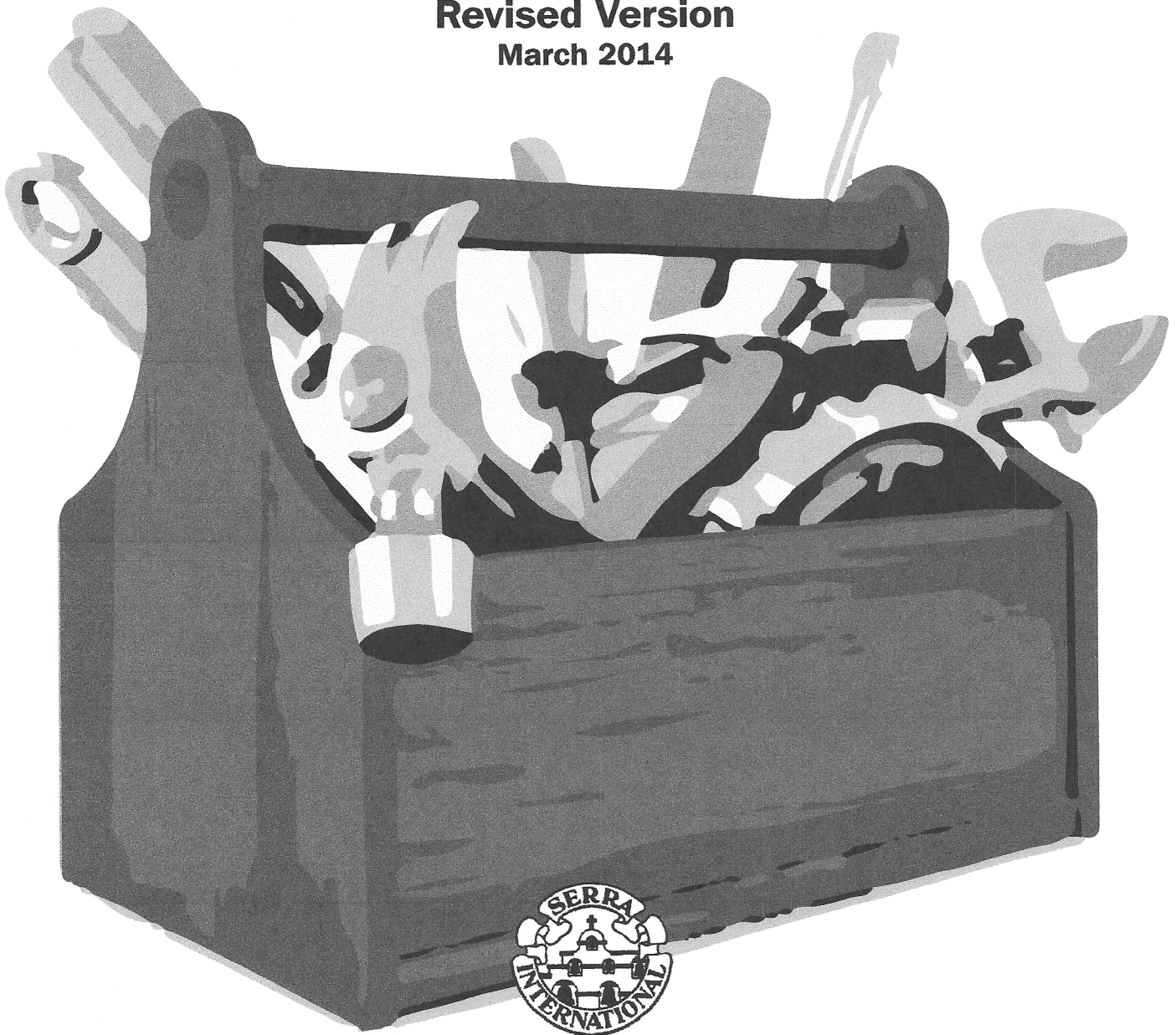


TOOL KIT

Initially Prepared for District Governors Training January 2014

Common Serra Club and District Problems with Suggested Solutions

Revised Version
March 2014



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COMMON CLUB PROBLEM

Problem: Shortage Of Members In Our Club Is Becoming A Major Problem.

TOOL: GET YOUR CLUB FULLY FUNCTIONING again so the members feel good about their work and want to invite others to join them.

