

WBCCI: New Directions

A compilation of Proposals

Compiled by the
2020 Long Range Planning Committee
for the
WBCCI International Board of Trustees
Jan. 14, 2009

The 2020 Long Range Planning Committee, during the course of its interviews and research, were made aware of a number of ideas, concerns, suggestions and observations for the Wally Byam Caravan Club International.

These have been compiled and presented here in a report to the International Board of Trustees.

WBCCI: New Directions Index

WBCCI Administration

Management.....	Page 4
Master Plan.....	Page 4
Some “meat on the table”.....	Page 4
Committee Reports.....	Page 4
Committee Structure.....	Page 4
Mid-Winter IBT.....	Page 4
Selling Current Headquarters Building.....	Page 4
Create a WBCCI Foundation.....	Page 5
Region Mentor Program.....	Page 5
Best Practices Program.....	Page 5
Intra-Club Coordinator.....	Page 5
Nominating Committee.....	Page 5

International Rally

High Cost Of Gasoline.....	Page 5
Change International Rally Dates.....	Page 6
First Timer Mentoring System.....	Page 6
Suits and Ties.....	Page 6
Parking on Sunday.....	Page 6
Opening Ceremony.....	Page 6
Teen Queen Contest.....	Page 6
Special Parking, Special Seating.....	Page 6
Unit President’s Dinner.....	Page 6

Electronic Initiatives

Get Rid Of Paper.....	Page 7
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Communications

Blue Beret Published by Airstream Life.....	Page 7
Blue Beret and Web Site Synergy.....	Page 7
Revamp the Web Site.....	Page 7
WBCCI Director on CD.....	Page 7
Web Site Advisory Board.....	Page 8
Blue Beret By E-mail.....	Page 8
Region Communications.....	Page 8
Blue Beret Interactivity.....	Page 8
WBCCI Action Lion.....	Page 8
Blue Beret Letters To The Editor.....	Page 8

Marketing

WBCCI Marketing Department.....	Page 8
Member Recruiting Package.....	Page 9

Airstream and WBCCI Marketing Strategy.....Page 9
Leveraging Assets.....Page 9
Friendships.....Page 9
Product Knowledge.....Page 9
Promotional CD.....Page 9

Membership

Membership Recruiting and Retention.....Page 9
Membership Retention.....Page 10
Membership Staff Position.....Page 10
Creating Data Base Of Used Airstream Purchasers.....Page 10
Reply Card With Letter In New Airstreams.....Page 10
Effective Unit Membership Chairmen.....Page 10
Membership Strategy.....Page 10
Use The Media Kit.....Page 11
Free Rally Weekend.....Page 11
Survey of all MAL Members.....Page 11
Survey Non-WBCCI Airstream Owners.....Page 11

Units, Regions, Caravans

Focus On The Units. Remove Barriers..... Page 11
Region Officers.....Page 12
Caravans.....Page 12
Members At Large (MAL).....Page 12
Eliminate Region Second V-P.....Page 12
Region Invitational.....Page 12

WBCCI administration

Management. WBCCI suffers from a lack of effective management. The club needs a clearly defined and stated mission statement with clearly stated goals and objectives. WBCCI leaders spend too much time looking at the past, dreaming of the “good old days” with little visible evidence of attempting to move the club into the future.

Master Plan. A drag on WBCCI’s ability to function effectively has been the absence of The IBT Executive Committee should have a four- or five-year-plan that guides the operation. The incoming president would be responsible for developing a plan of action for his or her year in office based on the long-term plan, with specific goals and specific responsibilities for vice presidents, committee chairmen and Region presidents to achieve the goals. Continual review, assessment, alignment and adjustment will be required as we move into the future. It is recommended that the Executive Board and the 2020 Committee annually review the “master plan” against the status of the club and the actions taken.

Some “meat” on the table. The International Board of Trustees needs to come to its meetings with some “meat” for the table. An inordinate amount of time is being spent on governance at the expense of working to enhance the member experience. The board needs to begin looking outward rather than inward.

Committee Reports. For the Committee Chairman to go before the IBT meetings and provide a verbatim reading of the report is a total waste of time. The Committee Chairman should summarize the report and spend the rest of the time in give-and-take with the IBT members on committee plans and its effort to support the WBCCI mission.

Committee Structure. WBCCI has a committee structure covering a multitude of areas, but the committees get little or no direction from the leadership as to what they need to be doing to support the long-term strategy of the organization.

Mid-Winter IBT. The WBCCI constitution gives the International president the option of canceling the Mid-Winter IBT meeting. With the soaring price of gasoline and the financial challenges facing the club, exercising this option should be given consideration. It would amount to a \$17,000 savings for WBCCI.

