

Greetings from Ontario, Canada.

What strategies can clubs use to help them regroup, refocus and revitalize? When I was President of the Shooting Federation of Canada spanning a ten year period, we had member clubs from coast to coast. We tried to engage our clubs in providing feedback on this and other issues. Questionnaires usually had a high percentage response rate and was considered fairly accurate. Generally speaking, the clubs that were appreciably in decline were clubs that had no junior programs, little or no outreach activities that involved other segments of the community, poorly structured or non-existent inter club competitions and for the most part members wanted to simply attend their club at their convenience, do some shooting and go home. They didn't want to grow their member base, improve their facilities or even maintain their numbers. Some of these clubs by now I suspect have disappeared.

Compare the foregoing to clubs that are proactive with fun things to do for shooters and family alike and work hard at attracting new members. Whether in this order necessarily or not, here are some things that I consider very important to revitalization success:

1. There must be a genuine will to revitalize
2. Revitalization is driven by a proactive, organized and committed board of management
3. Outreach programs with the community are very helpful - fundraising for local charities, bring local politicians in to make presentations, work with the media on firearm/club initiatives (in other words - take the fear out of the sporting use of firearms and share some of our best kept secrets, that competitive and recreational shooting is safe and fun)
4. Treat your volunteers right - thank them, recognize them, and reward them. Without them, where are you?
5. Be ever vigilant in keeping on top of legal and political issues and take an active role in the outcome of things like local noise by-laws, discharge of firearm by-laws etc (you are stakeholder and can't let others define the issues that will impact on you)
6. Do a 5 year plan and maybe a 10 or longer plan too. It is (in Ontario for instance) like municipalities updating their "official plans" every five years. Set goals and be able to measure results. Then set new goals. Many clubs in my experience have eager, active memberships during the building stages of a club. Fundraising and volunteer work combine to achieve objectives. Then once achieved interest wanes, membership decreases and the club declines because new objectives have not been set to challenge its membership to loftier accomplishments
7. Recognize the difference between red tape and protocol related to safety and other important issues and needless bureaucracy for its own sake. Members understand and accept the former, but resent the latter.
8. And, above all strive to make target shooting safe and fun for all - work at it and share the experience with others, and before you know it, your club is well on the way to revitalization.

I would be pleased to have you share your experiences - let me know.

And, if you will permit me to digress a little, I would like to share with you a recent experience. My son Drew and I attended the Concepcion, Chile World Cup in early March representing Canada in trap and double trap. This was for us a good (but very expensive) training opportunity (our bunker has been under snow for months). Because of my injured knee, my wife Bev felt she should attend to help look after me (lifting things etc). She was a big help. However, she

doesn't like air travel and like me is not much of a tourist. Historic sites yes, but touristy things - no. Meanwhile, Drew loves it all. We all like talking to people from other countries and share experiences and perspectives.

International trap is different from ATA trap in so many ways. Screw up one round and you ruin the whole match. At least in ATA trap you may get hot in one or more events and salvage something. Language is a barrier. And, unusual occurrences (for us) may be common place to locals. Like the 6.0 Richter scale earthquake that we experienced the first night. It was about 11:00 p.m. Bev and Drew were in our room on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor when it hit and the room started swaying and shaking. Scared the heck out of them. The Italian team was in the parking lot - shaking. Locals found this common place and didn't get excited (unless it is 7.0 or more). Meanwhile I was in the casino attached to the hotel and figured that as long as the gamblers were just running to the cashier things were likely okay - until Bev and Drew (still white-faced) found me at my machine and wondered why I had not tried to "save" them.

Why can't a trip to a grocery store at a World Cup be as simple as at an ATA match? The taxi ride to the grocery store seemed uneventful and we were dropped off at a huge double door and walked in. Later, when leaving by the same door we learned that we had entered the "exit" door and there was actually a long line up of people waiting to get in to the store. Security let only so many in at a time. Thank goodness, because we were in the cashier line for 40 minutes. There were 13 lines and we couldn't move to another. We were jammed like sardines. The cashier for our line seemed to take forever, counting slips of paper and fiddling with one thing or another. We later learned that this was the "food stamp line". We were finally three customers from the cashier when a young (obviously) pregnant lady flitted past Bev, Drew and myself, smiled at us and promptly proceeded to the head of the line. By now my leg was killing me and all three of us were becoming grumpy. While I usually have no problem deferring to ladies and especially pregnant ones, I did feel this young lady was just a little presumptuous. What gave her the right to barge to the front of the line like as if she was somehow entitled? Until I looked at the sign above the cashier, that was now close enough for me to read and in Spanish went something like this "Prioridad futura mamas". It was about then Drew piped up that behind him there were "like, a dozen pregnant women". In spite of the fact that Bev was along to "help" she absolutely refused to follow my suggestion that she tuck her purse under her sweater. ATA is so much less traumatic. Enjoy it.

Paul Shaw  
ATA Ontario Delegate