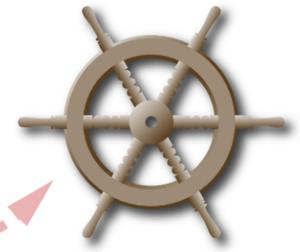




Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Awareness and motivation lead to engagement

by Gérard Cormier, Executive Staff Officer, Outreach Programs & Equity Services

Many organizations in our society are grappling with the issue of member engagement. They want the secret recipe that will lead to their members being more engaged than they are presently. This is all well and good until the issue of level of engagement is examined. For instance the NSTU has over 10,000 members but they cannot all be engaged at the same level. The provincial executive could not be comprised of 10,000 members nor could the NSTU Equity Committee. A further examination of the three levels of engagement will shed some light on the appropriate spectrum of engagement levels for an organization the size of the NSTU.

There are three levels or rings of engagement: the inner ring, the middle ring, and the outer ring. The inner ring of engagement is comprised of the core team of leaders and most committed individuals. This would include the staff, provincial executive, and Local leaders of the NSTU. Their level of engagement has them spending a lot of time and effort in moving the organization forward. The middle ring of engagement is comprised of school/campus NSTU representatives as well as provincial and Local committee members. They are less involved than the Union leadership but still dedicate an important amount of time and energy to the functioning of the organization, especially at the Local level. The outer ring of engagement contains the majority of NSTU members. They are the members who vote on contracts and other issues such as pensions. They may check the NSTU website from time to time and periodically read an issue of *The Teacher*. The NSTU can be proud of their involvement as witnessed in the last two contract votes. Voter turnout was

much higher in the NSTU contract votes than in any provincial or federal election in some time. Regardless of whether a member is in the inner, middle, or outer ring, they are engaged to the level they feel is appropriate for their circumstance. All three levels play an important role within the organization.

The problem is not in the level of engagement; it lies in the number of members who are **disengaged**. These people belong to the outer ring but do not vote on Union contracts, do not visit the NSTU website, and do not read any materials from the organization such as *The Teacher* and *AVISO*. They do, however, have strong viewpoints on how the organization does nothing for them, but continues to collect their dues. It is these individuals that are in need of awareness of the benefits of belonging to the collective known as the NSTU. To that end, the NSTU developed a workshop entitled 'What Does the NSTU Do for You?' It gives members an opportunity to realize all the benefits and services that are available to them because of their membership in the NSTU. Very often members learn about benefits and services of which they were unaware. Also, it does not take long for them to realize that they receive their money's worth for the price it takes to belong to the NSTU. This is what is called building awareness, and awareness is critical if the organization wants their members motivated and engaged within the various levels of engagement.

At Annual Council 2013 delegates received a report from the ad hoc Committee on Member Engagement. The committee made a list of seven recommendations to the provincial executive, all of which were passed and



Above are NSTU members from the Strait RRC participating in one of seven member engagement focus groups that took place last March, as part of the work of the ad hoc Committee on Member Engagement.

have since been sent to the appropriate staff/department for implementation.

They are as follows:

- That the data collected from the random survey, the focus groups, and the '6-3-1' activity be forwarded to the appropriate NSTU Standing Committees, NSTU leaders, and/or NSTU staff for information and possible action
- That the NSTU investigate the creation of a mobile application for its membership
- That the NSTU investigate the creation of a new member packet for each new member, which would contain their NSTU address with temporary password, a welcome letter from the president, and NSTU promotional item, and a listing of NSTU documents and services;
- That NSTU staff investigate the creation of a member-engagement day and report their

findings back to the provincial executive;

- That the NSTU public relations department conduct a yearly member satisfaction survey;
- That the NSTU staff develop an action plan on how to better engage and support NSTU representatives and report its findings back to the provincial executive

The Ad hoc committee had also recommended that *The Teacher* publication be made available in print but the provincial executive had already acted on that issue. Print copies were again in circulation starting in September.

Over the next couple of months the background work that is needed to move these resolutions forward will be done. Some of them will be sent back to the provincial executive to be re-examined and further direction given. Whatever direction is given, it is hoped that the three levels of engagement will be increased with NSTU members more aware, motivated, and engaged.

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