

**TO: U.S. MASTERS SWIMMING BOARD OF DIRECTORS
U.S. MASTERS SWIMMING STAFF
LMSC LEADERS**

FROM: ROB BUTCHER

COPY: OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

DATE: JULY 11, 2011

SUBJECT: 2011 SUMMER UPDATE

In preparation for our July 16-17, 2011 Board of Directors meeting, please find enclosed the national office update.

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership survey administered by Metropolitan State College of Denver has been concluded. Two surveys were conducted: (a) to renewing 2011 members and (b) to non-renewing 2010 and 2011 members. The central questions for both groups were to understand current and past members' satisfaction with USMS services and benefits, reveal factors that lead to member retention, compare and contrast findings between groups, and uncover how can we improve the membership experience to lead to improved member retention. A summary report will be made available with the key findings and opportunities on the accompanying pages. It should be noted that respondents were asked to self-identify as a competitive swimmer, fitness swimmer, triathlete, or open water swimmer. The sample results are not truly random and should not be assumed to represent the full population of USMS members. For example, the proportion of competitive swimmer respondents was greater than the USMS population. However, there is still terrific insight to be gleaned and some key takeaways.

Renewing Members

1. Join every year (86%)
2. Membership is worth the price
3. Are interested in other membership options (multiple year, rolling, same)
4. More likely to be a competitive swimmer
5. Less interested in the fitness programs of USMS.
6. Less interested in the benefits of USMS
7. More positive about swim club experience
8. Don't drive as far to swim
9. More likely to participate in club social activities
10. Tend to have been away from swimming longer
11. Have more perceived increase in both fitness and swimming ability as a result of membership
12. Compete in more meets and open water swims
13. Look more positively on participating in events sponsored by USMS
14. Feel higher affiliation with USMS
15. Have a better attitude toward their USMS coaches
16. Have a more positive overall attitude toward swimming
17. Express higher importance of social and community aspects of swimming with a club
18. Demographics
 - a) 63% have no kids at home
 - b) Of the 37% with kids at home, more have kids who are elementary school age and older
 - c) Tend to be involved with fewer non-swimming activities
 - d) Have a higher average household income (\$122,000)

Non-Renewing Members

1. Joined every year (41%)
2. Membership is not worth the price; More concerned about costs; Slightly lower income
3. Prefer rolling membership option
4. More likely to be a fitness swimmer
5. More interested in the fitness programs of USMS
6. More interested in the overall benefits of USMS
7. Less positive about swim club experience
8. Drive further to swim
9. Less likely to participate in club social activities
10. Tend to be away from swimming for a shorter period of time
11. Have less perceived increase in both fitness and swimming ability as a result of membership
12. Compete in more triathlons
13. Look less positively on participating in events sponsored by USMS
14. Feel lower affiliation with USMS
15. Have a less positive attitude toward their USMS coaches
16. Have a less positive overall attitude toward swimming
17. Express lower importance of social and community aspects of swimming with a club
18. Demographics
 - a) 62% have no kids at home
 - b) Of the 38% with kids at home, more have kids who are elementary school age and younger
 - c) Tend to be involved in more non-swimming activities
 - d) Have a lower average household income (\$110,000)

The Key Takeaways and Opportunities from the survey respondents were:

- Current USMS members are geographically closer to their clubs' pools, more engaged with their clubs' social activities, and more positive about coaches
- Non-renewing members feel a lower affiliation with USMS
- Non-renewing members tended to be away from swimming for a shorter amount of time (before joining USMS) and they have a lower perceived increase in both fitness and swimming ability as a result of membership
- Non-renewing members are more likely to swim alone (21% compared to 14%) and are more price sensitive to coaching fees, facility fees and the USMS membership fee
- Non-renewing members have a less positive overall attitude toward swimming
- Focus on segmentation by goal, recognizing different needs as well as overlap between groups
- Increase communication about current programs and member benefits
- Educate coaches on the different market segments and how to respond/help meet their goals
- Continue to improve existing benefit and use of those benefits
- Make it easier to find information via club, LMSC and usms.org websites
- Add functionality and access to the Fitness Logs
- Increase accessibility to online workouts
- Create achievement opportunities that are not competitive based for the Fitness Swimmer
- Connect those who swim alone or are unattached with a club whether that club is virtual or real
- Develop training programs working towards goals (i.e. Postals)
- Make membership easy to renew and reward loyalty
- Focus on retention of first-year members
- Acknowledge membership milestones (i.e., "10 year member" caps)