WBCCI should consider selling its current headquarters building and acreage. When the real estate market improves WBCCI should consider selling its headquarters office and acreage and negotiate a favorable rental agreement with Airstream for office space in its complex. The transaction would raise a substantial amount of immediate cash that could be invested to help pay for the Airstream rent. This would also bring WBCCI and the Airstream Company closer together.

Create a WBCCI Foundation. WBCCI should create a not-for-profit foundation to which members could make donations to help support future activities. With an aging population in WBCCI many of its members are nearing an age when they will be considering bequests from their estates. WBCCI has been such an integral part of their lives some would give serious consideration for making bequests. Special fund raising efforts could be conducted. Revenues from the Foundation would not be used to support regular operating expenses but would fund special projects aimed at moving the organization forward.

Region Mentor Program. Regions should create mentors for each of the Units in the Region. The mentor's responsibility will be to maintain a regular contact with the Units to provide assistance, answer questions, make suggestions how the Unit could be more effective and help implement the ideas. The mentors will be selected from the pool of long-term WBCCI members in the Region with past Unit, Region and International experience. The Mentors will make quarterly reports on the Units to the Region president.

Best Practices Program. Conducted annual survey of Units that have demonstrated success by realizing membership gains to gather information on what are the practices that make these Units effective. These Best Practices will be compiled and shared with the rest of the Units in WBCCI. At each International Rally a Best Practices Seminar will be conducted in which selected Units from those with membership gains will make presentations on their methods of operation.

Intra-Club Coordinator. Create the position of Intra-Club Coordinator with the person responsible for uniting more special interest groups into WBCCI Intra-Clubs. The experience has been that the Intra-Clubs have cohesiveness and a focus that creates a strong bond.

Nominating Committee. The nominating committee should be encouraged to exercise the option of nominating more than one candidate for an office if the candidates are felt to be equally qualified.

International Rally

High Cost of Gasoline. The high cost of gasoline has to be a consideration in the future when selecting a location for the International Rally. As gasoline moves to \$3 and \$4 a gallon and possibly even higher, people aren't going to be willing to drive from one coast to the other coast for an International Rally. Perhaps it's time to revisit the idea of four Region rallies in the country each year and designate one of those to be the official International Rally.

Change International Rally dates. Change the International Rally dates so that the Rally starts on the next to last Saturday in June and ends on the first Saturday in July. Starting and ending on a weekend will make it possible for working members to be able to attend the Rally. This would require a constitutional change because the Rally wouldn't always extend through the 4th of July.

First Timer Mentoring System. A mentoring system needs to be developed for First Timers to help make them comfortable in this new and strange environment they find themselves in. The mentor could be available to answer questions, provide companionship and in general make the First Timers feel comfortable and more willing to come back in the future.

Suits and Ties. Airstream is not selling new Airstreams to the suit and tie crowd. WBCCI has no business being a suit and tie organization. It's a caravanning and camping club.

Parking on Sunday. The idea of no parking on Sunday has to change. It's an inconvenience for anyone, who because of schedule, can't arrive at the International Rally any other day than Sunday. This is especially true for the non-retired members who take a week off to come to the International. Many other volunteers at the International have to work on Sunday. Why can't the parkers work on Sunday? Parking hours during the week need to be extended so fewer people get stuck in the bullpen. The parking process needs to be more user friendly.

Opening Ceremony. Many respondents have high praise for the Opening Ceremony but feel it could be shortened.

Teen Queen Contest. Many responses suggested that the Teen Queen Contest is an International Rally activity that was cited by a number of Units that has outlived its usefulness.

Special parking, special seating. Special parking and special seating for International Officers and Committee Chairmen is another International Rally activity cited by a number of Units that has outlived its usefulness.

Unit President's Dinner. If a Unit President's dinner is going to be held, don't schedule it before the Rally starts when many of the Unit Presidents, especially those who are arriving with caravans, aren't able to attend.

Electronic initiatives

Get rid of paper. Take advantage of electronic opportunities to get rid of paper. Do a thorough analysis of the entire operation to determine where this strategy can be implemented. Have as a goal the most complete elimination of paper as possible. This will provide savings on several fronts...supply costs, person hours that goes into printing and postage for headquarters, International Officers, Region officers and Units. With 86 percent of the WBCCI membership using the Internet, transmitting information digitally can be an effective alternative to printing and mailing material. This can also expedite communications.

Communications

Blue Beret Published by Airstream Life – Enter into discussions with Rich Luhr at Airstream Life about publishing and editing the Blue Beret. This will add professionalism to the development of the magazine. Blue Beret would retain many of its unique and distinct features and its present format so its identity as a WBCCI publication would be retained. Advertising could be increased by selling the Blue Beret and Airstream Life in combination. Only 20 percent of Airstream Life subscribers are WBCCI members. Cross promotion of the two magazines could provide an enhancement for both. Joint mailing to members who subscribe to Airstream Life could result in postage savings.

