

Timaru High School Old Boys' Association

July 2019

Discussion Paper – The Way Forward - Summary

Gentlemen – Having received nine responses to the Way Forward Paper that I sent out to everyone on 2 May, I am now in a position to send you a summary of all the points raised. There have been some really promising observations and suggestions which hopefully we can take on board and adapt to suit the outcomes we require.

Under each heading I will give you the comments I have received and then I will endeavor to provide a common theme which will be the result of those comments. A couple of extra headings have been added.

Membership

“A personal approach is needed”.

“Stay with the current set-up”.

“Identify the advantages of being a member”. “Make it easy to join up and belong”.

“A recruitment drive should be set up”. “Use social media”. “Share ideas with other Old Boys' Associations”.

“Keep asking people to join up”.

“Have an honorary membership for all leavers for 10 years”.

“We have to look after our members”.

“Be physical, have presence. Send out a superb newsletter of 12 full colour A4 pages”.

Conclusion:

Stay with the current structure by having an annual membership subscription, broken down into various categories. Work out what the advantages are of being a member. Set up a recruitment plan which will include a professionally produced newsletter sent out twice a year.

Magazine

“Has to be produced and distributed much earlier”.

“Should be produced digitally”.

“Should be sent out by the end of November in the year it refers to”.

Conclusion

Not many respondents were in favour of splitting the magazine into a School publication and an Old Boys' publication and nearly everyone wants it sent out much sooner. There could be an opportunity to offer it digitally to those who opt for it, at a lower subscription. David McInnes's survey brought out the fact that about 50% of members would be happy with a digital version. It should be easy to set this up. We need to communicate with the school to see if an earlier production is possible. The late delivery also has an impact on our cash flow.

Subscriptions

“Must have subscriptions”.

“The subscription invoices should be sent out digitally”.

“Hard to send out digitally as a lot of people do not have email or internet access”.

“Leave as is”.

Conclusion

We obviously need an income especially if we are to continue producing the magazine as a hard copy. Doing away with subscriptions was a “cheeky” suggestion to get people thinking. David McBride gave an excellent example of what happened to the Timaru Civic Trust when it discontinued subscriptions several years ago. More on this later in this summary.

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Donations for Specific Projects

Almost none of the respondents wanted a “specific donations facility” as suggested in the paper. This was to replace not having a subscription. Obviously we need to keep the current facility where members can add a donation when they pay their subscription.

But Cameron Gibb came back with a very interesting interpretation as follows:

I feel that as a current staff member we at school are very appreciative of the help and support given by both the Foundation and the Association but perhaps the project focus approach would actually have a greater bearing on the continued development of the facilities and the opportunities that are on offer to our boys.

My sentiment was based on the project orientated approach that you mentioned in your paper.

I think that through questioning of staff regarding potential projects that would be of benefit to the current and future students we could potentially pitch ideas towards the Old Boys association who would then advertise these projects to its membership. If an interested party would like to donate to a specific project that would be appreciated by staff.

As an Old Boy of the school I have noticed a decline in the facilities and also the exterior of the school. I would like to see some capital funding to increase the aesthetic appeal of the school.

I believe we have our 5 Year allocation of funds that goes towards our buildings. I just feel that we could improve the aesthetics of the school.

Conclusion:

After reading Cameron's suggestion, it would appear that a “specific project donation” could be set up for that sort of expenditure. This would be an extra donation.

Branches

“There must be key people in each area”.

“Branches must hold functions on an annual basis”.

“We need at least two key people in each area”.

“There must be more support for the existing branches”.

“There needs to be a South Canterbury Branch and an Otago Branch set up”.

Conclusion:

The convenor in each area has to be pro-active in arranging functions and it would be ideal if each area could hold two of these each year. The convenor can't do it all on his own so he needs to set up a small committee to handle the various tasks involved.

As convenor of the Hawkes Bay branch, the best way of getting people to turn up to functions is to ring them and get them to pay up front so that they feel committed. In my experience, just sending out an email doesn't work – it's the one-on-one approach that is successful.

