

Report on 2016 RRCA Convention - Chad Holmes

Thursday March 17

Thursday's activities kicked off with Regional Meetings. Due to drive time from Houston to Dallas, the author was unable to attend the Regional Meeting.

The Welcome Reception was held in the expo area, lower level of the Crowne Plaza. The main theme of this informal ice breaker appeared to be club networking. Striders present (incl. C. Holmes, H. Wong, B. Schamus, K. Willhelm) participated in obligatory small talk with other club directors, officers, and RRCA top brass - including Jean Knaack, Executive Director of the RRCA. No key take-aways to report.

Friday March 18

Friday commenced with a morning 5k run through downtown Dallas, followed by the official Convention Welcome, General Session (Insurance), Education Sessions, and Expo time. After lunch, Education sessions continued, followed by the official RRCA Annual Meeting of the Membership and additional Expo time. The night was capped with a group trip to Eddie Dean's for barbeque and networking.

Convention Welcome

- Address by Jean Knaack (RRCA Executive Director) over continental breakfast.
 - Welcome this year included a short mention of the RRCA continuing its rapid growth as part of a current on-going running boom.
 - *CH Note: Financial snapshot of the RRCA seems to indicate a less rosy view on growth. Net Profit for the organization down to \$17.6k in 2015 from \$139.6k in 2014 and \$190.4k in 2013. Net Worth down by >\$10k from previous year, Membership Growth trend plateaus in 2014-2015 according to chart in annual report.*

General Session - Insurance And Risk Management (Terry & Trent Diller)

- Key comprehensive resource online documents the insurance coverage through RRCA: <http://www.rrca.org/services/insurance/>
- Proof of Insurance Certificates:
 - ~12,000 certificates generated last year (a record).
 - Polite request for clubs to send requests with full name as registered with RRCA to avoid delays in processing certificates.
- Insurance Highlights:

- General Liability Insurance
 - \$1MM or \$2MM coverage for runners
 - Covers participants as well as spectators. Participant injuries, e.g. runner trips into a hole or is hit by automobile while completing event.
- Automobile coverage for when member is performing the business of club - doesn't protect individual but protects the club from being sued.
- Volunteer medical coverage for volunteer doctors, nurses, medical staff who may require the coverage to be present at event.
- Accident Medical Coverage: up to \$10k/person medical claim payout - excess coverage above personal health insurance coverage. This is technically "goodwill coverage" meant to avoid liability claim after the fact.
- Directors/Officers Liability: coverage for non-bodily injury, non-property damage situation, i.e. "mental injury" of director/officer; covers defense costs for lawsuits.
- Equipment Coverage - can cover equipment damaged on the way to event, stolen equipment, etc.
- Takeaways:
 - Paid coaches need to have their own extra policy - ask for certificate of coverage form as proof. Note: "paid" can include taking coach out to dinner, collecting money from trainees, etc. as a thank you.
 - Paid race directors need to provide their own certificate of coverage form since they will not be able to piggy-back on club's RRCA coverage.
 - Remember to have participants in the club and club events **sign waivers!**

Education Session 1: Governance Series I: First Steps for New/Returning Board Members

- Presented by Dwight Mikulis, RRCA Maryland State Rep, and Stephen Wright, President of Oregon Road Runners Club (ORRC).
- Session Focus: board orientation, handbooks, committee participation, and mentoring.
- Filling a club's Board of Directors
 - Boards need to move beyond "anybody is better than nobody" for filling open seats.
 - Diversity of thought! Don't fill the board with your friends. Look for "devil's advocate" person since they may make things uncomfortable at times, but they will make the board better.
 - Use a Nominating Committee
 - They should understand the demographics of the current board, the skill sets needed for the open positions.
 - Should include non-board members to help with screening.
 - Use exit interviews for departing board members to help shape the future board for the better.