Blue Beret and Web Site Synergy – Focus on improving the synergy between the Blue Beret and the WBCCI.org Web Site so one is supportive of the other. This could include a page in the Blue Beret each issue with items that can be found on the Web Site and have a link on the Web Site that could be called “Coming Up In the Blue Beret” that would include information on the upcoming Blue Beret issues.

Revamp the Web Site. The 2020 Committee has a proposal for a complete revamping of the WBCCI.org Web Site. It is provided as an addendum to the New Directors report.

WBCCI Directory on CD. As a cost savings measure that would also be a member benefit the WBCCI Directory could be produced part as a printed book and part as a CD in Word format. The printed book would include the alphabetical (with only the name, address, number and e-mail address) and numerical listing of members and other information used while travelling. All the other material would be provided on a CD attached to the book. The book size would be reduced by approximately 40 percent, for a significant printing cost savings. Producing the CDs would not be expensive. Postage cost would also be reduced. Plus it would be possible to add additional information that could be placed on the CD, including forms and other information that is provided on the Web site.

Web Site Advisory Board. Create a Web Site Advisory Board to monitor and generate information for the WBCCI.org Web site.

Blue Beret by E-mail. Start a program of delivering the Blue Beret electronically as a .pdf file, which would reach members three weeks earlier than by mail. The Blue Beret would not be sent as a total magazine but would be broken up into sections to expedite electronic delivery. Converting 500 members to a Web magazine would save the club approximately \$6,500 a year.

Region Communications. A number of Units feel communications from the Region to the Units could be greatly improved with regular and informative newsletter that offers information on what's happening in the Region, provides suggestions how Units can be more effective and provides information on activities that have proven to be particularly effective for the Units. The newsletter should be published a minimum of five times a year with monthly newsletters the goal.

Blue Beret Interactivity. Interactivity is the mantra of the new publishing world. It demonstrates to advertisers the audience is involved. It demonstrates to members that the magazine is an effective communication tool.

WBCCI Action Line. Create an Action Line to provide answers to questions members have. The questions can be answered both on line and in the Blue Beret. This is another example of interactivity that can create added value for members.

Blue Beret Letters To The Editor. A valuable addition to the Blue Beret magazine would be a letter to the editor section where members could voice their opinions and make comments.

Marketing

WBCCI Marketing Department. Create a marketing department at WBCCI headquarters charged with developing and implementing a strategy for attracting new members and a strategy for developing new revenue sources by leveraging the club's membership base. There hasn't been an organization in history that has expense cut its way to prosperity. The only way to truly achieve an improved balance sheet is on the revenue side. WBCCI needs a marketing director to be responsible for marketing campaigns, branding and revenue generating ideas.

Member recruiting package. Create an information package the club can make available to new Airstream owners. The package would include a history of the club, information on the club activities, membership forms, advantages of joining the club and a CD with a video of the exciting club activities.

Airstream and WBCCI Marketing Strategy. The Airstream Company's marketing strategy currently targets a different segment of the RVing public. They are targeting new RVing families and the trailers that are selling are to weekend campers with best selling units in the 25-foot range. Thirty-one percent of new Airstream sales are to first time buyers. WBCCI is out of step with this potential membership base. Adjustments in activity schedules must support future members as well as meet the needs of older, retired members.

Leverage Assets. The major asset WBCCI now has is its 14,000 plus individual members. The organization has not been effective over the years in leveraging this major asset to create revenue sources and additional programs for members through partnerships with other organizations.

Friendship. Far and away the most frequently mentioned "perk" of WBCCI membership was the friendship and fellowship of fellow members. This major advantage of membership isn't emphasized enough in the membership recruiting materials and membership recruiting strategies.

Product Knowledge. Another frequently mentioned "perk" of WBCCI membership is the product knowledge gained from veteran members. This is another area that isn't emphasized enough in membership recruiting materials and membership recruiting strategies.

Promotional CD. Create a promotional CD on WBCCI and its activities that can be distributed to Regions and Units to be used as a recruiting tool.

Membership

Membership Recruiting and Retention -- Region 5 Second Vice President Bob Gregory, the Region's Membership Chairman, has developed a Membership Retention and Recruiting Program that has a recruiting chairman and retention chairman in each Unit in addition to the membership chairman. This is the first year of the program so it has no track record to date. For more information contact Gregory at bobgreg734@aol.com

Membership Retention – WBCCI has to become more effective in retaining members if it is to reverse the membership downward trend. Special emphasis needs to be placed on retention.

