

APOGEE

PEAK OF FLIGHT

NEWSLETTER

Rocketry Competitions as a Club Activity

By Tim Van Milligan

Note: This is a section out of the Apogee publication: *"Recruiting and Retaining New Club Members."* The entire publication can be ordered from the Apogee web site at: http://www.apogeerockets.com/club_membership_bk.asp

One of the unique features about being a member of a club is that you can test your skills against others in friendly rocketry competitions. For a certain type of individual, this is very appealing. And if you look at clubs that have been around long periods of time, they have been active in holding competitions, and those individuals holding the leadership positions have been active in past competitions. Therefore, holding competition events may give a long range stability to the club that other types of activities don't (such as being just a HPR club, educational, etc).

Here are some of the benefits of competition that you can use to attract and maintain new club members:

1. Competition allows a fair and measurable way to compare your skills against those of others.
2. Competition may be the fastest way to learn new flying skills. You need to pay attention to the smaller details so you have more successful flights.
3. You don't get to win any prizes in sport launches; i.e., competition has an attainable and tangible goal.
4. Friendships with other modelers are much closer. You have more in common because you are working on similar models and your experiences parallel each other.
5. Competition more closely mimics the engineering goals of NASA than other types of rocketry such as HPR. It tries to stretch the performance of existing vehicles.
6. Technology advancement appears much more readily as a result of competition models. Those that actively compete are on the forefront of new technology.
7. Competition allows the modeler to get more recognition within the modeling community; i.e., ego satisfaction.
8. If you get really good at competition, you could win

a spot on the USA team, and get a free trip overseas to attend the World Spacemodeling Championships.

9. Through competition, the modeler can set and hold performance records — more ego satisfaction.
10. A good way to learn about the principles of aerodynamics; as you need this knowledge to push the edge of performance.

11. Less costly than HPR.
12. A great way to establish friendships with modelers in other countries. They enjoy competition too.

Even though competition can provide long term stability in the club, other people are turned off by it. Here are some of the reasons they may give.

1. The same people win every time.
2. The events get boring after flying them so many times.
3. It takes too much time to try to establish a new performance records, and they lack patience.
4. Newer, more expensive technology, means the person with the most money has the advantage.
5. Some other competitors may get to secretive about guarding their techniques; so it becomes anti-social activity.
6. Some people think that all the accomplishments in competition have already been achieved.
7. There is a negative stigma attached to flying small rockets. On the other side, there is ego gratification with having the biggest rocket on the field.
8. They don't have the time it takes to build multiple models for every event.

If your club decides to hold competitions, you should do it in a way to stress the positive benefits and minimize those things that turn people off. You should also try to hold competition seminars to try to refute the negative stereotypes that people may have about contests.

Here are some other suggestions:

1. Select a large portion of the events so that they can be



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flown by newer modelers using readily available kits. Established competitors won't be turned off, as this means they don't have to build a new set of models.

2. You are under no pressure to hold only NAR recognized events; so for variety, make up your own simple events. How about things like upright lander—spot landing, or ping pong ball duration?

3. Choose low power events where less expensive motors can be used.

4. Select events that are suitable to your field size. Holding $\geq D \leq PD$ is a bad choice if you fly from a football field.

5. Those people that have converted to mainly flying HPR models aren't going to be enticed back into competition if you have events using HPR motors. You're wasting your time if you try, and you'll also end up souring the experiences of the people who prefer to fly low power rockets.

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The longer version of this article has these features:

- *21 different benefits of being in a club.
- *Five goals for a club with direct member benefit.
- *Nine reasons to recruit new members.
- *22 ways to advertise your club.
- *How to make a good first impression in the eyes of a potentially new member.
- *14 items to put in your membership packet.
- *29 different awards and special recognition certificates you

can give to your club members to make them feel important.

- *Eight topics for general meetings that make them fun for new members.
- *Nine types of special meetings to break up the routine of general meetings.
- *30 types of articles you can put in your newsletter to make them exciting.
- *The specific duties of the membership committee.
- *15 sample questions you can put into a new member questionnaire.
- *12 ways to raise money for the club besides the regular "dues."
- *Plus, as you've read in the above article, it also lists the 12 reasons why competition attracts new members, and the eight excuses people give for avoiding competitions.

I now have this publication as a pdf file. If you order it, and want it delivered via email, just send me a note in the comments section of the order form.

About the Author:

Tim Van Milligan is the owner of Apogee Components (<http://www.apogeerockets.com>) and the curator of the rocketry education web site: <http://www.apogeerockets.com/education>. He is also the author of the books: "Model Rocket Design and Construction," "69 Simple Science Fair Projects with Model Rockets: Aeronautics" and publisher of the FREE e-zine newsletter about model rockets. You can subscribe to the e-zine at the Apogee Components web site, or sending an email to: ezine@apogeerockets.com with "SUBSCRIBE" as the subject line of the message.

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