- Past President as an emeritus board member - some clubs do this, but it's not always a good thing.
- Board size should be manageable. General consensus: 13-17 is difficult - hard to engage, unwieldy. Much smaller than 10 may be difficult to get work done with an all-volunteer board. Close to 10 seems ideal.
 - Keith: odd number of directors better to break tie votes!
- How do you manage removing someone on the board?
 - Nibble like a duck to get rid of a person, eventually they get the message.
 - Make sure you provide them with an honorable way to leave.
- Governance Committee
 - Purpose is to keep board on track, ensure good governance practices in place, and keep vigilant and engaged.
 - Typically comprised of board members only, good balance is 3:1 for board members to governance committee members. (e.g. 12 person board, 3 on the G.C.)
 - Key considerations: good stewardship and reputation of the club.
- Meeting Minutes
 - Important for keeping board on track - capture decisions and action items.
 - Should be shared with general membership on website.
 - Preparing for sharing: scrub out names, replace with "a board member." Sensitive topic discussions can be mentioned as "executive sessions" in the minutes.
- Joining the Board
 - Orientation sessions are important for new members. Provides means to engage the new members while re-engaging the old ones. This doesn't have to be something formal - going out to talk over drinks is often valid and effective.
 - Clarify organization's mission
 - Walk through an organization chart
 - Discuss future time commitments
 - Talk about board culture (different for every board)
 - Question & Answer session
 - Team-building by getting to know each other
 - Expectation letters - these can be high-level or detailed, but basically provide responsibilities and expectations for each board position.
 - Template available from ORRC - ask Stephen Wright.
 - This can be a signed agreement - state new member understands what is expected of him/her and what he/she can expect from the board.
- Board Function
 - "Working board" puts all of the tasks and responsibilities directly on the board of directors. This can result in progress gaps as directors get overwhelmed or are unable to juggle the volunteer work with "real life."
 - "Policy board" leverages committees to do the actual work of organizing and running the club. Committees hold the accountability, responsibility, and need for good communication to funnel status updates to the board member committee chair, who then reports it to the board,

- Consent agenda at board meetings can further streamline things - provide time for specific committee reports only when committee chair asks for time.
- Board Handbook - key resource,
 - Regularly updated, acts as a compass for board members.
 - ORRC has an example that can be shared. Key components:
 - Mission, values, vision, strategic plan
 - Club history and general description
 - All legal documents
 - Financial data/reports
 - Organizational chart
 - Contact list for board
 - Standing sub-committee job descriptions
 - Bios for all board members
 - Board member job descriptions and expectations
 - Board policies
 - Recent meeting minutes
 - Board member agreement
 - Calendar of meetings
- Legal responsibility of board is to ensure organization functions within the framework that supports the club's mission.
- Three core duties for all board members:
 - **Duty of Care** - board member is reasonably informed and actively participates.
 - **Duty of Loyalty** - board member serves in the best interest of the club.
 - **Duty of Obedience** - board member complies with applicable laws, abides by bylaws, and is a guardian of the club's mission.
- Board Member Agreement - a contract-like agreement without legal enforcement, but serves to outline explicit expectations and responsibilities of a new board member that should be signed by the new member.
- Key Policies
 - Conflict of Interest policy
 - Sarbanes-Oxley - requires a board-approved Whistleblower policy and Document Destruction policy. (see RRCA for comprehensive policy covering both)
 - Code of Conduct/Ethics policy - meant to manage the passionate personalities of runners. (see RRCA for example)
- Term Limits for Board Members
 - Some operate with no term limits, which can lead to stagnation as no new blood or ideas comes into the board.
 - Some clubs have 1 year term limits, so change is constant and consistency and experience are lacking.
- Job descriptions
 - Should include clear expectation of attending all board meetings.
 - Include detailed responsibilities. (e.g. President provides meeting agenda, Secretary drafts meeting minutes, etc.)

- Also include soft skills. (e.g. be an ambassador for the club)
- Explicitly state succession requirements - when directors step in for one another.
- Mentoring
 - New members can benefit from being assigned a mentor on the board.
 - Makes orientation friendlier, accelerates learning, provides a guide.
 - Can help explain why board culture is as it is (e.g. the history behind controversial board issues).
- Remember: RRCA state representatives are great resources - they have access to many clubs and best practices to share.

Luncheon

- Address by Ben Rosario. Theme: running impacts lives. Ben recounted several instances where his life was influenced by running coaches and his coaching has impacted the lives of others.

