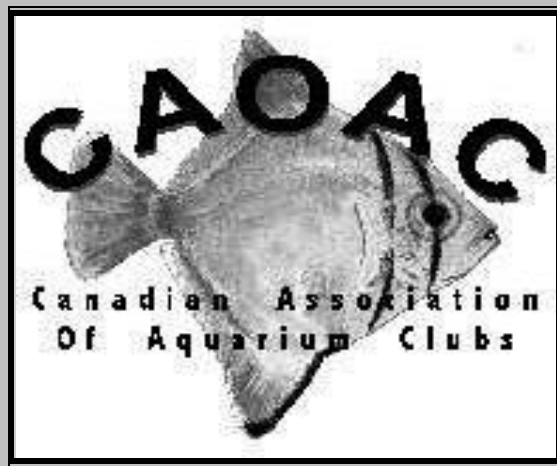


***OPERATING
A SUCCESSFUL
AQUARIUM CLUB***



***SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES
FROM
AQUARIUM CLUBS WORLDWIDE
BY
SPENCER JACK
PETER ORPHANOS***

***CANADIAN ASSOCIATION
OF AQUARIUM CLUBS
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Introduction

This booklet was produced as a result of approximately thirty survey responses and consultation with experts from fish clubs around the world. The results were analyzed by members of the CAOAC Futures Committee and organized into this booklet whose purpose it is to help clubs throughout the world achieve success. It must be emphasized that these ideas in themselves will not ensure success. It is primarily the leadership skills of individuals, supported by club members, utilizing the following strategies that is the key to success.

There are no secrets, just good ideas that work. The trend worldwide is to lower attendance in most hobby clubs. More convenient and captivating tools such as computers and the television have provided the information hobbyists want. In order to compete, clubs must be aggressive in providing social, economic and informational needs in a unique and compelling manner. In the 2000's the successful club is run like a business but with a family atmosphere. Clubs can still be successful, but they need to be innovative and use all the modern tools coupled with good old-fashioned people skills.

The following words best describe the formula for success:

- 1) **LEADERSHIP** – strong beliefs with a shared vision
- 2) **TEAMWORK** – shared workload and synergy
- 3) **INVOLVEMENT** – foster sense of belonging
- 4) **RELATIONSHIPS** – bonding through positive experiences
- 5) **ORGANIZATION** – thoughtful planning for best results
- 6) **INNOVATION** – imagination and risk taking
- 7) **ENJOYMENT** – fun, relaxation, appreciation

Seven Key General Ingredients of A Successful Club

The club must be a total team effort. One or two people doing all the work are a recipe for failure and discontent. If each person does a little together you do a lot. If people want it, then they will support it and vice versa.

1. Plan well and organize for success. It builds confidence in your membership.
2. Keep politics out of the organization. We all love fish. We all take turns leading. There are no conflicting or competing motivations.
3. **Run it like a business** with the least amount of formality possible. People come to relax, not to worry or listen to boring details.
4. Keep it fun. Establish a friendly, relaxed atmosphere.
5. Give back to members what they give to the club. It's non-profit, so spend that money on speakers, prizes, community work and social functions that create good memories.
6. Advertise, Advertise, Advertise. In this modern age use all media to your advantage. Seek maximum exposure through the Internet, Television, Newspapers, Pet Shops, Libraries etc.
7. Involve as many members as possible to the extent that they wish. What they put into it is what they will get out of it.

Organizational Components

Constitution and Bylaws

A constitution and Bylaws are necessary to establish order and provide a point of reference for decision making and problem solving. Officers should consult a parent organization, (do not “reinvent the wheel”).

Appendix A (page 8) provides a sample Constitution from the Aquarium Society of Winnipeg. You can use this sample for the formation of your club’s constitution.

Also, Appendix B (page 10) includes sample Bylaws that can be used as a template.

Possible Executive Positions

President

Vice President

Secretary (Corresponding, recording)

Treasurer

Committee Suggestions

Program

Advertising/Store contact

Communications

Membership

Newsletter

Awards/Recognition

Refreshments

Welcoming/Greeters

Webmaster

Show

Auction

Convention

Other as needed

Successful Strategies

Recruiting Adult Members

Advertise, advertise, advertise

- ✂✂ Meeting ads in pet shops, libraries and any other place that is high traffic
- ✂✂ Recruiting at annual shows and auctions
- ✂✂ Website – attract and sign up online
- ✂✂ At aquatic and gardening events
- ✂✂ Municipal magazines and newsletters e.g. Parks and Recreation schedules, city organization listings
- ✂✂ Newspaper articles, event columns
- ✂✂ Word of mouth – a satisfied member is your best advertiser
- ✂✂ Local radio, television
- ✂✂ Magazines – TFH, Fish etc.
- ✂✂ Giant yard sale with a membership table

Recruiting Junior Members

- ✂✂ Offer family memberships to encourage entire families to come
- ✂✂ Set up aquariums in schools and offer lessons to students
- ✂✂ Plan youth nights – scouts, guides
- ✂✂ Some clubs hold their meetings on weekends during the day to attract juniors

It is interesting to note that some clubs have had difficulty with too many junior members offering challenges to the regular meeting and have sought to create a separate junior club. This separate junior club can meet at the same time in an adjoining room and have separate activities most of the time. It may join the senior club for a portion of the meeting.

Keeping Members and Attracting Them To Meetings

- ✂✂ Communicate well about upcoming events in advance– website, newsletter, local ads.
- ✂✂ Offer an excellent program – varied, relevant and interesting to all – fantastic speakers
- ✂✂ Maintain a friendly and welcoming environment – avoid cliques
- ✂✂ Greet and introduce new members personally, sit them with people with similar interests in fish and orient them with what the club has to offer
- ✂✂ An excellent newsletter – online and hard copy
- ✂✂ An excellent library – variety of good books
- ✂✂ Interesting educational activities such as tours to fish stores, zoos, aquaria, visits to fishrooms,
- ✂✂ Fun social activities – picnics, Christmas party, games night
- ✂✂ Well planned events such as auctions, shows and hosting a convention, solidify the team
- ✂✂ Recognize contributions – through newsletter, website, president’s comments, awards
- ✂✂ Recognize accomplishments – well organized HAP and BAP programs

- ☞☞ Enter club visits and activities – double membership is common in the hobby and benefits everyone
- ☞☞ Offer freebies – door prizes, gifts, a percent off purchases at stores
- ☞☞ Sales table with terrific prices – NO it does not harm local stores
- ☞☞ Mini auctions with super deals at every meeting - NO it does not harm local stores
- ☞☞ Multi year memberships – saves money and keeps members
- ☞☞ A bank of experts which members can phone for help – make members feel welcome to phone these experts
- ☞☞ Spend all your money to benefit members, give back to those who are giving to the club
- ☞☞ Free refreshments, Xmas gifts, prizes
- ☞☞ Phone all members at beginning of each year to welcome them back or to find out why they have stop coming and act immediately to fix the problem
- ☞☞ Do annual evaluations – let your members tell you how the club is doing and fill the gaps
- ☞☞ Keep meetings positive, avoid public dissension and refer complaints to be dealt by the president or executive at another time.
- ☞☞ Have a Meet-Our-Members section in the newsletter to highlight the variety of talents in the club.

Community Relations

- ☞☞ Give to the community – set up aquatic displays in schools, hospitals etc. spread the beauty of the hobby
- ☞☞ Maintain excellent relations with fish stores, distributors, manufacturers – we are all in it to promote the hobby
- ☞☞ Have a Store Listing section in the Newsletter where you inform members of what's new in the stores, the discount offered etc.
- ☞☞ Donate to zoos, fish conservation projects, ecology projects
- ☞☞ Support the Fish Rescue Program to maintain good PR with the general public
- ☞☞ Help at the zoo, museum at aquatic exhibits
- ☞☞ News releases to local press, media about community contributions
- ☞☞ Advertise Community Day in the local newspaper in the family section – inviting public to an event

Communication

- ☞☞ An excellent newsletter also offered on the website and electronically emailed to each member in advance of every meeting
- ☞☞ An excellent website offering all the needed information in an attractive format. Make it user friendly and full of excellent links.
- ☞☞ Presidents - Find a moment to talk with every member personally. Make the connection
- ☞☞ Have a social break at each meeting for member contact
- ☞☞ Thank all contributors personally and by letter – advertisers, club members, speakers etc.
- ☞☞ Make a quality laminated colour poster advertising your club and have it prominently displayed in stores, libraries and other high traffic areas. Make it look good and attractive

