



**Historical Societies Convening 2  
March 6, 2019  
New Canaan Museum & Historical Society**

**Discussion Group Reports**

**1. MEMBERSHIP**

The common challenge was in finding younger members

**Annual appeal** should be made to the whole community (not just members). In general don't assume who will be interested, go out to the whole community. Rowayton put together a town-wide mailing (hard-copy)

**Events** can also bring in a new broader constituency (eg: honoring key people: firemen, businesses etc). Or create an off-site exhibit (take an object; work with schools and teachers; bring teachers in.

Benefits: **reciprocal memberships**, enabling members to visit other societies for free; encourage the sharing of exhibits; look for the unique feature of your society.

Open on school-closed days (MLK Day; Presidents Day - so you capture whole families and new members - or organize special programs for those holidays.

**Progressive Tour** idea: passport idea of getting your passport stamped.

Could organize one just for historical societies; and then one for the public.

**2. BOARD DEVELOPMENT**

Quite a lot of differences between societies

**Issues:**

- how to get board contributions
- attendance
- wealth:wisdom:work
- importance of stating board members' responsibilities
- problem of "in-groups - need to have more recognition events and other social meetings
- have "historical" content to liven up meetings

**Ideas:**

- partner with staff from another society and track ideas and progress
- have a Dropbox for key materials to enable other societies to compare documents

### **3. EXHIBITS**

1. Important to upgrade collections databases
2. Incorporate citizens and town organizations
3. Collaborate with other local organizations

Work with elementary schools, banks, stores (not just the library)

Rather than rely on database, exploit your own collections and archive

Go out and find material that is not in your collection: Firehouse; Houses of Worship. Find out what is needed in the community and work with other material

Norwalk Historical spoke of a project at 50 Washington Street where NHS produced a slide show: you \*can\* work with developers.

### **4. PROGRAMMING**

1. Share "Top Five" programs with others
2. Wine, beer, food, music and art are all good to combine with an historical event
3. Collaborate with other non-historical organizations: work with the local garden club to co-sponsor a town-wide event
4. Cuseum could be a good tool to use as a way of sharing talks.

### **5. MARKETING 1**

1. Master the press release and then everything can stream from that.
2. To get the press to respond, you need fantastic images; then contact individual reporters who have shown an interest in historical/cultural affairs
3. Involve the Board by sending links to published articles about your events/exhibits
4. Be aware of all digital outlets like Patch, Hamlet Hub, etc.
5. Instagram is a social media must
6. Include your Chamber of Commerce
7. Have a business portfolio of photos, endorsements, letters of support; your mission. Go to local companies and show "this is how we are helping the community." Businesses are often looking for community partners.

### **6. MARKETING 2**

1. Social media is key. Pull in younger people; perhaps work with schools
2. Use Facebook's "memories" and "stories" features
3. "Cross-pollination" - reciprocal marketing and sharing events with each other; show other societies events in your newsletter
4. Have "non-historical" events to get new audiences (eg organize student art show).

### **7. FUNDRAISING 1**

1. Your Board is key: you need the whole team
2. Events help build relationships
3. Corporate: use board to develop relationships
4. Relationships throughout
5. Boards do respond to statistics and feedback
6. Development Team: all staff and board together
7. Invite corporations to your events (50% respond to Stamford Historical Societies invitations)
8. Persuade the board to invest in a Development person - do as an experiment and measure the ROI

### **8. FUNDRAISING 2**

1. Events should be whole-community friendly

2. How to build annual events: how to decide whether to continue
3. MUSIC draws people - so include musicians in your events; also use students at such events
4. Bequests (smaller donors actually good).