



So You're Going To Be An Officer...

It's November, and time for us in the GWTA to be thinking about new officers. Maybe it's time for you to volunteer? I have some ideas for folks thinking about being officers, and for Chapter members to help officers, too.

First, read the "TA Way". At least the part that pertains to the office you are thinking about. You may be surprised what you find there. Even if you are doing an office you have done before or are doing again, go ahead and read that TA Way one more time. Let it reinforce what works, and give you ideas to do things better. The TA Way is the 'standard' for GWTA culture, and communicates a good deal about what makes our organization what it is.

Part of the reason I recommend reading (and re-reading) the TA Way is to know the minimum requirements for your job. Nothing is more frustrating than taking on a job, and then discovering there is a lot more to it than you ever imagined, or wanted to do. (I can tell you some hair-raising stories all by myself.) When you know what the minimums are, so you can be comfortable knowing you are achieving them. But I also encourage folks to resolve to do more than the minimum. Whatever task you take on, make it your own by adding your own personal touch. Make it so that, in a few years, people will look back and say, "Remember how Bob did that? Man, that was cool."

One of my core philosophies is that if we're not having fun, then we're probably not doing it right. I encourage the same approach to an officer task. Make how you do your task something that you will enjoy, and something others will envy. I have always found that when things are going well, everybody wants to help. So figure out a way, using your own particular skills, talents and style, that the job becomes fun for the whole Chapter. Not 100% sure what will work for the whole Chapter? No problem. Do what works for you and your friends. I bet that you will satisfy the needs of many others, too. And those that have other ideas will let you know, so you can involve them next time. The whole idea of the GWTA is to have fun. If you think of doing something that is fun for you and your friends, that enthusiasm will carry over and stimulate others to get involved, too. When others think what we are doing is fun, they are more likely to step up and help when it is time for us to move on.

Getting others involved is crucial to the success of our organization. And we need to start at the Chapter level. Good Chapter leaders help us find good State leaders. Good State leaders help us find good Regional leaders. And so on. But it starts at the Chapter. Yes, riding is the core reason for membership in the GWTA, but fun and friendship is the magic that holds us together. I recently had a ride with a fellow member. We couldn't make the Chapter campout, but we decided to make a day trip to go see them. We met for coffee first, and started talking about what it means to be friends. We met up with the rest of the chapter (about a 100 mile ride), but the weather turned bad, so we came home a bit early. We stopped for lunch, had a cigar, and talked some more. That's what made the day great. It wasn't the destination, it wasn't the weather, it wasn't the food. It was who we rode with, and how we talked. Whether you are going to be an officer or just a member, I encourage you to help out and participate wherever you can. That is what will make it fun for everyone.

Finally, if you are going to be an officer of any kind, I suggest you set some goals. Maybe it is to grow the chapter by 'n' members. Maybe it is to go on 'n' trips. Maybe it is to take 'n' members to Gold Rush. Maybe it is to have 'n' members reach Level IV in the Rider Education program. Maybe it is to reach "Gold" in the Chapter Olympics (hint, hint.) And then make them public. Tell people about your goals. Get them involved. Let them be part of the success. Celebrate milestones along the way. Invite others to share their goals, too. And work with them to achieve their goals. And celebrate with them when your friends and fellow members reach some goal. Get others involved in your goals, get involved in other friends goals. Sharing goals will bind you together, make achievement more fun, make your Chapter stronger.

If you are not an officer this time around, I suggest you promise to help whomever is doing the officer role this period. For many to have fun, some have to do a lot of work. But I have usually found the work to be part of the fun. I bet you will, too.

Setting goals, getting others involved, making a job personal, knowing the minimums and doing more than that, and following the TA Way are all fun parts of the process along the way to Destination Friendship.

Jerry Weltner
National R&R Director (Recruitment & Retention)