Education Session 2: Governance Series II: Financial Management and Tactical Planning

- Presented by Dwight Mikulis, RRCA Maryland State Rep, and Stephen Wright, President of Oregon Road Runners Club (ORRC).
- Session Focus: financial management, internal controls, and tactics for clubs to consider.
- Financial management of a club is not just the job of the Treasurer.
- Doesn't require that all directors be experts in financial management - merely that they remain interested enough to pay attention to the treasurer's reports, financial statements, and ensure policies are in place to protect against fraud or theft.
- Using sound policies helps keep the treasurer from undue suspicion.
- Internal Controls
 - Start with segregating duties around club finances among more than one person.
 - Financial Management Process:
 - Receive income (dues, sponsorships, donations)
 - Deposit income in bank account(s)
 - Write checks drawn from the bank account(s)
 - Reconcile statements for the bank account(s)
 - Regularly report financial status to board
 - Finance Committee should assist in these elements to spread the work across more than just the treasurer.
 - Financial Policies:
 - Perform annual review of signers on the bank accounts. When board changes after elections, old board members should be removed as signers.

- Check signer policy - board-approved policy that sets a cap on the number of signers for checks.
 - Other Suggested policies that apply to Finance Committee:
 - Require all checks to be co-signed.
 - Have someone other than the treasurer receive copies of the bank statements and have access to the bank accounts.
 - Make sure all expenses paid are documented.
 - Reconcile all bank statements.
- The Budget - the annual financial plan for an organization
 - Look at prior year's income and expenses to establish an operating baseline.
 - Answer the following key questions:
 - Profit/Loss: is club showing profit or loss this month, quarter, year?
 - Revenues: are revenue sources increasing or decreasing?
 - Diversity of Revenue: single source of revenue or more?
 - Expenses: any unexpected expenses? Will they recur?
 - Goals: new goals for the coming year?
 - Reserves/Cash Flow: does club have sufficient reserves?
 - On-Track: are revenue and expenses on track with budget?
 - Vision: is budget consistent with mission, strategic plan, vision?
 - Budget should consist of three important elements:
 - Budget period (date range)
 - Two-year income and expense comparison
 - Budget for coming year including income, expenses, budgeted profit or loss with notes covering significant variances compared to previous years
 - Key note: Non-profit does not mean no profit!
- Tactical Planning:
 - Opportunity for clubs to transform how they serve their members and manage data.
 - Technology is changing the world around us, and can transform running clubs, especially with good IT and social media support.
 - For non-profits, technology changes how audience engages with their favorite club, provides new marketing opportunities, and new ways to communicate.
 - Examples:
 - Websites that are simple, easy to navigate, information-rich, and supported on multiple platforms and media devices.
 - Google for Nonprofits platform - free tools for organizing and running a non-profit.
 - Facebook, Twitter, other social media platforms - outreach, event notifications, building online communities.
 - Supporting mobile devices is essential. Nearly 50% of emails are read on mobile devices today, and race sign-ups are experiencing a growth in mobile-based registrations as well.
 - Big data and software that can handle it, cloud-based implementations, static information without a tight user experience is insufficient now.

- Cloud-based data access allows directors to access information anywhere from any device, securely and cheaply. No more need for portable hard drives, USB keys, or emailing .docx, .pptx, or .xlsx files to everyone. Simply share a direct link to dynamic documents that can be collaboratively edited.
 - The issue of data retention can also be managed using services like Google for Nonprofits, Dropbox, or other online storage options.
- Marketing to Millennials:
 - Fast growth of endurance events largely attributable to Millennials.
 - Millennial generation (born ~1980-2000) are redefining marketing and the way brands, including running clubs, engage the masses.
 - Millennials make up 18M of the country's 42M runners. That's the largest segment of running community.
 - Generational values: experiences, adventures, shared communal activities, and documenting it with media. Also, healthy lifestyle - health and well-being are the key reasons Millennials run. See the 2016 [Millennial Running Study](#) from Running USA and RacePartner for more stats/info.
 - How to engage
 - Awards, swag, flash and pomp for the event help, but aren't the only drivers.
 - Prioritize event participation as opportunity for participants to be active and physically challenged.
 - Millennial runners more interested in races focused on the run rather than fun, untimed runs.
 - Of all distances, half marathons are the most popular, especially among Millennials. 5k and 10k distances are 2nd and 3rd most popular.
 - Millennials learn about running events through social media (66%) and internet searches (57%) more than any other medium. Expos and running magazines capture only a small number.
 - Facebook (95%), Instagram (39%), Twitter (27%)
 - Almost all Millennials report registering for events at least one month in advance, with over 50% registering 3 months before the event. 80% registered on computer or laptop, <1% by mail.
 - Take-away: don't invest a lot in brochures with registration forms.
 - Millennial considerations when choosing an event:
 - Distance is top priority.
 - Cost is second-most important.
 - Swag, shirts, etc. are 5th most important.
 - Well-known events more likely to catch their attention.
 - Sweet spot price for races from 5k up to Ultras: **\$26-\$50**
- Gender Diversity:
 - Women currently represent the majority in all race events except marathons.
 - Female millennials could be an asset on boards - they represent the biggest potential audience for race events and trainings.
- Other Take-Aways:

- Regular audits can be a valuable tool for the club, particularly if there is a CPA on the board. If cost is an issue, at least consider an audit when a treasurer completes his/her term to review the books and have a clean transition.
- Budget should be shared with general membership for transparency.
- If possible, place club reserves in an endowment to protect the money and keep members from “complaining about expenses.”
- Monthly treasurer’s report to board should include 5 basics: profit/loss, revenue increases/decreases, changes in expenses, reserves, on track with budget or not.
- Adopt charitable giving policy before budgeting.
 - Consider forming a Community Outreach Committee. This subcommittee can do things like connect with local schools - e.g. Oregon schools had physical education budgets slashed, so ORRC was able to supplement.
 - Schools and organizations can apply for charitable contributions via grant proposals reviewed by committee.
 - From Keith: due diligence with charities is important before writing checks to support them!
- Tactical planning includes common branding - including basic email addresses for all board positions that match the club’s domain name.

Annual Meeting of the Membership

- RRCA meeting with David Cotter (President) providing report from RRCA Board of Directors, Dan Edwards providing Treasurer’s report, Jean Knaack presenting the 2016 budget and the Executive Director’s report, and finally the election of Directors for the 2016-2018 term.
- All business was orderly and efficiently conducted. Nothing specific to report. See online for meeting minutes (www.rrca.org/about/governance).

Saturday March 19

Saturday kicked off with the second morning 5k run through downtown Dallas, followed by two back-to-back education sessions. After lunch, additional education sessions and Expo time preceded the Awards Reception and National Running Awards Gala Dinner. The convention was officially concluded with the Gala Dinner, although many participants (including the author) stayed for the Rock ‘n’ Roll Dallas Half Marathon on Sunday March 20th.

Education Session 3: Working with Charities

- Presented by Abby Sidebottom (Muscular Dystrophy Association), Nate Longfellow (Leukemia & Lymphoma Society), and Ben Malburg (CrowdRise).

- Session Focus: benefits of aligning with one or more charities for events.
- Abby Sidebottom: Muscular Dystrophy Association
 - Benefit of charity alignment is broadening of event audience. A charity-focused event can bring in participants from outside the state or region. It connects you with a different pool of people.
 - Bucket listers are often charity runners, especially 1st time runners. e.g. Chicago statistics is 58% of participants are first-time marathoners.
 - Charity alignment also connects with Millennial generation - motivated to do something for others while sharing in the experience themselves.
 - Simple and easy are key for Millennials.
 - Consider at connecting with charities at event registration - allow people to identify who they are running for, e.g. by drop-down menu on registration page with teams/organizations listed.
 - Social Media Connection:
 - Use of hashtags can help identify a motto or organization to align with (e.g. #gamechanger).
 - Link website to Crowdrise, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter to provide easy social media posting opportunities.
 - Pictures! Show milestones, people charity runners are running for, create a “footprint” and build up charity runner “stories.”
 - Single event can associate with many charities
 - Austin Marathon assigns every mile to a different charity.
 - Crowdrise platform can help with juggling multiple charities.
 - Another benefit of aligning with charities: volunteers! Charities can provide the people to help make the event successful.
- Nate Longfellow: Leukemia & Lymphoma Society/Team in Training
 - Team in Training (TNT) spends money on organizing multiple siloed groups to get drugs on the market for leukemia and lymphoma patients. Government, pharmaceutical companies, academia, etc. They also provide patient information and support, money via copay assistance to patients, and travel assistance as well.
 - TNT can bring people into running events as guaranteed entries. Event organizers don't have to only rely on locally-sourced participants.
 - Partnerships are possible through different levels, each with a different level of benefit to the event or organization, e.g. access to email lists of TNT alumni, ability to post logo on website, Facebook access, VIP events...
 - Quick slide, but the author noted levels listed at \$5k, \$12k, \$25k
- Ben Malburg: Crowdrise
 - Benny was the 3rd employee at Crowdrise, has seen the company grow dramatically over the years.
 - Crowdrise has partnered with big marathons, including Boston and NYC.
 - Provides a platform that simplifies the fundraising process.
 - Easy profile set-up for a new fundraiser.