Step 1. Fill every slot with an officer. Make assignments if necessary!

Step 2. Have every member on a committee, with a job.

Step 3. Challenge each officer to have simple plan at next board meeting to fulfill the Committee and Club mission.

Step 4. Hold a club program to assess what members can do to revitalize and refocus on Serra Mission of fostering and promoting vocations. Implement top suggestions.

Step 5. Then, focus your membership invitations* on most receptive recruitment pools:

- Daily Mass attendees
- Parents of seminarians and postulants
- Family members of priests and nuns
- Your own family members

* For detailed information on recruiting steps see *Recruitment Workshop* slides on USA Council Resource Material disk or at www.serraus.org.

COMMON CLUB PROBLEM

Problem: Average Age Too High – Can’t Recruit Young Members

TOOL: CHANGE YOUR DEFINITION OF “YOUNG” MEMBERS TO “YOUNGER” MEMBERS

Step 1. Admit that recruiting “young” members in the 25-44 year old age bracket sounds wonderful, but is increasingly impractical due to careers, family obligations, and lack of time and money.

Step 2. Make the age of your “targeted prospects” in the 45 – 60 year old age bracket or, even, just younger than yourself.

A. Most are becoming “empty nesters” so have more time and dollars available to join our Mission

B. People in the 45 – 60 age bracket know they are moving toward the 61 – 80 year old age bracket, and see wisdom in their elders (not a bunch of old fogies that will be boring)

C. Many in this age bracket are looking for something meaningful to do in retirement.

Step 3. Refer to and then follow the solution steps listed for the Club Problem on page 3.

COMMON CLUB PROBLEM

Problem: Difficulty with Members Taking Club Officer Assignments

TOOL: ADOPT THE LEGACY OF STRONG CLUBS AND EXPAND EACH MEMBER'S PERSPECTIVE OF THEIR PERSONAL LEGACY

- Step 1.** Adopt the policy on many of the strongest and most vibrant clubs that all officer positions will be filled every year and no member will serve in the same office more than two consecutive years.
- Step 2.** Form a 5 person Nominating Committee and follow the guidelines in our USAC Membership Directory for the annual officer nomination process.
- Step 3.** Require the Committee to meet as many times as necessary to fill all officer slots.
- Step 4.** Before the Nominating Committee begins its work, hold a Club program that is focused on building a stronger Club. Emphasize:
- A. Every member has unique talents and strengths to contribute
 - B. Every member approaches a challenge differently
 - C. All share the responsibility to avoid burnout of the few
 - D. The joy and fun of being an active Serran praying and working to promote and foster vocations to the priesthood & religious life
 - E. Being a active Serran – especially a Club officer – is an excellent way to role model a strong Catholic LEGACY to our children and grandchildren
 - F. The many talents that Almighty God has given us and that we are called to maximize those talents (Matt 25: 14-30 Parable of the Talents)
- Step 5.** Build a backlog of commitments for future club officer positions. Some talented people may lack time NOW to move into a position. Ask when their current commitment is scheduled to be finished, and gain a commitment NOW that they will take a club officer position 1 – 2 years in the future.

COMMON CLUB PROBLEM

Problem: Getting People To Take On The Job Of Club President

TOOL: A GROOMING PROCESS

- Step 1.** Look ahead. Generally, few persons are willing to just accept the invitation to be Club President the first time offered. A grooming effort needs to take place.
- Step 2.** Identify two or three members who are enthusiastic about Serra and interact well with other members in tasks or projects and seem to make suggestions to others in performance of these.
- Step 3.** Get more acquainted with them in conversation before, during, and after meetings. Get to know them and their background.
- Step 4.** Obtain their assistance by having them carrying out duties as a vice-president or another officer. This will give them the opportunity to assume the responsibilities of a leader. Even if they do not, they can still be considered for grooming into the president-elect office.
- Step 5.** Encourage, guide, and mentor them as early as possible. Evaluate their strengths and talents, and provide feedback to build their confidence and help them learn, improve, and contribute to the club's mission. Give them authority to act and responsibilities to carry out.
- Step 6.** Introduce them to the idea of passing on the LEGACY of Serra, its spirit and mission, like runners in a relay pass on the baton to the fresh runners on their team. Grasp the Serra Baton for awhile and then pass it on. Do your part to preserve the LEGACY.
- Step 7.** When the opportunity arises for the nominating committee to make its search, suggest at least two persons you have been grooming for the office of president-elect.

