

Pull In; Push Out

Igniting Your Ambassadors

If you pulled your staff into a cohesive group this past summer, then they've embraced your mission. That's something to be proud of. Random friendships abound at average camps, but the exceptional camps yield staff who would defend the camp with their lives; who claim their blood is the color of camp; who preach their willingness to spread the good word about the experience. You think to yourself: *What fantastic marketing...and how wonderful it is that I'm not alone in living this vision!* But do you coach your staff on how to be good ambassadors? Here's how.



First, remind them that they represent camp every day of the off-season. If they're wearing a camp sweatshirt while taking a selfie doing a keg stand, that's a problem. Sadly, it's a problem many staff don't realize until a group of parents has already texted it around and called you on the phone. Camp gear is awesome; so is the way it amplifies good and bad behavior when your staff are wearing it.

Second, send them some mission-related literature. Perhaps something a staff member wrote this summer will inspire everyone. Perhaps a glowing

evaluation from a parent will remind everyone why they work at camp. Perhaps a free subscription to *Camp Business* will further professionalize their attitudes and behaviors. The point is: Send them something cool to read. (By the way, all of my previous blogs and articles can be downloaded for free from CampSpirit.com. I'm just sayin' ☺)

Third, enlist their help organizing local camp events. When you do home visits, camp fairs, or regional alumni gatherings, it's important to invite local staff or recent alums so that they can infuse the event with youthful exuberance. Your including them also adds importance to their job and renews their sense of commitment to the organization.

Fourth, tap your staff talents for videography, podcasting, and graphic design to give your promotional materials, yearbook, or even your website a bit of a facelift. Or simply ask some of your staff to write content for some of these outlets. You'd be surprised at how insightful and sincere your most loyal staff are. Let go a bit and allow them to be the voice of camp from time to time.

Fifth, incentivize certifications. Now is the time to communicate to your staff that a lifeguarding certification is not only something camp will pay for, it's also something camp will reward by adding \$100 to their summer contract. Too many camp directors wait to remind staff about certs until the spring. Courses like Wilderness First Responder, Lifeguarding, Water Safety Instructor, and even CPR take some time to schedule when you're a busy student. Jump on that now.

Your investment in your staff not only strengthens their hard and soft skills, it also makes them skilled spokespeople. Too often, we load training at the front of the season and forget about the long-tail success strategies that strengthen our programs in the months the follow closing day. This fall, push out

your message and marketing with intentional ambassador instruction. It's one of the best ways to pull in new campers.



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