- Page where a story and pictures can be added.
- Simple “donate” button with credit card acceptance and ability of donors to leave personal messages of support.
- Reporting capabilities to summarize individual, team, and event statistics on donations.
 - Crowdrise gave NYC the first actual numbers around fundraising dollars collected for the marathon - before they could only estimate.
- Business cards of all presenters were handed out so we can follow up based on interest.

Education Session 4: Governance Series III: Legal Responsibilities, Strategic Planning, and Effective Behavior for All Board Members

- Presented by Dwight Mikulis, RRCA Maryland State Rep, and Stephen Wright, President of Oregon Road Runners Club (ORRC).
- Session Focus: document review and setting measurable goals for the organization, board member behaviors, and bylaws.
- Basics of Bylaws:
 - Who...
 - Is a member?
 - Is in charge?
 - Gets to vote?
 - Can “sign”/represent the organization?
 - Especially important when bad things happen and someone speaks on behalf of the organization with the media.
 - What...
 - Is the purpose of the club?
 - Is the term of directors?
 - Inferred term limits? Some clubs have no term limits. One side of the argument is efficiency in running the club with experience and consistency; the other side is no new blood or younger leadership.
 - Happens when you dissolve?
 - Is a prohibited activity?
 - Are the titles/jobs that board members have?
 - Where...
 - Are the meetings held (virtual and real)?
 - Virtual meetings should only be considered when there is IT support for tested technology.
 - Are the records kept?
 - Are the announcements made?
 - When...
 - Do membership meetings occur?

- Are proxies allowed?
 - Is the budget presented?
 - Do board elections occur?
 - Does the board have board meetings?
- How...
 - Are proposals and budgets approved?
 - Many board members sit on the board?
 - Are board members elected?
 - Are board members removed?
 - Importance of Letters of Intent or MOU (memorandum of understanding) to define position expectations, and thereby have leverage for removing directors who do not live up to expectations.
 - May require hiring a lawyer.
- Bylaws can also provide guidance on individual positions.
 - Common to have individual officer positions (President, VP, Secretary, Treasurer) defined with responsibilities and powers in the bylaws.
 - Club prerogative to include other director positions with an equal amount of detail.
- Important to separate bylaws and strategic plan. Bylaws are a legal document and difficult to change, so it's not always necessary to have strategic plans written in.
- Bylaws are a guiding document, but what happens when there are infractions to the bylaws?
 - Usually only comes up when it's important - e.g. a lawsuit levied against the club.
- Conducting Effective Board Meetings
 - Four points to meeting effectiveness
 - Prepare:
 - What is the purpose of the meeting?
 - What would happen if you didn't have this meeting?
 - What are the desired outcomes for the meeting?
 - Make sure all the participants are prepared.
 - Prepare an agenda with clearly understood purpose, articulated desired outcomes, time required for each item, date/time/place, participants invited.
 - Circulate all meeting materials in advance so people don't have to read in the meeting.
 - Communicate:
 - Inform participants of the purpose of the meeting, what will be discussed and why, what preparation is needed in advance, and what the desired outcomes are.
 - Prepare and distribute the agenda in advance.
 - Distribute ground rules in advance when appropriate.
 - Control:
 - Start meeting on time.
 - Review agenda and adjust as necessary.
 - Assign roles and review ground rules.