Other comments that were made:

Benefits of being a member

At the meeting on 10 June, it was agreed that Stuart North in Auckland and all of the area convenors will be granted limited, read-only access to the national database. This should open the way to expand the number of Old Boys on the database and to sign up more members. One of the respondents suggested that it would be very beneficial if we could find some retired Old Boys who would be prepared to work on a voluntary basis, tracking down Old Boys. This could be a hobby for people with an interest in the school who have time on their hands.

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Conclusion:

It is one thing making contact with new Old Boys but it is another challenge to actually get them to sign up as members. \$30.00 a year (plus a donation maybe) is neither here nor there financially and of course each member receives a copy of the magazine.

There are other benefits – getting back in touch with people you were at school with can be quite rewarding and it can lead to renewing friendships from long ago.

Digital

Cameron Gibb said “I feel the way forward is to look towards the digital age that we are currently in. Social media and websites are the best way to both advertise and ‘sell’ products or concepts in this day and age”.

Conclusion:

We need to call on the knowledge and expertise of the younger generation to use platforms such as Facebook etc. which are now used by all sorts of companies and organisations. I have heard Edward Patterson talking about using Facebook for co-ordinating rugby activities at the school and with the Old Boys' rugby club so it's people like Cameron and Edward who could help set this up for the benefit of the Association.

Brochure

David McBride's contribution/response to the “Way Forward” paper was extremely interesting and promising and it is worth repeating in part here:

I have put a copy of a Timaru Civic Trust newsletter in the mail to you. This was a “first” for the Trust. As mentioned in my earlier response the Trust was sliding in to oblivion when a few of us got motivated and revived it in 2014/15. The newsletter last year had a powerful effect in the community. Some of our Board members deposited copies in waiting rooms etc. This let people know that we were active again, and invited new members by including the subscription form.

In my note to you with the newsletter, I said that I would check on the cost. There was a set-up cost of \$254 incl GST and the printing cost was \$555 incl GST for 300 copies. Subsequently we had a reprint to meet demand. Those prices were not the result of competitive bidding; one of our Board members just went to Copyfast in Timaru with some images and some stories. Another option would be Corporate Print in Timaru. Both companies have talented designers.

I'm thinking that 2 per year (summer, winter) would be adequate for the Old Boys. With all of the School activities available, as well as Old Boy news, there is an abundance of graphic material to use.

As mentioned these newsletters lie around on kitchen tables and generate good vibes amongst people that one doesn't even know about, as well as pride within the School community.

The brochure has an Annual Subscription form on the back page which people can fill in, giving their contact details and an invitation to pay by cheque (to send to a box number) or internet banking.

Conclusion:

I believe this “brochure” project is worth pursuing and as there is a cost involved it could attract the attention of a sponsor, maybe an Old Boy who is involved in a large company or organization who could see the benefits that would accrue to the Old Boys' Association.

National Survey

We are all aware of the work David McInnes devoted to this project and at the time of writing this summary, we have received a very detailed summary of the information the survey brought out.

Some of the relevant points are as follows:

- 1) A number of Old Boys have indicated a preparedness to help the OBA, in the following areas:

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- Helping with functions, reunions
 - Sport, regional and/or national role within the Association
 - Mentoring and providing career advice
 - History of School, memorabilia
 - Business opportunities with fellow Old Boys.
- 2) With a couple of exceptions, a major concern is that the vast majority of Old Boys have expressed a disinterest in assisting with recruiting and marketing as part of the OBA membership drive.
- 3) Otago recorded 14 positive responses from 16 respondents with:
- helping with functions, reunions, etc. being the dominant positive response which is extremely interesting considering that the Otago branch is basically 'dormant' and in this regard can be seen as an encouraging response in what is an untapped market for the association;
 - sport;
 - regional and/or national role within the OBA provides further evidence of a genuine interest;
 - history of school, memorabilia, etc., along with business opportunities with fellow OBs and mentoring and career advice provide further reinforcing indicators of a branch which is ready to be 'reignited'.

