



Penny-Wise, but Pound-Foolish

Some of the best remembrances of my motorcycling life are etched in my memory with pictures of my GWTA chapter and other friends, either doing rides or putting on events or just socializing.

And I'm sure that other leaders have the same kind of fond memories of good times, which make making tough decisions or handling difficult issues with the friends in those memories not just challenging, but down-right numbing.

Too bad. We have to get over it. And we can.

When I first took on the job of working with our Recruitment and Retention, I heard stories of Chapters where they had a significant number of people in the group whose membership had lapsed, but they continued to ride with the Chapter. I have to admit I was surprised to hear this. My Chapter experience is so positive, I eventually signed up for "Life Membership". And I could hardly imagine a situation where folks would participate with a Chapter, but not pay dues. Still, I'm assured it happens. All the time, from what I'm told.

What is a Chapter to do? Do you confront the non-paying members, and risk alienating them so that they do not come back at all? And, therefore, perhaps lose the critical mass it takes to keep a Chapter running at all?

Yup. That's what you do. But you do it in a nice way. A positive way. A way that does not assign blame or embarrass people more than necessary. Let me suggest a way that might work for you. How about if a Chapter Director or ACD or other senior Chapter member approached the member whose membership had lapsed, and says, "Hey Bob! I hate to bring this up, but the reports from National say that your membership has lapsed. I don't know if their system is messed up, or if your renewal was lost in the mail, or what. But I would like to help you get it figured out. Could you check to see if you've got a canceled check or credit card charge? And, if not, maybe you can renew at the GWTA.org web site. I know you are an active and important part of this Chapter, and we do not want to lose you. We all want to keep you as a member." And then pass over a green tri-fold membership application. You could even offer to take a check, and mail it in for them.

Does this put someone on the spot? Perhaps. But we are not holding someone up against the wall and working them over. We need to work with our members. Money tight this month? Hey, no problem, as long as we get caught up next month.

A similar situation exists when we have an active family in the Chapter, but, for whatever reason, they have chosen to only register a single member. Of course, this does save them \$10. But, honestly, situations like this do affect the GWTA as a whole association. Even \$10 makes a difference to an organization like us.

Do we just let situations like this slide, to keep the family in the Chapter? I would hope not. You may not know it, but we as an organization need our renewal dollars to make our budget. And, believe it or not, we could actually lose our GWTA if we do not make a better effort to collect (all) the membership fees we are due. Just like the memories which are etched in my brain, I would hate to lose our organization because we did not have to commitment to collect dues when they are due.

The number of single memberships that should be Family membership adds up very quickly. I think the GWTA means enough to me, and probably you, that we could get over the nervousness, and approach a family with a single membership and work with them to get them properly registered. I think doing anything else is being penny-wise, but pound foolish. What good does it do us to keep a single membership, if we lose the whole organization? And, unfortunately, it could happen this way.

Helping to collect the membership dues we need to survive might be a challenge, but it is also part of being in the best Association of it's kind. Only a membership-owned and membership-operated group like the GWTA could give as much as we do for so little dollars.

Our membership program is one of the best things about being on the way to "Destination Friendship." Let's find more ways to keep it working.

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