



Editorial Perspective:
Send Your Credit Union to Summer Camp!



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by Arnie Goldberg

This article originally appeared as a Community Blog post at *CUInsight.com* on June 25, 2015 and is reprinted in its entirety here.

There's something about summertime that always reminds me of the carefree, playful, adventurous days of my youth. Whether my memories are triggered by catching a whiff of sunscreen mixed with chlorine or hearing classic rock through the car window or spitting out the seeds from a piece of ice cold watermelon, they send me back to a time when being a "happy camper" meant having three months of vacation stretching out endlessly before me.

Camp CU Wants YOU!

Remember what passed for monumental decisions in our lives on those long days at summer camp?— Top bunk or bottom bunk? Swimming or archery? Prank the next cabin or tell ghost stories by the fire? What if your credit union could find ways to channel and communicate the same spirit of discovery and fun to your members and community this summer? Here are six ways to put the timeless principles of summer camp fun to work to create some excellent adventures at your credit union in the months ahead:

1. Make New Friends and Keep the Old Ones

Summer is a great time to raise your credit union's visibility by using your branches as a destination for members or prospects who are out and about looking for something to do on summer weekends. You can hold "block parties" where you serve lemonade or ice cream or set up a hot dog truck. Try hiring a bouncy castle or make your parking lot a destination by showing "drive-in" movies. Or simply bring everyone inside to enjoy your air conditioning while you give branch tours, possibly including a scavenger hunt or featuring treasure chest prizes or a raffle.

2. Bring Similar Cabin Mates Together

Creating targeted presentations for different demographic or behavioral groups is a great way to brand your credit union. Organize seminars or presentations at your branches where small groups of attendees receive financial advice in a low-key, entertaining setting. For example, you might organize a pizza night for Millennials or an evening where the parents of young children can drop them off for a supervised story hour while they move to a nearby room for a presentation on saving for college. Seniors might enjoy attending a coffee hour or light lunch that features a hands-on demonstration of new developments in online and mobile banking.

3. Put on a Talent Show

Summer is a great time to tackle new projects that might get overlooked during the rest of the year and it's a great time to give interns meaningful projects to complete. Your credit union may also have volunteers or temps who would love to bring their energies and fresh eyes to creating website improvements or doing data analysis. Regular employees can also be encouraged to work on pet projects or get involved in helping to brainstorm solutions to operational or workflow problems that have troubled them during the rest of the year.

4. Organize a Field Day

Summer is the ideal time to bring your credit union closer to the community by running a joint service project or fundraiser. Create teams to handle various functions such as making signs or creating a video that can compete for bragging rights in good natured fashion. The feeling of achievement in making something happen will raise your credit union's visibility, generate great PR and contribute to employee pride and morale.

5. Get Your Credit Union in Shape

Who can't use a little more focus on "fitness" during the summer months? In this case the "diet and exercise" your credit union may need in order to stay in fighting trim could come in the form of increased attention to optimizing finances and/or operations. For instance, summer is a great time to review operations in your call center when volume may be lower or to get your card portfolios ready for future growth campaigns by conducting thorough portfolio or risk and collections reviews.

6. Plan Your "Back-to-School" Strategy

Summer may seem endless now but it always draws to a close far sooner than you think. The time period from September through the holidays will offer outstanding opportunities for themed marketing growth campaigns, but only if you plan ahead. Build your calendar during the summer and your programs can be off and running when fall rolls around.

Making Memories That Last

In the spirit of summer fun, these ideas should be approached as suggestions intended to jumpstart your credit union's own sense of member and community service rather than a one-size-fits all checklist. Start small and learn from your experiences—good and maybe less good—as you go along. Above all, remember that the best way for your credit union to create experiences that make your members feel like happy campers is for your credit union staff to feel like happy campers when they provide them.

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