Auctions

- ☞☞ Most popular method of raising funds
- ☞☞ Mini auction at monthly meeting can be tied in with the topic of the month, e.g. plants, Africans.
Articles in the newsletter about the topic spurs interest in the auction items
- ☞☞ Mail people who attended in the past and advertise widely to the broad public
- ☞☞ 70/30 split is most popular
- ☞☞ Seek donations and advertise your donors well then thank them with a letter
- ☞☞ Everyone does a little and together you can do a lot. Don't have just a couple of people run the event. It is a bonding experience when you work together and earn a bundle of money.
- ☞☞ Use of 2 auctioneers is popular
- ☞☞ 20-table 20 items system is most popular with bigger auctions. 10-table 20 items system is most popular with smaller auctions. Auctions last from a couple of hours to two days.
- ☞☞ Limiting the number of items per person prevents problems.
- ☞☞ More clubs are going to two auctions a year but the profits do not increase proportionately.

Conventions

- ☞☞ Many are poorly attended. Cost and timing are deceives. Larger conventions, national in scope, e.g. ACA have more chance of success.
- ☞☞ Excellent speakers, a good package price, good deals on the auction are the hooks.
- ☞☞ Market the convention, establish personal contacts in each area and sell it aggressively. Spread the excitement
- ☞☞ Divide the work or you'll never get the workers to help again
- ☞☞ Multiple day conventions are most successful
- ☞☞ Local clubs need assistance from larger body, financially and with advice, otherwise big problems arise. e.g. big loss of money, reinventing the wheel. Parent organizations must have information on running a convention available to local clubs.

Club Socials

- ☞☞ Very important for some clubs – create social bonds, foster good relationships and friendships
- ☞☞ Make it a family event with goodies and games for children, your future members
- ☞☞ Most popular: Christmas Parties, Picnics, Barbecue, Awards Night, Dance, Progressive Tank Night (visiting houses). Many clubs have a speaker or other features at these events. E.g. Mini auction, freebees
- ☞☞ Pot luck very successful – keeps costs down
- ☞☞ A good time for clubs to give out awards
- ☞☞ Keep costs down to zero if possible – a time to give back to the members

Most Successful Events

1. AUCTIONS by far with a show and in some cases a speaker
2. National convention
3. Large shows
4. Social events – picnic, party
5. An excellent speaker
6. Tours

Other Suggestions

- ✍️ Develop good relationships with local stores; educate them on what you do and how working together may benefit both. This is a greatly underestimated point.
- ✍️ Meeting day – it was found that clubs meeting on weekends have more relaxed atmosphere and more juniors
- ✍️ Conventions should be at least a two-day event to make it worthwhile for those from out of town to come.
- ✍️ Summer events help keep members in touch and there is less membership loss due to forgetting about the club.
- ✍️ A question and answer period before meeting starts. Keeps all members involved and gives them something to do while waiting.
- ✍️ Societies need a permanent address that will be good for at least 5 years. Yearly changes of address are confusing and can cause great delays.
- ✍️ Societies who develop a commercial aspect to their operations must be aware of the legal requirements and the impact on other commercial entities. The trend is clearly towards utilizing the Internet to promote club sales and this has worked to a varying degree worldwide. Commercializing a club's operating has its advantages to members and is legal with proper incorporation. However the relationship with other vendors must be reconciled and maintained.

Assistance To Local Clubs

Parent organizations such as CAOAC, FAAS, Dutch Aquarium Union, Scottish Federation and IFOCUS need a resource base of individuals who will personally help new clubs and clubs in trouble. This can be achieved through a Local Club Support Body and annual presidents' meeting to facilitate sharing and problem solving. This component is probably the most important function of a parent club and needs to become more of a focus. The health of a parent organization is defined by the health of its member clubs. Vibrant clubs will in turn contribute to a vibrant parent organization.

More specifically, parent organizations need to create and distribute to all member clubs a brochure such as this on how to run a successful club. It should be the local club's main reference. These last two measures will save an immense amount energy and frustration.

CAOAC Human Resources Team

CAOAC's most important job is to assist member clubs.

Our strength lies in successful clubs. If you wish to begin a new club or need advice on improving your existing one, contact the CAOAC president and he will provide a team of people to assist.

