EFFECTIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENTS

Staff development and shakedown weekends may be helpful for planning and preparing for your course, but remember that some staffers have been through it all before while others are new to the whole staff thing. As experienced staff attend training weekend after training weekend, be sure to not only keep them involved and engaged, but use them as valuable resources to help train less experienced and new staff members. Don’t forget the fun either!

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR PLANNING AND RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT WEEKEND:

PLANNING
Staff development weekends are not only the perfect time to plan who-does-what for the course but also a great time to practice. Presentations, leading reflections, creating some realistic first aid scenarios, morning assembly shenanigans, you name it - set aside time to actually do the activities rather than just plan them. Your staff will feel more comfortable when course rolls around and most likely, be more successful in imparting their knowledge on others!

BREAKOUT SESSIONS
Obviously buzz groups work well for practicing presentations and coming up with ideas. At your staff development weekend, don’t forget that returning staff and new staff are coming from different backgrounds. You may want to break your staff into groups to review or explain what it means to be an NYLT staff member. Discuss any changes, improvements, or new ideas with returning staff members. Explain the roles of different members to new staff. Come back together and maybe even set aside some time for new staff to ask the group, or an assigned or chosen experienced staff member, questions about their responsibilities. New staff learns as returning members have the opportunity to share their experiences while improving their mentorship abilities. Keep both groups involved. It’s a win-win!

TRADITION
Some program shenanigans are tradition - a morning joke, a particular skit during a campfire - remember that new staff members have different skills and new ideas to bring to the table. Save and add to the tradition. Keep your course everlasting and ever-changing!

SONGFESTS & FUN
Like any NYLT staff function, fun is inevitable. Although your staff may enjoy planning and participating in practice round robin games, or realistic first aid, don’t forget to include time for staff fun. Sing a song here or there, have an hour long songfest, hold an impromptu campfire, play board games, Ultimate Frisbee, charades, go for a short hike, tell some jokes, have a story telling contest - with a prize! - laugh. Staff will get to know each other better and feel more comfortable around each other. You may be together mainly for business-fun but the addition of silly-fun makes for an even greater time!

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Give Your Audience What They Need

The University of Vermont’s Outing Club hold their club council elections once a semester - our normal meeting format had been changed so that everyone had a chance to give their speech to the entire club. One after another, candidates walked up in front of the lecture hall and gave their 2-3 minute platform speeches. Some of them leaned against the chalkboard (One of my biggest pet peeves), some of them stood behind the large desk - a few had shaky voices, and a few were fairly confident. The problem was that they all got up, spoke, and sat back down - like they were performing a well-rehearsed choreography, the same thing over and over again. I watched my friend, Abby, stand up and walk to the front of the room now filled with disengaged and bored individuals. She was running as the Social Chair and I was eager to see what she had to say. Without saying a word, she placed her computer on the desk and plugged into the halls sound system, she pressed her space bar and “Celebrate Good Times” by Funktown America blasted through the hall. Heads popped up everywhere to see her dancing back and forth to the rhythm, eventually turning it down so she could tell us all about her plan for an Outing Club Prom, and Outing Club Sadie Hawkins dance. She ended up winning her election by a pretty big margin - but not because of her ideas. The OC Prom and Sadie Hawkins dance was nothing new - we did it yearly! She didn’t have much content to her speech, but she knew how to capture, sustain, and capitalize on her audience’s attention.

The next time you’re giving a presentation, or a speech, or any public address for that matter, be mindful that the beginning and end are what the audience will remember. Trying to justify using a “Raise your hands if you’ve ever.....” kind of question as a hook is only hurting yourself. I challenge you to do something different, do something energetic, do something that involves a story or capture your audience’s emotion! When people hear music, their entire brain is stimulated, not just the parts devoted to understanding “EDGE”, so - obviously - the brain remembers it easier. Human brains are story telling machines, they will follow and remember a story much faster than it’ll take them to memorize the stages of team development by name.

Don’t just do a hook because it's on your presentation plan form, your audience is investing their most valuable possession into your presentation - time - make it worth their while, and give them something to walk away with.

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TAKE YOUR NYLT STAFF TO THE NEXT LEVEL!

NYLT-LeadershipAcademy.org
Maya Angelou once said that “All great achievements require time.” This quote could be used for any life lesson, but could not be more perfect for Scouting, as it takes time to nurture our leadership skills. National Youth Leadership Training had the ability to teach me this exact lesson; leadership skills take time to grow, and becoming a leader takes even longer. It is a journey through which Scouting teaches us how to become a leader for not only today, but in our everyday lives.

When I first joined Venturing, I was a 14-year-old girl who just wanted to be a part of the camping and high adventure world. It wasn’t until I started moving into the area level that I figured out that being a leader takes time. I took NYLT the first year my council offered a Venturing specific week. During that week, I gained the foundation of how to manage my time between all of my Scouting obligations and other responsibilities.

Throughout the years while staffing NYLT, there were times where I was holding three different Venturing positions and had a ton of responsibilities. At times it became difficult to manage all of these positions at once while being activity involved in NYLT. I was able to use the skills gained through NYLT to plan my schedule in a way that I could accomplish my responsibilities. This way I was able to focus my attention on the task at hand and give each task my best.

There were a few things which helped me be successful, one of which was a calendar set with all of my school and Scouting commitments. From there I could prioritize the things I needed to complete first, and take out the unnecessary items, to allow more time for other commitments. I believe that it is up to the individual to have the self-dedication to put the time into Scouting and NYLT. The things we learn from the program, not only help us succeed today, but help us mentor the next generation into the leaders we have become.

Throughout my two years in college, I still say that the things I have learned from NYLT have helped me in my everyday life. Through the communication, planning, and goal setting of NYLT, I have had the ability to be successful in college while still managing a full load of activities. Every person is different on how much they can handle, but with the knowledge gained through Scouting and NYLT, anyone can accomplish what they want as long as they put their mind to it. Remember that “All great achievements take time.”

CHRISTINA VOGT is a guest columnist for the March/April edition of The Quest. A student at Lindenwood University, Christina hails from the St. Louis Area Council and served as the 2013-2014 Central Region Venturing President.
“THERE ARE NO GREAT LIMITS TO GROWTH BECAUSE THERE ARE NO LIMITS OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE, IMAGINATION, AND WONDER.”

RONALD REAGAN

Former President of the United States, Ronald Reagan sums it up perfectly. There are no limits because we have the power and freedom to explore and innovate. Currently, NYLT staff nation-wide are embarking on the most important step in creating a successful course - STAFF DEVELOPMENT! One of the most rewarding and empowering experiences a staff member can go through.

Remember, respect the process and don’t be afraid to try new things. Every year, the dynamic of the staff is different. Procedures that worked last year, may not work this year. Don’t be afraid to experiment with new leadership styles; there are NO LIMITS! I wish you all the best of luck and you prepare to teach and serve the leaders of tomorrow.

Namaste,

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