



Kiwanis Insider

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For the Leadership of Kiwanis

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Dear Kiwanis Leaders:

How's MY club doing?

"In the unlikely event of an emergency, oxygen masks will drop from the compartment overhead. If traveling with small children or others needing assistance, please secure your own mask before assisting others."

No matter how many times I hear the flight attendant say these words, I still struggle with the idea that I am suppose to secure life-giving oxygen for myself before I give it to my young children. As a father it appears unseemly to take care of my own needs before my babies. It just doesn't seem right. Of course, when you understand the bigger picture, you realize that if you don't take care of yourself first, you will be of little or no use to others. It is not selfish; it is practical and necessary. The same holds true in Kiwanis. As selfish as it sounds, each of us needs to focus on the health of our own local Kiwanis club before we turn our attention to other leadership opportunities. Once we have secured life-giving oxygen for our own club, we will be in a great position to serve others. You might be surprised how often I hear from people who are involved in leadership at various levels in the organization who either are unable or unwilling to ensure their home club is active and alive. My encouragement to each of you as leaders is to take a fresh look at your own club and determine whether your leadership and influence might make a difference in your club. As a past club president, board member, lieutenant governor, or governor, you are in a great position to model servant leadership by leading at the local level. Past International President Steve Siemens is the new membership chairman for his club, and you should see his eyes light up when he talks about the awesome growth plans they are developing for their club. We need every talented leader and worker to make sure their club has all the oxygen it needs to both survive and thrive. Are you the one?

California-Nevada-Hawaii District Convention

In the previous Kiwanis Insider, I shared that the California-Nevada-Hawaii District delegates would be voting on a governance change for their district. With a strong endorsement by Governor George Francis and other key leaders, the delegates overwhelmingly approved the measure. This new structure will allow the lieutenant governors to focus on their primary objective of serving and supporting the clubs in their divisions and will create an 18-member board of trustees with three-year rotating terms. The district's elections resulted in the confirmation of Oscar Knight as governor-designate and the election of Dan Connolly as governor-elect. Their goal to grow to 100,000 members by 2015 will require strong leadership and determined effort, which this district clearly has. Congratulations to George, Oscar, Dan, and the other district leadership for a great convention and for setting the stage for future success.

Onstage Recognition at the Convention

Over the past few months I have participated in dozens of conversations in which people expressed their opinion about what kind of onstage recognition is appropriate to show our amazing volunteer leaders. Having spent my career working with talented volunteers, I know they are the real heroes in our organization. While everyone agrees we need to show love, respect, and appreciation for the hard work of our leaders, they do not agree on what form that recognition should take or who should be included. Here is a sample of some of the views expressed:

1. Leaders and their spouses should be publicly recognized from the stage at the district and International conventions.
2. There is too much emphasis on recognizing the work of our leaders and not enough on the accomplishments of our members.
3. Recognition is not something that should be anticipated or expected, but should come as a surprise/bonus.
4. Past leaders and their spouses should be recognized each year on the stage at the district and International conventions.
5. Club members who attend the convention are "put off" by the parade of leaders across the stage.
6. How can we expect people to continue to work hard if we can't take enough time to recognize them?
7. If the club president is such an important position in Kiwanis, why aren't they on the stage being recognized instead of a select group of top leaders?
8. Our International President and our district governors worked hard to get where they are and deserve to be recognized.
9. Since the majority of the people at our convention are volunteers who work hard for children, why do we single out some for recognition when the room is full of heroes?
10. I sat through all those boring recognition ceremonies while I was waiting for my turn, so now they can be patient while I get the recognition I deserve.

The only data I could find on this topic comes from the evaluations of the International convention. These evaluations rank 17 different items, with number one being most important. "Onstage recognition" was ranked 17th in 2006, 2005, 2004, and 16th in 2003. Evaluations of this year's International convention showed 65.2 percent of the attendees felt "onstage recognition" should receive either the same or less emphasis in the future. Rather than offend anyone by attempting to interpret those results, I will let you draw your own conclusions.

Your Kiwanis International Board and staff want to deliver a convention that appeals to members, but also honors our leaders. We are exploring creative ways to use the video screens for recognition and are open to other ideas people might have. This is not an issue of whether our leaders deserve recognition; the question is how to do it in a way that honors them, but also respects the time and hard work of the thousands of other Kiwanis volunteers in the audience. You can offer your opinion by participating in the blog on this topic at www.kiwanisleader.org or by sending an e-mail to robparker@kiwanis.org. I'll be sure to share the results of your input in a future update.

Thanks for leading.

Rob