

Youth Initiatives for Classic Car Clubs

Objective: To encourage younger people to participate in club activities

Some suggestions for clubs to consider:

1. Form a club committee or working group to discuss ways to attract younger people to club activities and membership

Gain the support of the club Executive to have a committee or working group focus on youth-oriented initiatives, coming up with recommendations for the Executive to consider. Ensure that the membership of this group includes folks who are open to change (particularly some long-term members who are well thought of) and includes some young people who are in their teens or twenties. Members who've been high school teachers or college instructors or others who've worked with youth are handy to have in the membership too. One possible approach to consider is a 'think tank' where all ideas are initially accepted for further development, to encourage creative thinking about new directions. Have the group select a few short-term, high-payoff and low-risk things to act on, and gain the support of the Executive, particularly if there will be any costs.

2. Look at ways to make the membership meetings more youth-friendly

Youth-oriented culture takes advantage of technology & media and focuses on 'active' versus 'passive.' Consider ways to introduce audio-visual aspects into the club's membership meetings, including presentations (e.g. PowerPoint with embedded photos) on past and future events prepared by the event organizers. Encourage members to submit photos of events they participated in, thus broadening the involvement of members who might otherwise just sit in the audience. New members can be introduced with photos of their car(s). Include short videos downloaded from YouTube (e.g. about the history of classic cars, entertaining car commercials from the past, and clips from TV series such as Top Gear).

If the club doesn't already have suitable equipment, proposals could be made to the Executive to purchase a relatively high quality audio-visual system that could include microphones, a computer and projector on a stand all ready to go, a screen, a sound board and professional-level speakers. Enlisting a member who knows this type of equipment can allow for purchase of high-level used equipment at reasonable prices. It is important to have a technology and media-savvy member oversee the A/V system at meetings and prepare the presentations ahead of time with contributions from other members. Having teenaged members or sons/daughters of members be A/V assistants is another way to involve the younger set. Meetings introducing technology can be more fun and engage the members more, young or old, with a side benefit that the older members with hearing challenges are able to hear what's going on better than before.

3. Consider active events that would be of interest to young people

It appears younger folks are more interested in driving, learning about and working on cars than going to social events. Consider increased emphasis on driving opportunities, rallies and autocross. Introduce a 'fill the seat' initiative, by encouraging members who have room in their cars to take along their kids, grandkids, great-grandkids (or even children from their neighborhood) to club driving events in their classic or collectible cars. Think about sponsoring rallies, fun/gimmick rallies or more formal Time Speed Distance ones if your club has the expertise. Sponsor autocross/slalom events and invite young folks to watch, take part when they get a driver's license or volunteer to assist the organizer. If the club has tech sessions, invite the same group of kids & grandkids to come along with their parent or grandparent club members.

4. Sponsor events in conjunction with high schools or colleges nearby

Contact high schools that offer auto mechanics and propose bringing club cars to the school for an informal car show, with members prepared to talk about their cars. Consider joint events with local college auto mechanics, collision or restoration programs – for example, programs such as the

Hagerty Driving Experience Program (See item 6.) Work with high schools or colleges to train selected auto mechanics or collision students to be youth judges at car shows, less formal ones rather than concours.

5. Develop more youth-friendly ways to communicate

Consider launching into social media, for example, setting up a club Facebook page for club members and others to post photos and event notices. Ensure the webpage administrators include at least one younger (e.g. under 30) person. Once a Facebook page has been established, it grows on its own with participation of members as well as non-members. It can include postings about future events, past events, other club-related issues, and classic car-related commentary and it can allow for immediate posting of photos taken by smartphone. Postings are by members of the Facebook page, not Executive members, although the latter can certainly participate if they want. A presence on Facebook can provide major promotion for a club and make it look like fun, active people are involved.

Having an 'open' Facebook page allows non-members to participate and can gain the club new members. Set up the Facebook page to be monitored, so any inappropriate material (e.g. commercial messages) can be immediately removed – have two or three administrators watching over it. If the club membership includes many who aren't familiar with Facebook, have members who are Facebook-savvy offer short workshops the hour before club meetings start, with the objective of teaching older members how to access the club Facebook page and use FB for other purposes like keeping track of their kids/grandkids and accessing car-related pages.

[Important note for club newsletter and magazine editors and website administrators: Before using photos of minor children in your publications or on your club website or social media, check into the laws and/or regulations applicable to the jurisdiction where your club operates to find out if there are any limitations or prohibitions related to using images of children.]

6. Look into the youth initiatives of Hagerty Insurance

Hagerty has many initiatives related to encouraging youth to become interested and active in the classic/collector car hobby. Consider proposing involvement with Hagerty in their Driving Experience program where a one-day event is offered to teach young folks 16 to 25 how to drive a standard shift classic car. Due to the PR efforts of the company, these events receive wide coverage in the media, and can provide good promotion for clubs that partner with them to offer these programs.

Hagerty also has other youth initiatives, including Youth Judging.
See: <http://www.hagerty.ca/corporate/hobby-support/youth-programs>

[Jennifer Orum: March 19, 2015]