- Stick to time guidelines.
- Encourage equality in participation.
- End on time or early when possible.
- Do a process check at the end of every meeting.
- Document:
 - Capture ideas on a whiteboard or flip chart.
 - This shows participants you are listening.
 - Process of writing can clarify thoughts.
 - Keeps group on agenda - create “parking lots” for things to revisit at a later date.
 - Assigns responsibility publicly.
 - Avoids repetition.
 - Writes the minutes for you.
 - Keep an Action List to collect expectations for what should be accomplished before the next meeting.
 - Record main discussion points and decisions for future reference.
- Things to remember:
 - Insist on a structure or format.
 - There must be outcomes or follow-up actions.
 - Everyone must take responsibility for an effective meeting.

Luncheon

- Address by Gilbert Tuhabonye - victim of the Burundian Civil War, immigrant to the United States, professional runner and coach. Theme of talk was “Run with Joy” where Gilbert recounted almost being burned to death and his athletic and coaching successes in life.

Education Session 5: Increasing Diversity in Clubs and Events

- Presented by Tony Reed, co-founder of the National Black Marathoners Association.
- Session Focus: increasing racial, gender, and age diversity in clubs and events.
- First running boom - 1970s/1980s.
 - Male dominated.
 - Largely due to publication of impactful books like *Aerobics & The New Aerobics* (Cooper), *Complete Book of Running* (Fixx).
- Second running boom
 - Women runners, starting with key role models like Katherine Switzer.
 - Driven largely by passive exposure to role models - women saw men run down the street, other women running, joined in.
 - 50 years of growth, from 1967 with Switzer in the Boston Marathon to Post-2005 when the statistics showed women made up >50% of race finishers.
 - Big influence was passage of Title IX.

- Marketplace for women athletes - creation of sports bra, women's styled running apparel, women-focused port-o-cans, etc.
- According to Running USA, number of race finishers leveled off in 2013. 2015 is similar to 2014, with ~ 10.5 million runners.
- Where will next boom occur?
 - Millennials (born 1980-2000) are marked by "social conscience" and seek "experiences." They may be able to maintain the current numbers, but cannot be the individual source of continued growth.
 - Gender is also not a first-order focus area any longer either.
- Ethnic minorities are a relatively untapped resource.
 - Runner's World (2011) showed that 10% of core distance runners are minorities, where "core distance runners" are defined as running 3-4 days a week every week of the year. U.S. population consists of 28% minorities. That disparity is an opportunity.
 - 2010 Census - 49.9% of children under 5 are ethnic minorities.
 - Ethnic minorities often have health problems. e.g. African American population high risk for diabetes
- Potential economic impact:
 - 2014 average race fee: \$75
 - Prediction is running industry lost between \$253-\$323 million in race fee due to ethnic disparity in distance running.
- Problem: ethnic minorities lack passive exposure.
 - Races aren't run in their neighborhoods.
 - Lack of recognized role models to look up to.
- Program Solution:
 - General Idea: Adults -> Collegians -> Youth
 - Approach:
 - Education: introduce to minority role models, promote healthy lifestyles.
 - Training: certify coaches for distance running, coaches for nutrition and personal training, provide support via social media.
 - Sustainability: promote joining local RRCA club, organize ethnic fun run.
 - Financial advice and support sometimes necessary for race fees and travel. Benefits: opportunity to also teach about economics and personal finances.
 - Important issue: need to break "myths" (esp. in African American community)
 - "Running is bad for your health"
 - "I can't work out because of my hair"
 - "We aren't naturally distance runners, we're sprinters"
 - Adult focus includes encouraging coaching certifications.
 - Collegiate focus includes student outreach, provide scholarships, education talks.
 - Youth focus includes talks, scholarships, and clinics.
 - Final solution: engagement by running community with minorities.
 - Reach out to those interested in joining clubs - biggest complaint is minorities feel like no one talks to them, that they are outsiders.
 - Actively recruit minority runners you see on the trail, at races, etc.