

US Powerboat Training Centers' Meeting
US Sailing Leadership Forum
February 5, 2014
San Diego, California
Prepared by Stephanie Webb, Edison Sailing Center

US Powerboating Manager, Jonathan Meyers, provided a review of the year:

- Increased participation by 35% between 2012-2013
- Added new IT course to increase availability of Instructional Trainers
- Seven new training centers and Eastport YC added to training centers bringing total number of centers to 30
- Online marketing and increased print presence – Facebook, PropTalk, Spinsheet – positive results

A panel of training center representatives responded to the following topics:

A. Success – what does it look like?

- A shift from a state to a national program
- Outreach
- Awareness – put a boat out in front of West Marine with ads/brochures for your PB courses
- Host a Marina Day, an Explore Boating Day
- Partnerships with schools
- A need to train Race Committees using their equipment – make this a requirement
- Post your course dates 6-9 months out and honor your dates, even if it's only one person signed up. Restricted courses can show as “closed” or “full”, but get – and keep your name out there

B. How do you drive interest in getting boater's education in states without licensing requirements?

- Focus on the safety issue
- Target the importance of training for those who instruct, coach, run races, etc.
- Offer Explore the Bay Days, Discovery Days, Marina Days to bring people to you

C. What do we charge? Fees?

- Wide range of fees - \$125 - \$575 (cross-section of responses)
- Way to advertise: “Come crash our boats, not yours!”
- Who do you market to – home schoolers (can schedule throughout the day, not just after school), colleges & schools (some may earn credit for the course), Fire Dept teams (rescue boats), those who are going for their USCG pre-6 pack license, and the FAA (airports that are on the water must repair landing lights), DOT (bridges), dredging companies, ACE; annual training for staff of YCs, sailing centers – aligned with mission and commitment to safety; First Responders – one training center invites a specific First Responder group each spring to train in Safety Rescue/Support
- Create a curriculum that builds on the Safe Powerboat Handling (16 hours); then Safety Rescue (8-10 hrs); Mark Set Boat Handling (4-6 hrs); Race Mgt course (1 day)
- Combo course options can also drive additional traffic to your training center
- Don't forget the Cruising Powerboat training piece

- D. Instructors – how do you keep them interested and “fresh”?
- Get them to teach right away. If not confident, have them co-teach.
 - Get them to follow-up with students before and after classes – get feedback and determine if additional help is needed or desired
 - Create cohorts of trainers – gather them periodically; have them teach a skill on the water or in the classroom; ask what they would like to have in the way of additional training or support
 - Suggest taking a student course elsewhere
 - Recruit good instructors
 - Remember that PB Training Coordinators are good “Go To’s” for support
 - Jon is working on creating an instructor’s network
- E. Techniques – what’s important to do the first hour of class?
- Set the tone
 - Get an idea of who’s in the room
 - Keep calm and maintain professional attitude
 - Try to engage everyone
 - Combine drills/skills to move things along
 - Use humor
- F. Tips – what’s worked for you?
- Rhymes, anagrams help cement information
 - Colored magnets on white boards for navigation
 - “Steer before you gear”
 - “Don’t approach a dock faster than you want to hit it”
 - “Go slow; be a pro”
 - Teaching the boat skills uses a different part of the brain
 - Encourage friendly competition between teams on drills
 - Hook the kill switch to anyplace but your wrist! Surfboard leash easy to move. Consider the auto-tether at West Marine
 - Use the website’s video clips
 - Call before and after the course
 - Laminate key points for each drill and keep on the boats

As part of our training day, we were introduced to Josh Chiles, a Social Media Marketer who founded a company called **Engaged!** Weather prevented Josh from attending the Forum, but he “connected” to the group through a live webcast. Josh likes the social network called Google Plus Hangout – it’s done in real time, it’s industry friendly, and you can share the screen

Josh polled the group on its goals for using social media – examples given included pictures (parents love these), reaching out to people we know, growing the organization. Josh offered five benefits of social media: (<http://engd.in/proven-benefits>)

1. Strengthens customer loyalty – it is a conversation with a person
2. Provides insight about your customers – mailouts target a location with no feedback; Facebook can target a zipcode but far more...you can increase the reach for less cost
3. Reduces marketing expenses – traditional marketing is linear, 1:1; social media is viral. Actions beyond the initial Facebook post, e.g., are “profit” because they have now spread the word to others
4. Increases web traffic – tends to drive traffic organically, e.g. from Facebook to You Tube and beyond the website – blogging, etc.
5. Extremely targeted

Josh also offered the following suggestions relative to Facebook business pages:

- A. Cover photo – update this four times a year; make sure that compressed images still make sense
- B. Logos – make them simple; square Create a custom image to represent your brand and keep it across all communications
- C. Likes – something to remember: when people don't hit "LIKE", its relevance decreases and Facebook removes content. It's also why we don't see some people's posts
- D. Negative posts – respond right away; be first to do so
- E. Positive results = visible data ---- let the data drive your decisions
- F. Create a Facebook account: <http://facebook.com/ads>
- G. Hashtags carry across platforms – they work well for discovery, e.g. #sailing,#boating,#ussailing
- H. Posts – every 24 hours or every other day
- I. Best time to post – between 2-3 PM and 8-10 PM
- J. Photo albums are helpful – use 1,3, or 6 format for max results
- K. Appeal – across generations. Note that younger generations don't show loyalty to a specific platform

Summary: Engagement is the key to success in social media and your business/organization! Create engaging content: "Help us find a new home for...". "Help us make sailing possible for...". "Share this post with someone who..."

If we think in Olympic terms: LIKE is the Bronze; COMMENT is the Silver; and SHARE is the Gold!

<http://facebook.com/pages>

For more information, contact Josh@StartEngaging.com ; www.StartEngaging.com

On the horizon at US Powerboating:

- New logo – website and instructional resources
- New instructor log-in
- Now includes USCG logo – we should also include this logo
- Instructor Resources pages have been cleaned up. Jon will send links
- For Instructor Candidates – online version of Teaching Fundamentals – interactive; four PDF modules, self-assessments
- New version of the SPR manual has NASBLA updates
- New version of test materials – return old exams – USP will replace
- Possibility of an annual conference call