The 2020 Committee recommends:

- Identifying active members (members attending events vs. seldom or never) and how to motivate the inactive members.
- Identifying non-renewals vs. retirements, Airstream sold or other attrition reasons.
- Developing a program to reduce the number of the non-renewals that will involve the Regions as well as the Units.

Membership Staff Position – Create a staff position of Membership Director at the WBCCI headquarters to coordinate with the WBCCI Membership Chairman in developing and implementing a Membership Growth Strategy and coordinate with the Region and Unit membership chairs.

Creating a Data Base of Used Airstream purchasers. A system needs to be developed so the purchasers of used Airstreams can be identified and added to the WBCCI prospect list. A lot of potential members are falling through the cracks because there is no follow-up procedure for used Airstream purchasers.

Reply Card With Letter in New Airstreams. The WBCCI Membership Chairman has arranged for a letter from WBCCI to be placed in every new Airstream sold. This needs to be taken one step further and postage paid, self-addressed post card attached to the letter. The postcard could be returned to WBCCI so that a complete membership kit could be mailed to the prospective member.

Effective Unit Membership Chairman. A major reason cited by Units successful in attracting new members, is the effectiveness of the membership chairman. This can be influenced by the Region membership chairman who needs to keep frequent and regular contact with the Unit membership chairmen and provide assistance at every opportunity. Personal contact is identified as the key to getting new members. The Region membership chairman and the Unit membership chairman need to make sure the personal contact is happening.

Membership Strategy. Every Unit should have a definite membership recruiting strategy that is written down and followed. One strategy by a successful Unit is: Call prospective members when information is received from WBCCI. Talk to the new prospects and give them the Unit Web Site address. Then write a personal letter of welcoming to Airstreaming, send a copy of the Unit newsletter and send an application. Third, make a personal contact in a week to see if they have any questions and send out a DVD that has text and pictures on the club rallies and activities. Add the prospect to the Unit newsletter mailing list for a year.

Use the Media Kit. At a rally last year a local TV station did a feature on a Unit after the media had been sent a WBCCI Media Kit. After the newscast the Unit was visited by four couples that saw the TV interview. One couple joined on the spot. A second is still in play.

Free Rally Weekend. This year a Unit started a program of offering one free Rally weekend to prospective members so they could see what the Unit life was like. The Unit gained three new members.

Survey of all MAL members. Conduct an extensive survey of all Members At-Large to determine why they joined WBCCI, why they preferred not to join a Unit; what would cause them to feel more a part of the organization.

Survey non-WBCCI Airstream owners. We are preaching to the choir when we continue to conduct surveys of WBCCI members. The people we need to survey are the thousands of Airstream owners who are not WBCCI members to determine why they are not members and then implement the changes they recommend.

Units, Regions, Caravans

Focus on the Units. Remove Barriers The Unit is the heart of WBCCI. The focus of Region and International leadership should be on the Units...identify the kind of help needed by struggling Units, provide assistance when the Unit needs are identified, help identify prospective members, identify what successful Units are doing to get and keep members, assist smaller Units in planning and executing rallies/caravans that then make it easier for the smaller Units to recruit officers and encourage joint rallies between smaller Units.

- Too much structure is imposed on the Units that create a “cookie cutter” look to the Units. Remove barriers that keep Units from thinking outside the box.
- The Units should have the latitude to be innovative and creative in how they are organized and operate, trying new and revolutionary approaches, to promote new ideas and approaches. The approaches that work can be shared with other Units.
- Provide assistance and encouragement for the formation of new Units. Revise and reduce requirements for the formation of a new Unit.
- Member participation in the Units should be emphasized and an “active index” developed that would measure the percentage of members who are actively involved in Unit events.

Region officers. Units would like more oversight and direction from the Region officers. The feeling of Units is that Region officers are too preoccupied with the Region rallies to devote much time to helping Units be more effective and grow.

Caravans. The WBCCI caravan system needs to be emphasized and analyzed. It is without question the most successful of all WBCCI activities. It is able to provide caravans at a much lower cost than other clubs and commercial activities. It's important to identify how caravans are able to create involved and excited members and use this information to strengthen other areas of the club. The length of caravans limits them primarily to retirees. There needs to be short caravans available that would be appealing to still working members.

Members At Large (MAL) – Members At Large must not be treated as “second class members” of WBCCI. While the emphasis needs to be on the Units, WBCCI must be welcoming of non-Unit members. A subscription to the Blue Beret obviously isn't adequate to retain MALs. Other advantages need to be made available, but most important there needs to be regular communication with these MALs. One Region is mailing its Region newsletter to the MALs to keep them informed of what is going on in the Region. Special invitations need to be made to invite the MALs to participate in Region and Unit events.

Eliminate Region Second V-P. Eliminate the position of second vice president at the Region level and have four-year terms for Region officers.