

Communications Committee Report

September 22, 2009

2009 COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

Communications Committee Members

Cynci Calvin: PAUSATF Communications Committee Chair, Web Content Manager

Dave Schrock: PAUSATF Vice President/Coaches Committee

Alexander Hill: Youth Committee

Fred Baer: Track & Field/Media Committee

Mary Woo: Masters Track & Field

John Murray: Officials Committee

Linda Hall: Road Racing

Wayne Miles: Ultra Running

Don Porteous: Cross Country

Thom Trimble: Web Master

Therese Iknoian: member at large

Geroge Kleeman: member at large

Interested & Helpful Others

Irene Herman: President/Membership Committee

John Mansoor: PAUSATF Executive Director

Mark Winitz: sports writer, content volunteer

Thomas Vincent: Web volunteer

Lynn Walker: Web volunteer

2008 - 2009 Communications Committee Overview

1) In early 2008, Mark Winitz' contract as Communications Manager was not renewed, although Mark has continued to write stories, supervise volunteer writers, and submit news for Web site posts. Thank you Mark!

2) The Executive Board chose to hire independent contractors or use volunteers for stories, profiles, and managing of the Web site content. Bob Burns, long-time T&F sports writer, and Mark Winitz are two examples of hired writers. Cynci Calvin (me) has been managing the Web site content. This system is working well. Several volunteer writers and Web site volunteers have been helping out as well. We could use more!

3) Thom Trimble performed a major revision of pausatf.org.

4) Cal Track & Running News went to 5 issues and asked that submissions not be too time sensitive since the internet carries results. They are looking for profiles, meet stories, more interesting items of a more timeless nature.

Action Items Currently Under Consideration

1) Alexander Hill (Youth Com Com rep) made these internet suggestions earlier in the year. They were specific for Youth but could easily apply to other committees:

- A "Feed Back" form
- A "Subscribe Me" form for members who are interested in receiving E-newsletters to sign up.

Discussion: Each committee needs to consider these items, but the Communications Committee can help with their implementation. We can ask Web Master Thom Trimble to set these up if a Committee requests them. Once set up it will take a Committee member to receive the information, respond to it, and pass it on to the Committee's board for consideration. We could start by having a general PA suggestion form on the "About the PA" page. The mailing list and eNewsletter suggestion leads to a bigger discussion. See "2" below.

Com Com Chair's recommendation: ask Thom Trimble to set up a feedback form on the "about the PA" page if we can find a volunteer who will receive and process the feedback.

From member Dave Shrock: I agree with Cynci in that this helps reach out to membership to a greater degree, and hopefully would increase valuable input on our programs. I would also suggest that committees have the two options set-up on their respective pages, and Thom can easily have the hits sent to the designated person who will handle the communication.

- Consider joining social networking sites

Discussion: the national office is on Facebook, so that precedent has been set. If pausatf.org joins, the only problem I can foresee is the need for an administrator who checks the page every couple of days. And how about Twitter, MySpace, etc.? We will also need to consider the possibility of separate committees having separate Facebook pages, but for now let's limit the discussion to the pausatf.org as a whole.

Com Com Chair's recommendation: have the PA join Facebook but only if a reliable administrator and back-up administrator can be found.

From member Dave Shrock: I agree, this would be a good source of additional networking, though only if we have someone who can maintain and referee the medium.

2) Email list and eNews management: Join Constant Contact or a similar service

Discussion: Dave Shrock and I have been investigating this.

Pros -

- The National office has been using Constant Contact for their eNewsletters.
- The emails sent through these companies are less likely to be bounced back due to the company's zero-spam rating.
- Emails have an opt-out option and are automatically updated when opt outs occur or dead emails happen.
- Extensive statistics are provided concerning the number of opened emails and number of link click throughs.
- Emails lists can be set up in a variety of ways: for each committee, for the entire PA membership email list, etc.
- Enewsletters can be archived on the company's site and can also have a Web version posted for viewing by people whose email programs do not show the letter clearly.

Cons -

- It costs money. The cost is related to the size of the list: it would cost the PA about \$75 per month to upload the entire PA members email list (discounted if we pay a year at a time).

- Formatting the eNewsletters takes some html skills. This might not be worth doing for committees with smaller email lists who have not had a problem reaching their members with their current system.
- Need to find reliable committee volunteers with some html skills to compose the emails, deal with the email lists, and send the emails.
- Potential security risk if the people in charge of receiving, uploading and using the lists from the PA office database are less than trustworthy.

Com Com Chair's recommendation: See who is interested utilizing this service and go from there. I am very interested as I handle the LDR eNews. I recently lost my LDR list in an email crash -it had about 500 emails on it. When I asked the office to send me the emails from current LDR connected members, they said it contained around 2,000, so I would have a much larger and more current list for the notices I send out.

From member Dave Shrock: The USATF staff is pleased with the service, and the RRCA, FleetFeet, plus many clubs use the service with success. I have also heard that uploading content is tricky, though the company is attempting to make this more intuitive. Uploading attachments as Pdf's solve some of this problem.

The discounted cost for non-profits paying one year in advance would be \$52.50 per month, and I believe this is a good investment for the following reasons:

- strategies such as monthly 'upcoming events' to our 6000+ membership could create better engagement and participation, and hopefully better retention of membership. Getting the word out concerning many of our larger event this coming year: JO's, Masters Champs, Gold West, Coaching Education schools and clinics, plus officials clinics would better keep the info in front of our memberships' consciousness in an increasingly busy environment.
- each committee could have access to their own list, and could send out timely info concerning registration deadlines, updated meet info, ticket availability...this is becoming more critical as the hard copy Cal Track & Running Review is cutting back to 5 issues annually
- a 'zero spam' management software which updates e-mails and deletes duplicate addresses provides for more current lists which are less likely to get bounced back.

In an increasingly electronic information environment, I believe this investment would make us more viable and efficient about getting current information out to membership.

Thanks everyone for your time!

From George Kleeman: Good ideas. I can support them although finding volunteers is always a problem. Without them we shouldn't spread ourselves thinner. With elections are there some changes in membership due (do you need to ask chairs on Tuesday if they have any replacements)?