Conclusion:

We need to go back to all Old Boys who received the survey, especially to those who responded, with the final report. As David McInnes has pointed out, we now need to attract some "inside" support and assistance from local Old Boys (i.e. from the regions and branches) to assist in taking the investigations, analyses and suggested actions to another level.

It would be beneficial to identify the names of those who have offered to help in various areas, get in touch with them personally and firm up on what they are prepared to do.

Website

The Old Boys section of the School website is available for a huge input of information and this will be worked on over the coming months. At present it lists all the officers of the Association and the Foundation. It also has a page where people can sign up to become members and very soon it will include a payment option where people can pay by credit card or internet banking.

Newsletter

I am aware that newsletters need to be sent out to all Old Boys with email addresses on a regular basis and I confess I've been remiss in this area. These newsletters will be reinstated as soon as possible and they will be uploaded to the website.

Summary

I realise this has become a lengthy exercise but I felt it was important to cover all the various segments of the Association as it stands at the moment.

It's the next part that is going require input from a lot of people and it's all to do with marketing. If you run an organization and you have a product to sell, you have to locate the customers and convince them they are going to benefit by buying that product. In our case we are selling them a \$30.00 annual subscription and they will derive benefits as outlined above.

How do we find people within our Association who are prepared to devote some voluntary time to locating these potential customers?

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Allocate certain jobs to existing members of the Executive? Call for volunteers in each area? How successful would this be when you consider that in the responses to the survey most people were not too keen on getting involved with marketing?

Or do we contact and pay an advertising/marketing company to carry out the job for us? At a cost which could be met out of current reserves or by sponsorship. Maybe we have to spend money to make money.

I really like the idea of the "McBride" brochure and I believe we should follow this possibility through and give it a try. I'm sure David could lead the way on this project.

CONCLUSION:

In light of all of the above, I believe we should consider implementing one of the following suggested plans:

SUGGESTED PLAN A

Set up a membership drive carried out by each branch convenor with help from his local committee.

Now that each convenor has limited access to the national database, he will be able to identify those Old Boys who are not financial members and set up a process of contacting them personally by phone. With the aim of signing them up.

In the case of Timaru where there is no local branch at present, a separate group of volunteers will need to be gathered up.

This will take a lot of time and effort and it will be interesting to see if current branch members are prepared to take part. As mentioned above, I am certain that the only chance of convincing people to sign up is to contact them by telephone or in person – emails alone do not work. And just setting this plan up is going to take time and plenty of volunteers.

An important segment of PLAN A is following up on and using the information that came to light through those people who responded to the survey. Firstly we need to send out the full report, now that it is available, to all Old Boys who have email addresses. Then we need to make personal contact with all Old Boys who offered to help the Association in one way or another. Hopefully, out of this pool of known people, we should be able to enlist their help and get them to sign up if they are not currently financial.

Also included in PLAN A is the "McBride" brochure – I sincerely believe this is worth trying because it can be done at a minimal cost which maybe a sponsor could become interested in. Initially run it in South Canterbury where the largest number of Old Boys live. It could also be displayed on the website where it might attract attention from "out of towners".

Copies of the first and last pages of this newsletter are attached to this document.

SUGGESTED PLAN B

PLAN B comes into play if no-one is prepared to take on PLAN A.

As mentioned above, we could out-source the whole project and use the services of an advertising/marketing company who will employ people who are skilled in this type of initiative.

This will come at a cost which can be met out of current reserves. We are fortunate this money is available and at present it is sitting there with no purpose attached to it. Obviously we would have to give this company/organization authority to use the database on a limited basis, similar to the access being granted to all of our convenors.

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FINAL OBSERVATION

This has been said by many people during the three years that I have been President – if the Association continues to do nothing to increase its financial membership, the organization will quietly fade away.

So we need to take serious action now!

Regards to all.

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Timaru High School Old Boys Association

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