



My View

30 LESSONS IN 30 YEARS

As many of you know, we are celebrating TIP's 30th anniversary this year. This has been a year of reflection and reminiscing for me. A few weeks ago, I challenged myself to identify the 30 most important lessons I've learned about TIP in the last 30 years. These are primarily lessons I've learned about effective TIP leadership and about what makes TIP work. I don't pretend that these lessons are "the final word"...just what I've personally learned from trying to fight the good fight for 30 years. Here are my 30 lessons in 30 years...

1. Individual Leaders are disposable. Don't take yourself too seriously.
2. Dance with the ones who want to dance with you.
3. Your job is never done. You will never have all the pieces in place.
4. TIP Leaders at all levels need to stay close to the ground...close to champions and volunteers.
5. Most board members will never contribute as much as you would like.
6. Keep standards high by communicating them and enforcing them.
7. You are better off with a few highly performing volunteers than a lot of "flaky or high maintenance volunteers.
8. Communicate and celebrate "Wins." (growth/big call...).
9. Repeat a few important things over and over and over.
10. Keep it simple. "Do a few things right with a few people you like."
11. It takes a tremendous amount of leadership time for a TIP Program to flourish.
12. Volunteers want to stretch and grow...not to be coddled. We owe it to volunteers to invite them to stretch.
13. Leaders need to be strength seekers not weakness spotters.
14. TIP Programs need money to flourish.
15. TIP Affiliates take forever to establish and then to get traction. TIP Leaders need to be patient plodders.
16. Cities/Counties are like individuals. They have their own leaders, culture, resources, histories...They don't follow in lock step with other jurisdictions.
17. To be successful TIP needs support at the highest (electeds) and lowest levels(secretaries).
18. To be successful TIP needs reciprocal relationships with agencies and jurisdictions served. TIP leaders should expect these agencies to give as much as they get.
19. We don't really know TIP Volunteers/Board members. Like all human beings who they are is mostly hidden to us. We can't assume we know their willingness to help, their talents, and their skill on TIP Calls. These things will gradually manifest over time if we don't pigeon hole others.

20. Take responsibility for mistakes and losses. Don't whine or blame.
21. Good ideas rarely turn into sustainable programs.
22. Build on what works. Jettison what doesn't work.
23. Have friends outside of TIP who really couldn't care less about TIP.
24. We lose more volunteers from underwhelm than overwhelm. Keep volunteers busy!
25. TIP is difficult to start and operate.
26. Prepare...Prepare...Prepare so that you do everything with excellence.
27. You have to genuinely really like TIP Volunteers to be an effective TIP leader.
28. TIP Affiliates need to focus on the Mission. But that's not enough. TIP Affiliates need to have good business practices (fundraising/marketing/accounting ...).
29. When a volunteer's life changes so that she can't comply with TIP's high standards, the manager should love her out rather than struggle to accommodate her.
30. The future belongs to those willing to get their hands dirty.

Wayne would like to hear your thoughts.
Email him at Tipincceo@aol.com