The information below is a breakdown of the four key market segments reported by respondents and their key personality traits:

Fitness Swimmer

- This segment desires a coach that will help them meet their fitness objectives
- This segment does not understand the typical swimming language (i.e. repeat 100s, go on the next bottom, etc.) and can easily feel intimidated
- This segment has an interest in competing and would do so with encouragement
- If the fitness swimmer does not feel we (we being his/her coach, LMSC, USMS, etc.) are helping them reach their goals, they will likely leave the Masters program within two years

Competitive Pool Swimmer

- This segment is the most loyal and they are in their Masters program for competition purposes
- Not much is likely to scare this group away

Open Water Swimmer

- This segment can have a background as a pool swimmer, fitness swimmer or triathlete
- This segment inherently likes to compete in open water events
- The coach really needs to understand the goals and objectives of this segment to ensure retention

Triathlete

- This segment craves technique help to improve the swimming portion of a triathlon
- This segment does not want to feel disrespected because they are not the fastest swimmers or not a competitive swimmer or only swims freestyle or only comes to practice a couple days a week
- This segments priority is their triathlon and they are seeking swimming help to support this priority

MEMBER REWARDS PROGRAM

Last fall, seven of our sponsor partners offered exclusive discount codes to members that signed up or renewed in the November-December timeframe. Once a renewal was complete, the member was sent an e-mail that included all the various codes they could use for purchases. The feedback from both members and sponsor partners was incredibly positive. We will be replicating this program this fall for our 2012 membership.

This year, running March 18 through July 29, we created a Member Reward Program. This program was created to show our appreciation for our members. Each Friday during the duration of the program, we randomly select names from our membership database. All USMS members registered at least 24 hours prior to each weekly selection are automatically enrolled for a chance to win. Winners are contacted by USMS and mailed a prize. More than 300 prizes valued at \$10,000 will be given away during the 20-week program. The feedback to this new program has likewise been overwhelmingly positive. Many who have received prizes have e-mailed us thanks, sent in pictures, bragged to their teammates and posted pictures to their websites, and the USMS Facebook page. We announce the winners name and their club affiliation each week at www.usms.org/reg/rewards.php.

Planning and management of our Member Rewards Program, as well as sponsor partner activities, come under the direction of Kyle Deery in the National Office.

CLUB AND COACH DEVELOPMENT

A) *Clubs*

As of this report, we have registered 730 clubs in 2011. This represents an all time high. What is most curious is we have roughly 630 clubs that have fewer than 100 registered members. It is safe to assume, but impossible to know, how many of these 630 clubs actually have more Masters swimmers in their program but are not registered with USMS?

B) Club Renewal

Traditionally, when a club signs up or renews, they receive a certificate and Rule Book. For 2012, we are creating and mailing every club a welcome kit. The welcome kit will include an informational overview of USMS featuring LMSC/National Office resources available to the club, samples of marketing resources (i.e. caps, stickers, brochures, etc.), and the Rule Book. This enhanced presentation is intended to educate the club leaders, generate a closer connection to the organization and educate.

C) SwimFest

SwimFest, our interactive coaching weekend, was hosted by the Georgia LMSC. Fifty coaches attended and 44 swimmers registered. Thirty eight of the coaches went through the Masters certification program. SwimFest, now completing its third year, has been a valuable coaches educational platform. It has also taken a significant investment of staff resources. Our three club development contractors and six staff members played vital roles in the promotion, scheduling, accounting, and operation of SwimFest. After careful review, and now seeing several LMSCs begin to create their own SwimFest type programs, we feel it is best that the National Office support and encourage these LMSC efforts, and seek to regionalize the SwimFest model.