COMMON CLUB PROBLEM

Problem: Clubs Are Losing Their Zeal For Getting Vocation Activities Up And Running

TOOL: ADD FRESHNESS, KEEP IT SIMPLE, AND MOVE FORWARD

Step 1. Strengthen your Vocations Committee by assigning at least five club members to assist the VP for Vocations.

Step 2. Strongly encourage the Committee to meet and explore the very simple and exciting New Vocations Activities that have been documented as *THE FIVE STAR PROGRAM for VOCATIONS*. It is available from Serra USAC at www.serraus.org or by phone at 1-888-777-6681.

This document gives instructions on how to use your limited resources to instigate any one of the five simple and exciting programs in your club. In fact, it encourages clubs to select one of the programs, execute it, and six months later select a second then a third through all five.

Step 3. Review the five programs that are each simply explained as to what they are and how to implement them easily in your parishes. The five suggested programs are:

- A. Traveling Chalice or Crucifix
- B. Using Church Bulletins
- C. 31 Club
- D. Celebrate Priestly and Religious Life
- E. Holy Hour for Vocations

Step 4. Grab one of the five programs, decide how to proceed, introduce it to the club, and begin implementation of the selected program in 3-5 parishes by a set date.

Step 5. Generate enthusiasm among all club members by letting them know on a regular basis about the progress and success of the initial implementation. Celebrate successes.

Step 6. Assess implementation after 6 months, and repeat planning and implementation process for your first of the FIVE STAR programs for the rest of parishes.

Step 7. Choose another of the FIVE STAR programs and repeat process until all five programs have been implemented.

COMMON CLUB PROBLEM

Problem: Our Club Is Running Short of Money

TOOL: LIVE WITHIN BUDGET, BUT DON'T BE AFRAID TO INCREASE REVENUE

- Step 1.** Ensure your Club Treasurer has a solid system to account for club funds and is skilled at using the system, preferably a simple computer-based accounting program.
- Step 2.** Ensure your Club Board creates an annual budget as part of the SLPC process, reviews your updated budget on a monthly basis, and takes immediate action if expenses seem out of line. During this process, many clubs have discovered the exact expenses that were no longer necessary that could be cut immediately, preventing any dues increase.
- Step 3.** Push hard to collect dues from slow paying members
- Step 4.** Consider asking your members for a contribution, such as a Christmas donation. Some clubs have done this with great success.
- Step 5.** Increase dues by 5% or 10% at the most.
- A. Be sure to discuss at a couple of Board meetings that this is your best option.
 - B. Give several weeks of advance notice and explain how expenses have been scrutinized, how long it has been since the last dues increase, and how reasonable the percent increase is.

COMMON CLUB PROBLEM

Problem: Many Members Have Quit Coming To Regular Meetings

TOOL: TRACK ATTENDANCE AND RE-ENERGIZE MEETINGS AND MEMBERS

Step 1. Ensure that your regular club meetings are top-notch and not part of the reason for lower attendance.

Step 2. Measure the attendance problem.

- A. Have the Officers and Trustees define the number of absences that indicates an attendance problem may be developing.
- B. Record attendance at each meeting for a period of six months.
- C. Notify the President when a member may be developing an attendance problem and/or when a pattern of absences of several members is occurring.
- D. Determine whether members with attendance problems are current with their dues payments.

Step 3. Call the member(s) to let them know they have been missed and to find out the reason(s) for their absence. Encourage them to begin regular attendance and, if appropriate, ask their help on a specific project.

Step 4. Address the reasons members gave for their absences if they are within the Club's control and report back to the member.

Step 5. Establish a phone committee to make a reminder call to each and every member 2 days before the next meeting and continue for 6 months.

Step 6. Promote on-going attendance strongly using guidelines on page 16.

COMMON CLUB PROBLEM

Problem: Getting Club Officers To Attend The Board Meetings

TOOL: RE-FOCUS AND HOLD TO EXPECTATIONS

- Step 1.** Schedule and hold the monthly board meeting at the same day and time every month, for example, the third Wednesday from 7 to 8:15 p.m.
- Step 2.** Set pre-meeting expectations:
 - A. Compose a fresh agenda each meeting
 - B. Send the agenda early and ask board members for input
 - C. Ask for a report from each officer at each meeting on progress.
toward committee and club goals
- Step 3.** Run the meeting in a business-like fashion: stick to the agenda, keep the discussion moving, and end on time.
- Step 4.** Call the board members two days before the meeting to remind them.
- Step 5.** Call members who miss a meeting to let them know they were missed and encourage them to attend next meeting.
- Step 6.** Promote attendance strongly using guidelines on page 16.

