

Lions are a concept and have one mission critical factor: Membership.

Public Relations is about facilitating the delivery and acceptance of a concept.

One of the key concepts in Lions to drive membership is the 'Just Ask' idea. This can take many forms but the bottom line is: Ask a potential Lion.

At some point in this process **you as a Lion** are going to have to answer some questions if you 'Just Ask'. Some are easy and simply mean reciting some statistics; some not so much. Some should require a little introspection.

Five questions:

- 1) Why are You a Lion?
- 2) Why should I be a Lion?
- 3) I've heard of Lions – what do they do?
- 4) Where does the money go and administrative overhead? In other words: How much of the dollar donated actually gets spent in the community?
- 5) Time – how much of mine?

Question #1: Why are you a Lion?

The hardest question. Requires thought and possibly some soul searching otherwise you may never know the actual core reason. There may be more than one but most likely it is one that satisfies a core need for you. It implies: Why are you *still* a Lion?

This is more important than you may think. Your being asked and the response invoke a psychological effect (marketing) frequently called the Transfer Effect.

The 'transfer effect' is familiar to all of us. Example: A celebrity of some form speaks out praising a product or idea. The hoped for effect is that some of the 'magical aura' from the celebrity or 'cause célèbre' will rub off (transfer) to a product, an idea, a favour seeking politician etc.

Does it work? Obviously. Countless and vast sums of money (including tax revenues) are spent on it every year. Note the use can be quite sophisticated and may not even be recognized for what it is. Example: Companies, politicians, media lining up to associate themselves with various social causes perceived as valid, eg: environmentalism, etc.

If there is some attraction to one, it is desired for the positive aspects of that attraction to transfer to the other.

The 'Just Ask? Transfer effect is based on two things:

1) Lions have very high positive brand recognition although very low function recognition, (Question #3).

2) The evaluation of the Lion being asked by the person doing the asking. Are they seen as a person who exhibits belief in the concept of service and Lions while accepting and actually encouraging new ideas and individual input? Does the club appear to be the same way? Is it an open and free flow or is it a restrictive 'clique' structure?

If the answer to the above is a positive one, then a 'transfer effect' of the positive aspects of the Lion being asked may 'rub off' and enhance the person asking response to being a Lion. Note; obviously the 'transfer effect' can work in a negative way, particularly if later to be found untrue. *This is member retention.*

Remember: Be ready for the response or even a question out of the blue: Why are you a Lion?

Question #2: Why Should I be a Lion?

On the surface this is a fairly simple question. In a real sense, similar to Question # 1, only the person (prospective Lion) can answer this question; however, there are some very good suggestions that can be made.

Some of these can be found in the Lions Membership area of LCI and even address some specific backgrounds. Worth a read and has suggestion that can be developed.

There is another answer: **Lions Pay It Forward.**

Just by joining or even volunteering to assist the Lions; **You are Paying It Forward** to your community; locally and around the world. A few moments of your time can result in positive change in your community and even around the world.

Another very powerful suggestion, (a form of interviewing technique as well), is to openly advise that when all is said and done; *You have to look into yourself and find the reason you want to be a Lion.*

Question #3: What do Lions do?

You should be aware of what your and neighboring clubs have been doing in your community and LCI has substantial information as to what Lions are doing globally.

The key here is: Do Not Bury the prospective Lion in stats and data.

The KISS principle helps: Keep It Short & Sweet (*alright- a variation*).

A couple of local examples with a global one, perhaps a brief note on the global/district initiatives but mainly: We Serve – Lions are the background unsung heroes of supporting many needs in our community and even globally.

Lions Pay It Forward, even when no one is watching.... that is probably why even when many don't know what we exactly what we do, Lions are respected everywhere.

You don't join the Lions – You become a Lion.

Question # 4 Where does the money go? Overhead?

The simple answer: Funds raised from the community must be returned to the community.

That may bring some further questions. There have been some media and quasi-political musings about large international organizations and their higher administration fees. These included suggestions to donate to local halls/community organizations instead of such big organizations. While there may have been some self-serving interest in the comments, they are still valid.

Can you answer: What about expenses? Do Lions get paid?

Lions International is a member funded organization of over 200 clubs and 1.2 million members.

It is divided into two main areas: Lions International – the 'Lions Clubs' we all know and the Lions Club International Foundation (LCIF), the donating/charitable section:

LCIF does the grants/donations part of Lions on a global scale. Its primary source of income is donations by Lions Clubs, other organizations – large and small, individuals and some misc others. *Note: BC received more from LCIF than was donated by BC Lions Clubs over the past few years in emergency aid grants.*

From its website LCIF states that it's admin funding is supplied by return on investments made over the years. *Note that LCIF (including LCIF Canada Foundation) being the charitable part can issue a tax receipt. Many Lions Clubs are not charities.*

Both LCI and LCIF mandate that all funds collected from the community (public) must be returned to the community. No Lion "may derive pecuniary advantage" from being a Lion. That is: All volunteer – no financial benefit. If the community believes it is the Lions fundraising for the public benefit, the funds must be used for the public benefit.

Consideration: There are expenses involved in projects whether fundraising or supporting the community. These expenses are part of the Lions service which may legitimately use collected funds to support delivering that service. Without being able to cover these expenses, Lions could not serve. Example: To sell pancakes and sausages at a breakfast, the club must have everything needed to do so. Funds taken in less expenses becomes the funds returned to the community. There are no wages or other financial benefits to individual Lions.

This means that club expenses (membership dues, meeting location rentals, etc) cannot be paid from community funds. They must be paid from funds generated from Lions. Obviously there are some 'gray' areas and overlap, example: storage space is an fundraising/project expense that may be covered by community funds. What about meeting location space to plan community activities?

Here is the quandary:

How do Lions Clubs legitimately support themselves while ensuring close adherence to the Lions model of community funds back to the community?

Most BC clubs have at least three accounts to aid in this separation of funds:

Project: Funds collected from the community and believed by the community to be donated for the purpose of the Lions service. Club can designate which areas funds to be spent on.

Gaming: Funds obtained from the government, usually gambling sourced, generally used to support specific previously identified projects. Note: Gaming does provide that a percentage of these funds may be used for administrative purposes?. Lions does not....

Administrative: Funds that are in an account purely for use of the club and are not collected as part of fundraising from the community. *This is relevant to most clubs and small clubs may need to become inventive and look at ways of "internal revenue generation". It can be done....*

Example where funds can go to admin account:

Tail Twister – all

This includes fines, internal raffles or other games of chance, any game where 'buy in' required, member donations, beverage sales, etc.

Question #5 – How much time

There is only one answer: As much as you decide.

Lions understand commitments and life. The involvement time is yours but to benefit as much as possible from Lions, it is a good idea to at least volunteer for as many projects as you can and attend meetings whenever possible. This keeps you in touch, enhances involvement and input as to what you think is important.

Time is an investment currency; The more we wisely invest, the more the results from our investment.

There is no one answer and intuitive thinking is required. Humans tend to not be linear and mechanistic approaches may only be a part of the overall approach. As an introspective exercise in this, consider the Lions motto: We Serve and the Rotary motto: Service Above Self. Then consider the membership demographics of both. How would the PR concept message differ in membership?

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