



My View

THE BEAUTY OF BORING

Over the years, we have talked a lot about the value of innovation and the importance of an organization constantly changing, improving and planning for the future. In fact we began as a national organization after winning a national award called Innovations in State and Local Government. I wholeheartedly embrace the need for innovation and the continual tweaking of what we do. However, I think all of this innovation needs to rest on a solid foundation of consistency and constancy.

We speak in the volunteer training academy of the importance of rituals and routines in the lives of human beings. We point out that each of us needs routines and rituals in our lives to help us feel in control and be "masters of our universe." The same holds true for organizations.

As organizations change and adapt, they need to ensure that many of their routines, rituals, and programs remain intact.

Those of you who know me, know that I'm a big Costco fan. I'm in a Costco at least twice a week, even if it's just for one or two items. Besides being a happy consumer at Costco, I've often wondered what makes the big (sometimes cold) warehouse so appealing to me and to many others. I got a clue recently when the CEO of Costco, Jim Sinegal, retired and was interviewed about what makes Costco successful. He mentioned many things, but then pointed out what he considered the key to their success: "*we build stores that communities can count on, suppliers can count on and employees can count on.*"

As a consumer at Costco I see this "count on" principle in action. While many items in Costco "come and go" and there is always an element of "*what will I find today?*" There are certain things I can count on that keep me coming back...the roasted chicken (always 4.99), the hot dog and soda (always a 1.50) and yes, even the long lines.

What does all of this mean for TIP? Simply put, as we change and grow each of us as TIP Leaders needs to ensure that as individuals and as Affiliates we maintain routines and rituals that our constituents (volunteers, emergency responders, funders) value and cherish. Here are some ideas about how we can do that....

> We need to do everything possible to ensure that emergency responders can "count on us." We need to keep the TIP promise: "always ready, always there", 100% of the time. I'm convinced that is what responders value most about TIP...they can count on us ALWAYS.

> We need to be leaders our volunteers can count on. TIP volunteers face a lot of unpredictability on TIP calls. We as TIP Leaders should not add any more unpredictability to their TIP experience. We need to be fair; to be transparent and predictable; to facilitate quality CE meetings which start and end on time; to keep our promises; and to make decisions based on adherence to TIP's unchanging mission. I believe that the importance of leaders having "charisma" is overblown. More importantly than charisma is the necessity for TIP

Leaders to develop the "boring" characteristics of consistency, trustworthiness and reliability . . . leaders our volunteers can "count on."

> We need to identify and continue those practices and rituals which our champions in the community value. When community members look at TIP we want them to see a consistent and reliable partner. We need to ask ourselves: "What is TIP's version of Costco's roasted chicken?" What are the things our champions want to count on? This will vary from individual to individual constituent. It may be conducting Heroes With Heart Dinner every year; it may be our newsletter that comes out regularly; or it may be that they deal with the same TIP Leaders year in and year out.

Often establishing a "count on us" reputation happens in little ways in our one-on-one relationships. For example, I've established a ritual of delivering my wife's homemade "goodies" during the holidays to key TIP supporters in a local affiliate. When I delivered these goodies to a police chief's secretary last year, she said "*Oh wonderful. We look forward to these every year!*" Well, I'm sure this was a bit of an exaggeration, but I think it makes a good point about the importance of rituals.

This secretary values my annual "goodie" ritual, and I would be making a big mistake by abandoning it. I encourage all TIP leaders to identify the rituals that you currently have and to value and continue them. Also I think it important that we continually look for ways of establishing new "little" rituals with our community partners. It's through these seemingly trivial rituals that we become an organization that they feel they know and can depend on.

In summary, I believe to be successful we need to blend the new with the old. We need to continually improve how we do things while at the same time keeping those things which give our constituents a sense that they know us and can "count on us".

In short, we need to be an organization which is both BOLD and BORING.

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