C) Masters Coaches Certification

Masters Coaches certification has become a real success story. With the Coaches Committee, our Club Development Team has authored Level I and Level II certification with accompanying video and images. Level III curriculum is being drafted.

The Level I and Level II curriculum is:

LEVEL I

- Chapter 1: Characteristics of a Masters Coach
- Chapter 2: Knowing the Adult Learner
- Chapter 3: Coaching Triathlon & Open Water Swimmers
- Chapter 4: Special Populations
- Chapter 5: Safety / Risk Management
- Chapter 6: Basic Business Practices and Marketing Your Program
- Chapter 7: Writing Workouts

LEVEL II

Chapter 1: Coaching Style

Chapter 2: Stroke Correction and Development

Backstroke

Butterfly

Breaststroke

Freestyle

Chapter 3: Turns / Transition

Chapter 4: Dry land

Test

The teaching model is a partnership between the Coaches Committee and Club Development Team. Each sends a representative to teach so we have two instructors teaching Level I and Level II. Certification has been taught this year in the Virginia LMSC, Pacific Masters LMSC and at SwimFest. Certification is scheduled to be taught later this year in the Gulf LMSC, PNA LMSC, at the ASCA World Clinic, and at the USAS Convention. By years end, 150-200 Masters coaches will have completed Level I and Level II. Once a student completes the course, his/her test is sent to ASCA for grading and issuing of the certification.

PUBLICATIONS

Our transition to self-publishing *SWIMMER* magazine has also been a success. We have received many compliments on the quality improvements of the magazine and the delivery timeliness of *SWIMMER*. Bringing the magazine in-house, under the management and direction of Laura Hamel, has provided more than \$70,000 in annual cost savings to USMS. Anthem Media Group (AMG) continues to serve as our partner providing layout, design, printing and mailing support. *SWIMMER* is due for a layout redesign and that is the pipeline for second half of this year. In addition, we have begun the research process of making *SWIMMER* available online in a digital format.

STREAMLINES, our monthly member and coaches e-newsletters, and bi-monthly volunteer e-newsletter, also continue to be popular with readers. We experience a more than 30% open rate to the e-newsletters with thousands of clicks on the stories featured.

SPONSORSHIP AND MARKETING

A) *Sponsorship*

In the first half of this year, we signed new sponsor partners AquaSphere and Myrtha Pools bringing our total to 17 sponsor partners, five affiliate partners, and two media partners. We continue to sell out the advertising space in *SWIMMER* magazine. Since 2008 and the establishment of our national office headquarters, our sponsorship and advertising revenue has nearly doubled and our VIK has grown from \$7,500 to \$50,000. The VIK is used to support our events, member rewards/loyalty programs, and clinics like SwimFest.

B) *Marketing*

Clubs and events continue to order significant quantities of marketing resources from the national office. We have budget allocated to continue providing these marketing tools as a service to support our programs. In early summer, we introduced three new template flyers designed to promote your USMS program, promote your USMS pool event and promote your USMS open water event. The templates are housed on usms.org and were shared in *STREAMLINES* for Coaches. The three templates were the most clicked upon articles in the e-newsletter.

C) *USMS YouTube*

In the winter update from this year, it was shared we had 68,984 views to our USMS YouTube Channel. In the month of June, we went over 100,000 views to our videos. We continue to produce quality videos that are syndicated virally by our clubs and fan sites all providing exposure and story telling for USMS.

D) *USMS Facebook Page*

In the winter update from this year, it was shared we had 8,500 fans to our USMS Facebook Page. As of this report, we have 11,932 fans. Our USMS Facebook page continues to be a voice for Masters swimming generating enthusiasm and connection to our brand.