COMMON DISTRICT PROBLEM

Problem: Difficulty In Getting Volunteers For The Jobs Of District Governor And DG-Elect

TOOL: CHANGE YOUR VIEW OF THE TASK

- Step 1.** Look at this task as a **dynamic recruiting effort** in which the clubs have a primary role in nominating candidates, instead of as a task of one of two people asking individuals until someone says yes.
- Step 2.** Form a committee consisting of the last 5 or 6 available governors to improve the overall health of the districts and clubs. A good name for the committee could be District Improvement Committee.
- Step 3.** Send a committee member (and back-up if possible) to personally visit each Club President. No other club members should be there. The meeting should discuss only **strengthening the Serra District** by the President's club doing these 4 things:
- A. Send more club members to the district and/or regional convention.
 - B. Send its Club President (or representative) to every quarterly District Council Meeting.
 - C. Nominate a District Governor-elect within next 2 weeks.
 - D. Tell the Committee what help the Club wants to get from the District.
- Step 4.** Rank the nominees submitted and have a Committee member(s) meet in person with the best candidate and confirm the Committee's enthusiasm and support for the nominee.

COMMON DISTRICT PROBLEM

Problem: Getting Presidents To Attend District Council Meetings

TOOL: HELP THE PRESIDENTS UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- Step 1.** Know the responsibilities, purposes, and activities of your District Council.
- Step 2.** Identify which club presidents typically do and do not attend Council meetings and match their geographic proximity for possible carpooling in the future.
- Step 3.** On your club visits explain the role and activities of the District Council and that it involves teamwork among all the clubs. Encourage continued attendance by those who have been coming and find out why the other clubs have not been attending. Address issues and concerns raised.
- Step 4.** Upon scheduling a council meeting, encourage an active Council member to invite and ride with the less active one to that council meeting.
- Step 5.** Call and personally invite presidents who typically don't come and explain why it is important for them to be at this meeting. Follow up with an email reminder 2 days before the meeting.
- Step 6.** At the council meeting, recognize the presence and importance of those attending. Acknowledging their roles in representing the DG and Council to their clubs and being part of the team needed to promote the work of Serra in the district.
- Step 7.** Highlight interclub projects being coordinated at the meeting so as to invite attendees to communicate actively on cooperative needs and problems. This encourages first time attendees to want to return and develop an association of like-minded Serrans.
- Step 8.** Promote strongly using guidelines on page 16.

COMMON DISTRICT PROBLEM

Problem: Attendance At District/Regional Conventions Is Declining

TOOL: ANNOUNCE EARLY AND PROMOTE OFTEN

- Step 1.** Announce dates, location, and overview of the convention at least 9 months before the convention start.
- Step 2.** Start a program of promotion visits to each club by District Governor(s).
- Step 3.** Start a promotion program of many spaced email or hard copy releases. Consider as many as a dozen to be completed a week before the registration deadline.
 - A. Send them from the local bishop, speakers on the convention agenda, as well as other interesting Religious and Serra leaders in the area with their permission.
 - B. Target one category of prospective attendees with each promotional piece (Club Presidents, Club VP's for Vocations, wives, chaplains, new club members, veteran club members). Give each a reason they should attend.
- Step 4.** Have Club Officers call, email, and personally invite 2 or 3 club members to accompany them to the convention.
- Step 5.** Make it easy and fun to attend. Carpool and invite others to ride with you. Offer to arrange sharing of lodging to save money.
- Step 6.** Order *Increasing Attendance And Profits at USAC District/Region Conventions* from USAC by calling 1-888-777-6681.
- Step 7.** Promote strongly using guidelines on page 16.