The CAOAC President's contact information can be found on CAOAC's website:

<http://www.caoac.on.ca>

Appendix A – Sample Constitution

Aquarium Society of Winnipeg Constitution

Article 1 – name

1. The organization shall be known as the Aquarium Society of Winnipeg, hereinafter known as the ASW.
2. The objective shall be the maintenance, reproduction, preservation, and distribution of aquatic life, with particular emphasis on the social aspects.

Article 2 – membership

1. Any person interested in the activities of the ASW shall be eligible for membership, and subject to its constitution and by-laws.

Article 3 – organization

1. The society shall have the following officers and committee chairs:
Officers: a) President b) Vice-President c) Secretary d) Treasurer e) Past President
Committee Chairs:
a) Program b) Membership c) Breeders Award Program
d) Horticultural Award Program e) Newsletter Editor f) CAOAC/FAAS Representative g) Bowl Show
h) Publicity i) Aquarist of the Year j) Newsletter Exchange k) Auction
l) Fundraiser
Members of the executive may hold more than one position except for the following positions:
President, Treasurer, Breeders Award Program, Horticultural Award Program and Newsletter Editor.
2. The officers and standing committee constitute an Executive Committee, which shall manage and direct the affairs of the society.
3. Other chairs may be added as deemed necessary.
3. The above committee members shall have such duties as are customary to their offices or may be assigned in our by-laws.
4. The above committee members shall have such duties as are customary to their offices or may be assigned in our by-laws.

5. Officers and Chairs will be elected or appointed for a term of not less than one (1) year or more than two (2) years.
6. Executive members shall keep an accurate record of their acts and proceedings, and report to the society at any annual business meetings, or on demand.
7. The executive shall have the power to fill any vacancies which may occur until the next election.
8. Any action of the Executive Committee may be reviewed by the members at the regular meeting. All actions shall be deemed valid actions unless disapproved at this time.
9. In case of absence and/or resignation, the order of succession to the Presidency shall follow the order listed in Article 3 Section 1
10. Any executive member of the ASW, if found unsatisfactory in their position or actions deemed detrimental to the ASW may be relieved of their duties, after a formal complaint has been presented at a general meeting and by a two-thirds vote of those in attendance.
11. Any executive officer may be relieved by a majority vote of the executive, not counting the one in question, if he/she fails to attend three (3) executive meetings in a year.

Article 4 – meetings, etc.

1. The ASW shall hold monthly meetings at such time and place as shall be arranged by the executive committee. Regular meetings shall be open to the public.
2. Any business meetings shall be held at such time and place as deemed by the executive.
3. The executive committee shall hold regular monthly meetings.
4. Sixty percent (60%) of all executive members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Article 5 – dues

1. All members shall be required to pay dues as set forth in our by-laws.
2. The executive committee is empowered to waive all or part of the dues of any members unable to pay them.

Article 6 – newsletter

1. The ASW shall publish a monthly newsletter known as The Fish File.

Article 7 – amendment

1. To amend or repeal this Constitution or any part of it, it shall be necessary that the proposed amendment be presented in writing signed by at least three members in good standing.
2. The proposed amendment shall be read at the next regular meeting and voted on at that time.
3. The affirmative vote of the majority of all members in good standing shall be required for the adoption of an amendment to this constitution.
4. Any proposed amendments to the constitution or by-laws shall be published in the society newsletter before being voted upon.

Appendix B - Sample By-laws

SECTION 1 – fiscal year

1. The fiscal year of the society shall be from July 1st to June 30th inclusive.

SECTION 2 – membership

1. Membership is open to anyone interested in the society's objectives as stated in the constitution.
2. The membership chair may reject any application for membership, with approval of the executive.
3. There shall be 4 membership classes as defined below. All four classes shall be entitled to all privileges except as noted:
 - a) Regular Member – Any person 17 years of age and over.
 - b) Junior Member – Any person up to 16 years of age inclusive. Junior members may not serve on the executive.
 - c) Family Membership – Shall include spouses and all children living in the same residence. Any members under the age of 15 must be accompanied by an adult.
 - d) Honorary Lifetime Member – Any person who by outstanding service promotes the objectives of the society. Such memberships may be awarded by the executive by a unanimous vote, excluding the person being voted upon.
4. A non-member (visitor) may attend a maximum of two (2) meetings before applying for membership. Upon payment of dues a member is eligible to participate in all ASW activities.
5. Any member who has not renewed their membership 60 days after expiring shall have their membership revoked. Any members whose actions are deemed detrimental to the ASW may have their membership revoked by the executive.

SECTION 3 – election of officers

1. At the regular meeting in May a nominating committee shall be set up. It shall consist of 3 members, one appointed by the President and 2 from among the rest of the membership present.
2. The nominating committee shall determine who is able and willing to serve in various offices and shall formulate a slate of nominees for presentation at the June meeting.
3. No person may be nominated for more than one office. Any member shall be entitled to nominate additional candidates for any office from the floor.
4. Those elected to the various offices shall assume those duties and any records from the outgoing person over the July, August break.

SECTION 4 – finances

1. Dues shall be as follows: Regular member \$20.00 per year, Family Member \$25.00 per year, Junior Member \$15.00 per year.
2. All dues are payable upon joining and renewable one calendar year after that.

3. If additional funds are needed, voluntary offerings may be taken up, or any other proper means of fund raising may be used. No per capita assessments may be made.
4. Any member of the executive may not spend more than \$20.00 on behalf of the society, except without prior approval of the executive committee. Exempt from this is the newsletter editor only for expenditures of the newsletter to a limit of \$200.00.
5. The Treasurer shall keep an accurate and adequate record of all receipts and expenditures and shall be prepared to report on the state of finances at all times. He/she shall preserve all records of finances.
6. The books of the Treasurer shall be audited as deemed necessary by the executive.
7. It shall be the responsibility of the Treasurer to prepare monthly and yearly financial reports and to submit them to the executive and membership at appropriate times.

SECTION 5 – rules

1. Executive meetings shall be conducted in an orderly fashion.

SECTION 6 – amendment

1. These by-laws may be altered only as follows:
By a majority consensus of the executive committee, which has an attendance of a minimum of 10 people. If passed then announced at the next general meeting and subject to disapproval by a vote of less than two-thirds of the membership in attendance.

SECTION 7 – awards

1. The ASW shall make annual awards which include the following: Aquarist of the Year, or any other deemed necessary by the executive.
2. These awards are merit awards and shall only be awarded at the discretion of the executive.

Note: This is only one sample. Contact CAOAC for other Constitution and Bylaw samples which may be more favourable to your organization.

CONTRIBUTING CLUBS

Thank you to the following clubs for their important contribution to this project. Their involvement is greatly appreciated. Also, thank you to the CAOAC Executive and member clubs for their assistance and support in the production of this document.

Aquarium Society of Winnipeg	Manitoba, Canada
Brampton Aquarium Club	Ontario, Canada
Brant Aquarium Society	Ontario, Canada
Brazos Valley Aquarium Society	Texas, U.S.A.
Brooklyn Aquarium Society	New York, U.S.A.
CAOAC	Canada, U.S.A.
Calypso Fish and Aquaria Club	London, England
Canadian Koi Club of B.C.	British Columbia, Canada
Catfish Study Group	Wigan, U.K.
COAST	California, U.S.A.
CRLCA	Ontario, Canada
Durham Region Aquarium Society	Ontario, Canada
Greater Akron Aquarium Society	Akron, U.S.A.
Greater Cincinnati Aquarium Society	Ohio, U.S.A.
IFOCUS	London, England
Kitchener Waterloo Aquarium Society	Ontario, Canada
Linlithgow Aquarist Society	Scotland, U.K.
Mid Atlantic Cichlid Keepers	Pennsylvania, U.S.A.
Northwest Koi and Goldfish Club	Oregon, Washington, U.S.A.
Paradijsvis	Alblasserdam, Holland
Red River Valley Aquarium Club	Manitoba, Canada
Sarnia Aquarium Society	Ontario, Canada
Saskatoon Aquarium Society	Saskatchewan, Canada
Skandinaviska Killi Sällskapet	Sweden, Denmark, Norway
St. Catharines Aquarium Society	Ontario, Canada
Tropical Fish Club of Erie County	New York, U.S.A.
Utah-Wasatch Marine Aquarium Society	Utah, U.S.A.
Vancouver Aquatic Hobbyist Club	British Columbia, Canada
West Michigan Marine Aquarium Club	Michigan, U.S.A.