SWIMMING SAVES LIVES

Doug Church, chair of Swimming Saves Lives Foundation (SSL), will provide a more substantive update at the board meeting. Worth sharing though is that SSL supported the Grand Strand Masters swimming community event with signage, swim caps, and promotion. We are professionally producing a highlight video of the community service project with Grand Strand Masters head coach Diane Bartlett's challenge to other USMS programs to do the same.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS AND ONGOING PROGRESS

A) Staffing

With Mark Gill's departure from the full time staff, his membership responsibilities have been reassigned to Anna Lea Matysek, his event support responsibilities have been reassigned to Kyle Deery, and his club development responsibilities have been reassigned to Rob Butcher. We will evaluate our board-delegated priorities, workload and resources for 2012 and better evaluate this summer if we will seek additional staff resources. Mark also served as our meet director for the 2012 Summer Nationals in Omaha. Tom Boak has been named our meet director and is now spearheading our 2012 Summer Nationals meet operations.

Luke Shaheen joined the staff full time in June as a programmer. Luke comes to USMS from Indiana University, Pennsylvania where he was a four-year swimmer. Luke reports to Jim Matysek and with Jim's guidance has begun the process of developing our online sanction application. Jim continues to liaison with the End-to-End Event Management (E2EEM) task force to build out the E2EEM specs, while making enhancements to our fitness logs, and providing customer service for existing programming.

B) LMSC Support and Training

In addition to their membership coordinator responsibilities, Anna Lea Matysek and Tracy Grilli continue to play a vital role in the support of LMSCs. They have provided the following service to LMSCs:

LMSC Treasurers: LMSC Treasurers now have individual access to online membership registration system so Treasurers may reconcile their accounts by viewing reports showing who is registered, whether they registered by credit card or by check, and how much they paid (to USMS, the LMSC, their club, and any donations). All other member information (i.e. birthdates, address, etc.) is confidential. They additionally wrote tutorials to train all of the Treasurers how to run these reports. The tutorials can be viewed at www.usms.org/admin/lmschb/content/catutorial. Previous to this new access for Treasurers, the Treasurers had to rely on their LMSC Registrars to run these reports, save them as Excel files, and email them to the Treasurers.

LMSC Registrars: the Registrar tutorials have been updated, and new ones written and uploaded to www.usms.org/admin/lmschb/content/catutorial. The National Office and George Simon (Registration Committee Chair) have a bi-weekly call with Club Assistant our membership software partner. Throughout the year, Tracy and Anna Lea compile requests from Registrars, prioritize, and address during the calls. They then manage the process and enhancements to our online registration program.

LMSC Top Ten Recorders: Seven tutorials have been written that explain how to use the new Meet Results and Top Ten tools and uploaded to www.usms.org/admin/lmschb/content/tttutorial. The National Office has provided training in how to upload meet results to six Top Ten Recorders. Several Top Ten Recorders have successfully trained themselves using the tutorials. More training is scheduled for this summer/fall.

Additionally, four tutorials that explain how to set up a Masters meet in Meet Manager, how to import our RE1 file (registration file) into Meet Manager, and how to export the results

to send to the Top Ten recorder have been created for Meet Directors. Educating the meet directors on the front end of the process helps them produce better meet results.

Calendar of Events: The National Office periodically surveys LMSC/Zone websites looking for events listed on these websites but not in the USMS calendar of events. In the month of June, as an example, nearly 80 events were identified and added to the USMS calendar of events. It is ultimately the responsibility of the LMSC Sanctions Chair to upload events to the USMS calendar of events.

C) Convention Support

While Victor Beuhler remains our Convention Coordinator, Tracy Grilli is our USAS liaison for Convention. Tracy made a site visit to the Jacksonville Hyatt reserving our rooms. She has coordinated a travel service for delegates and has turned in a group registration for board members, committee chairs, liaisons and staff.

On behalf of the entire staff of USMS, we thank you for your support and opportunity to serve.

Respectfully Submitted,



Rob Butcher
Executive Director,
U.S. Masters Swimming