COMMON DISTRICT PROBLEM

Problem: Some Clubs Don't Contribute the \$3 District/\$2 Region Assessment

TOOL: BILL CLUBS EVEN IF YOU DON'T WANT OR NEED THE ASSESSMENT

- Step 1.** Don't adopt the position that "I don't need the money." The assessments are meant to help defray your out-of-pocket expenses. You may not want or need the money, but the next DG or RD may. It is critical to establish and maintain the expectation that the assessments be paid.
- Step 2.** Ask the USA Council Chicago Office to send you (the District Governor) the club invoices for your clubs. They are only provided upon request.
- Step 3.** Distribute the appropriate club invoice with a cover letter to each club treasurer with a copy to the club president. The cover letter should instruct the treasurer to issue and mail one check to the RD and a second check to the DG.
- Step 4.** If your check is not received by the due date, follow up. You might ask questions such as: "Did you receive the assessments?" "When do you plan to pay it?" "Do you need a letter of explanation for your board?" "Why are you withholding the contribution?"

COMMON DISTRICT PROBLEM

Problem: Motivating Club Officers to Attend SLPC

TOOL: FOCUS ON THE PLANNING ASPECTS OF THE SLPC AND PROMOTE THAT THEME

- Step 1.** Emphasize the “planning” purposes of the Conference in all promotion and contacts.
- Step 2.** Challenge Serrans who say, “Been there, done that.” They may have been at other SLPCs, but they did not do the planning needed to make their committees and clubs successful in achieving the Serra mission **in this coming year.**
- Step 3.** Make it as easy as possible for officers to attend. Secure input from club presidents as to the best date. Secure a central location. In large districts consider holding more than one SLPC at different sites
- Step 4.** Announce the Conference well in advance and start a promotion program of multiple releases targeted at categories of officers (VPs of major committees, treasurers, etc.). Use endorsements from past conference attendees. Highlight new information and tools that will be discussed. Point out the coordination of dates and large scale events that is done at the SLPC.
- Step 5.** Identify some solution or approach used by a club to deal with an issue that others might benefit from, thus enabling someone from that club to **come and make a contribution to the event.** Encourage all officers from that club to come and support their club.
- Step 6.** Have members of the District Council personally invite unregistered club officers by phone as a follow-up to a written invitation from the DG. Answer any questions or concerns regarding the conference.
- Step 7.** Promote strongly using guidelines on page 16.

Want to increase attendance at your next planned meeting?

Answer! Promote

How should you do this? Develop a plan to promote early and often

Do your homework

1. **Determine** - The total number of participants who have been coming to previous similar meetings, and the number from each category of participants.
2. **Determine** - How many participants do you need or want to attend your event, and the number from each category of potential participants.
3. **Calculate** - How many does this mean you have to attract (in each category) beyond the norm? Have fun with this, but the more realistic you make it, the better chance you will have of accomplishing your mission of increasing attendance.

Define Categories - Consider these for some of our most common meetings:

1. **Spring Leadership P C** - First time attendees - Club President - VP Programs - VP Vocations - VP Membership - VP Communications - Other club officers and past officers (by each category) - Chaplains - Spouses - Clubs not recently attending - Past DG's - Past presidents. 8 releases are not too many
2. **Region/District Convention** - Consider each of the same categories as for SLPC above. 15 releases are not too many.
3. **District Council meeting** - Each Club President - President-elects - Past Presidents - Past Governors - New club officers who missed out on SLPC - Any category of Serran who is interested in a particular topic on the agenda. 5 releases are not too many

How to promote - Determine the number of promotional releases you are willing to generate and distribute, and who they should be from (e.g., Bishop, RD, DG, speakers, past attendees, etc.) to accomplish your increased attendance goal (calculated above) - Limit each release to one topic and one topic only - Do not ever tell why management needs more attendance - Only tell how the targeted person will gain by attending, or what is exceptional about one part of the agenda - Target each release to one category at a time, but distribute to all categories - Make your initial announcement of the event early, **RULE OF THUMB** - Convention (ten months) - SLPC (three months) - District Council (two months) - Promotional releases can come as often as every two days if necessary, and be completed by the registration deadline - Last minute releases are totally ineffective - Serrans need time to fit this proposed meeting into their schedule before something else gets on the calendar.

Club meetings

1. **Club Board meeting** - Stir up a new tradition. For the week before the board meeting, phone, email, snail-mail, and second phone call (all 4), to each member on board telling why he/she will personally gain by attending the next board meeting. Do these 4 things to each board member for six months before tapering off.
2. **Regular club meeting** - Invite each club member by using two personal invitations from two different people a day or two before the meeting. Address these personal reminders in addition to the regular group email for that day.