and forms and ribbons as needed
- Reward volunteers - make happy children
- Structure - feel like accomplished something

LEPRECON 28

- Local pros had list of grievances:
 - Want individual book signings not in dealers room - would prefer mass social autograph signing
 - Didn't like Meet-The-Pros coinciding with Happy Hour - too loud for introductions
 - Book readings in lobby and pool areas are too noisy - would prefer a regular room in a quiet area for book readings
 - Hate programming topics, boorish fans on panels, too much repetition in panel topics - Programming crew is holding meetings on the 3rd Monday of each month to discuss programming topics
 - Money issues: need to pay to get in to con (unless do meet-the-pros plus 2 other panels and/or publicity value)
 - Guests: LepreCon = Art; CopperCon = Author/Science; - Need to keep contact - Pro Liaison?
- Problems with Rogue Programming (other groups setting up their programming niches) - Can't be using programming supplies (ribbons, pocket program space, place cards, etc.) without prior contact
- Kept Costuming tract in a boardroom - kept it easy to find in one space
- Needed more signage and maps
- Too spread out