2010 SOS Submission: Upstate SC
Expanded Meeting Options

Submission Date: 12/28/2009 3:28:36 PM   **Contact for this Submission:** Barbara Darby

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Chapter Location: Greenville, SC   **Chapter Title:** President

Chapter Membership Size: Small (Less than 100)   **Chapter Website URL:** www.upstatescastd.org

Description of Effort: This year our chapter addressed the need to provide meetings that were at more convenient locations and times and also addressed a special interest in technology by our membership. A Breakfast Club was formed and met on the east side of Greenville at a local restaurant. The group was facilitated by the Co-Director of the Membership Committee. The meeting topics were varied based on interest of the group. An average of ten members and non-members attended the meetings. In addition, we started a Technology SIG, lead by the Director of Communications/Marketing. The SIG met during lunch at a computer training company in central Greenville. Topics varied based on interest of the group. An average of ten members and non-members attended the meetings. The meeting room and lab were provided by the business.

Need Addressed: A choice of different time and location of meetings along with special interests.

Does this effort align with your chapter mission? Yes

Does this effort align with ASTD's mission? Yes

Target Audience: Chapter members and prospective members interested in a more convenient location and time and/or topic of interest.

Costs/Resource Use: (Include both hard dollar and volunteer hours expended to conduct the effort. Include any funding you were able to get through donations, contributions, barter, etc. and how you went about getting these resources.)

The Breakfast Club met at a local restaurant that provided a meeting room at no charge for the group. Attendees paid for their own breakfast/beverage. The facilitator devoted several volunteer hours to preparation through phone and email surveys and provided a planned agenda with topic for discussion. There was no registration fee for the meeting which was open to both members and non-members. Meetings took place from 7:30 am – 9 am.

The Technology SIG met at Carolina Computer Training Business Center. The business owner donated either a meeting room with AV or computer lab with AV. Attendees brought a bag lunch/beverage. The facilitator invested several volunteer hours for each meeting arranging for volunteer speakers on a variety of technology topics. The facilitator marketed both the Breakfast Club and Technology SIG events through Constant Contact to members and prospects and through networking via social media. SIG meetings took place from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm.

How did you implement: The Breakfast Club and Technology SIG were implemented by board members who had an interest in providing more meeting options and topics to our membership. Both options were

developed, organized, marketed and facilitated by the Co-Director of Membership and Director of Communications/Marketing who also served as our technology arm. The Directors utilized several board members for feedback and also went out to members for topic ideas. They created the meeting announcements which were broad cast through our ASTD member and prospect list but also within their own networks. The Breakfast Club provided an agenda and facilitated discussion along with networking. The Technology SIG provided an introduction of the speaker, presentation, Q & A, followed by networking. Both the Breakfast Club and Technology SIG were more informal meetings but still business oriented.

What were the Outcomes: We found that the Breakfast Club and Technology SIG attracted different people, many of whom did not attend regular evening meetings either due to time or location. Several of the attendees, and in some cases presenters, became more interested in our chapter and joined committees and/or presented at subsequent meetings. The meetings also attracted non-members who later attended subsequent meetings and are now prospects. There were several new local memberships as a result of the expanded meeting options. As a result of these meetings, we developed a strong relationship with a computer training business owner who we may partner with in other ways in the future. The owner circulates technology jobs that are available in the area which is a service for Chapter job seekers. The visibility and credibility of our Chapter was enhanced through these meetings and learning opportunities. Our committee strength increased and we formed a Technology Committee for 2010, with leadership from the Technology SIG.

Lessons Learned:
1) Planning and executing the meetings takes more time than you think. Our facilitators started out wanting to provide monthly meetings. They quickly realized that every other month was still a large order and for 2010, they will scale back to one meeting a quarter. The meetings will not conflict/compete (time or topic) with our regular evening meetings which we offer every other month.

2) Businesses are willing to work with you and provide resources. Sponsoring your meetings is smart business and they get a lot of exposure from the association with the Chapter.

3) By offering additional meetings, make sure you don't detract from your regular meeting offerings and deplete the energy of your board members and committee leadership.

4) The Expanded Meeting Options has had a positive effect on the perception of our Chapter. Hopefully this will help us build our board and committee strength and membership.

Specific ASTD chapter resources that helped guide you in the process of completing this best practice: