Starting Interest Groups

The Wonderful World of Hobbies

Question #1: What makes hobbies so enjoyable for us?

Question #2: What makes a hobby worthwhile or worth pursuing?
The Power of Interest Groups

There is a group of guys in Colorado Springs who get together for fly-fishing every couple of weeks. Early Saturday morning, they meet at one member’s home, load gear and food into an SUV, and head into the mountains. Once at the river, they pile out of the car, pull on their waders, sort through flies and rods, and venture into the cool Colorado stream.

To the other fishermen on the river, these guys look like everyone else. They search out a promising hole, cast back and forth, and wait for the snag on their lines that signals a bite. They talk and laugh and enjoy the beauty of the outdoors. But these guys aren’t just out for a day of fly-fishing. They aren’t just recreating. They’re connecting through their local church. In fact, they are holding an officially registered New Life Church Small Group.

At the same time, back in town, people all over the city are meeting for all kinds of different activities. A dog-training group gathers in the city park. Aspiring writers meet in a home to read and to discuss their works, a financial expert coaches a group of married couples on money management, and teenagers meet downtown to serve at the homeless shelter. Men pour into a basketball gym for a pick-up game, and women sit drinking coffee and discussing the latest best-selling book at the bagel shop.

What’s going on here? These aren’t community groups, although they don’t look like church groups, either….This seems odd, right? After all, what do fly-fishing, dog training, and eating bagels have to do with sharing Christ? They are ministry, and this ministry perfectly expresses what the Bible is all about: loving God and loving others…The way I see it, effective ministry is powerfully connecting with God and people--living life better through biblical relationships. (from Dog Training, Fly Fishing, and Sharing Christ In the 21st Century by Ted Haggard, Thomas Nelson Publishers, p. 5)

In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul expresses the genius of Christianity when he states, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.” It was Paul’s willingness to share his life with the Thessalonians that brought feet, hands and heart to the Gospel message. As it was in the first century, so it is today.

Have you ever creatively considered that God has given you a hobby, an interest, or a passion for a reason, and that reason may be that He wants you to share it with others, both inside and outside the church? That’s right--
there is tremendous power when people link up around a shared interest. It’s fun, it’s relaxing, it’s relational, it’s not hard to get motivated…etc., etc. Some of your friends might not come to church with you, but they would go fishing, or to the bowling alley, or to a coffee shop, or for a ride in the hills. So take the church to them by starting an interest group.

New Life Church found that when they encouraged their people to consider starting Interest Groups a number of exciting possibilities opened up. The leadership of the church simply asked that each group be willing to do one of four things at each meeting: worship, prayer, Bible study, or a short testimony. They found that this was a realistic requirement for almost any group setting. And every group understood that their primary purpose was to be a relationship building environment and to simply help people move one step closer to God.

Debrief
Question #1: What stood out to you from the article?

Question #2: What do you like about the concept of Interest Groups?

Question #3: As you were reading, did any possible Interest Groups emerge in your thinking?
What Interests and Hobbies Do You Have?
- Sewing
- Quilting
- Cooking
- Genealogy
- Painting
- Gardening
- Scrap-booking
- Travel

What Interests or Hobbies Do You Have?
- Basketball
- Softball
- Running
- Camping/Fishing
- Aerobics
- Running
- Weight Training
- Golf

What “Study” Interests Do You Have?
- Book Study
- Life Study
- Support Group
- Recovery Group
- Prayer Group
- Need Related Study
- Movie Critics Club

What Interests, Hobbies, Life Skills, or Professional Skills Do You Have?
- Guitar
- Voice
- Drums
- Brass Instruments
- Piano
- Quartet
- Composing
- Listening

What Life Skills, or Professional Skills Do You Have?
- Budgeting
- Financial Planning
- Getting Out of Debt
- Finances and Marriage
- Job Transition
- Business Leaders

What Needs are You Interested in Meeting in the Community?
- Homeless Ministry
- Prison Ministry
- Nursing Home
- Spanish
- Sign Language
- Community Action/Service
“What If” Possibilities

Assignment: Using the “Shared Interests” concept, brainstorm possible interest groups that would be attractive to people who are being drawn toward Christ. Try to generate at least ten new possibilities. Feel free to refer to the previous page which is filled with various ideas to get you thinking.

Key questions:
Question #1: What interests or hobbies do I have that non-Christians would share with me?

Question #2: What life or professional skills do I have that would help me build relationships with unbelievers?

Question #3: What life challenges am I currently facing or have faced in the past that non-Christians could relate to?

Brainstorming Possibilities:
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Interest Group Planning Worksheet

What kind of Interest Group(s) are you potentially interested in considering?

Who do you know (inside and outside the church) that might be interested in this kind of group? Who would you like to invite? Is there anyone who might want to partner with you in getting the group started?

When would the group meet and for how long each time? When could you have your first meeting?

Where would the group meet?

What are some challenges or obstacles you might face in launching an Interest Group?

What next steps can you take in the next 30 days toward starting an Interest Group?