

# Summer Camp Professionals

A place for some on-going discussion for professionals in the world of summer camp. VENDORS: You are welcome here. Please join in the discussion and focus on helping the #CampPros. Selling your product before being a true member of the community will get you banned. Pros: We look forward to hearing from you. Please feel free to invite everyone you know who is a full-time staff person or who you feel should be a full-time staff person. Please take a moment and introduce yourself.

Rebecca Jess on 2010-12-05

We're looking to make some major changes to our camp website. Do you have any examples of excellent websites (camp or not) to draw inspiration from? Remember, parents have to be able to easily navigate it.

Gary Forster

Hi Rebecca,

Here are my criteria. NOT a lot of good ones! But some good PARTS you can put together!

Read more at [www.garyforster.com](http://www.garyforster.com)

Show me what you come up with?

All the best,

Rebecca Jess

Thanks, Gary!

Mercede Rogers

i would check out some independent schools websites - Greenwood College School, UCC, Havergal, BSS - they put a lot of time and effort (and cash) into their sites as they draw from an international crowd. Check out their major headings and subheadings - see what its like to move through those sites and draw from it things you can put towards your camp site.

have you done any diagnostics with staff, campers, parents about the current site? things they like, dislike etc

definitely question what you want to be conveying on the site and who you want to be attracting - who is your target? is what you are planning to do going to draw them in? is the new site to entice new campers? or solidify pre-existing relationships? what do you want out of the site??

question question question then move forward :)

Dave Graham

Hi Rebecca, Ultimatecampresource.com put together this list

<http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activity/top-10-camp-websites.html> you may wish to check those sites out!

Travis Allison

The awesome thing about Dave's suggestion: your site is already listed.

Travis Allison

Good on you for working to keep it current.

Rebecca Jess

Thanks, all. This is great.

Matthew Kaufman

Rebecca, we just re-did our site: <http://www.ramaquois.com>

Nicholas Smith

@Matthew: Nice looking site. Quick suggestion: Change the text alignment in the scrolling 'i love', 'i tired', 'i learned' from full justified to left aligned. That will remove the awkward spacing on several of the quotes.

Travis Allison on 2010-12-21

What is going to be the first thing you are going to do in the new year to get new campers in the bunks?

Jason Sebell

Release our marketing materials in a brand new package that we think differentiates who we are, and beginning a new campaign of posting funny, poignant or compelling videos made by our campers this summer on our Youtube channel and Facebook fan page. Also, adding my dynamic content to our Facebook landing page.

Will Shelton

I just want a complete full-time staff. Check the ACA job postings for Camp Hantesa!

Shawn Moriarty

As with Jason, updated marketing materials, social media usage, and also calling parents, responding within 24 hours to all emails and phone calls, and hosting local open houses.

Shawn Moriarty on 2010-12-29

Howdy camp folks and happy end of the year. I have a question for everyone: What is the formula for calculating your return rates? I know that there are several methods, I am curious what are people doing and why?

Randall Grayson

I'm around :-)) I use the simple one -- number of campers from last summer, and number of campers returning for following summer. And, I also run it without campers who have aged out and look at both numbers. Getting more granular, run it by counselor and by age. If you've got a large enough camper population, you can also run it by years at camp and get a really big crosstab table. Although I don't use it, Excel has some nice pivot table features for drilling data like this.

Mark Young

Randy has a great look at the numbers. The only slight addition I would add are agency campers. I would simply reserve the camper in the agency name. That way if the foster child is no longer able to go to camp the following year, it doesn't throw your numbers off.

Mark Young

I forgot to add that Randy's look by age is a real eye opener for a camp to see just what programs are working and what programs are not

Shawn Moriarty

@Randy-thanks for your thoughts, your method is similar to the one we have been toying with. Unfortunately the data left to me is not very deep.

Shawn Moriarty

@Mark-thanks for the reminder of the agency campers.

Travis Allison on 2010-12-22

Vacation Auto-Responses: It's a Facebook glitch and I'm trying to sort it out so that they don't fill your inbox with those messages.

Yes, I see the irony of posting this message which will only generate more automatic emails. ;-)

Frustrated with Facebook, but loving this community,

Travis

Nicholas Smith on 2010-12-20

:: Intro ::

Hey there, I'm Nic and I work with Camp Augusta in California. I have a background in graphic/spatial design and a passion for all-camp games. When I'm not knee deep in Photoshop I help run [www.natureswrath.net](http://www.natureswrath.net) and [www.greatcampprograms.com](http://www.greatcampprograms.com).

Joe Richards

Great to see you join the group Nicholas. I checked out Natureswrath.net last week - really great game.

Travis Allison on 2010-12-17

CampHacker 5: Year in Review - <http://camphacker.org/camphacker-5-year-end-review>

Adam Brown on 2010-12-15

\*Advanced\* Facebook risk-reduction strategies for the camper, staff member, teacher or camp director in your life.

Travis Allison on 2010-12-15

We recorded our last CampHacker Podcast for the season yesterday with Dan Weir , Joe Richards and myself. It will be out in the next couple of days.

I also posted to the blog yesterday an article on how Beber camp is teaching their parents and also doing great marketing at the same time.

Check it out: <http://camphacker.org/teaching-as-marketing-beber-camp-urdoingitrig>

Ben Smoky Radley on 2010-12-13

Hey all. I'm Ben Radley, program director at PHOC. I'm always looking for new games for camp. A traditional one at our camp is a free flow variation of capture the flag called snatch. Anyone out there got some favorites they'd like to share around?

Andrew Bartle

Hi Ben, I'm with camp temagami, I was wondering how your snatch varies from capture the flag? sounds interesting. Some of my favourites are survival, or the ecosystem game, each kid is given a role (herbivore, carnivore, omnivore), and then they have to collect food, water shelter, ect. while avoiding some things like forest fires, storms, you can put any twist on it you'd like

Randall Grayson

Hello all . . . [www.natureswrath.net](http://www.natureswrath.net) is a free program designed for camps -- huge details so you can run the game at your camp. If you're interested in numerous variations on Capture the Flag or scores of other camp programs, check out [www.greatcampprograms.com](http://www.greatcampprograms.com)

Mike Sladden

We love Survival as well.

Mike Sladden

We do a game called the Message to Garcia. A team relay race through events both sacred and silly. Happy to share it. Always a hit.

Ben Smoky Radley

Randall, thanks for the links! Mike and Andrew...what's the best way to share game plans for you guys? email? Thanks for the replies!

Jennifer H. Selke on 2010-12-13

anyone need a mail roommate for ACA National in San Diego?

Travis Allison on 2010-12-13

Holy Cow! In one month we have grown to 99 members! Hopefully you know a Summer Camp Professional who could be our 100th member - us the "Add Friends to Group" button on the left hand side.

Thanks for everything you have each shared hear already. I love being part of the camp community!

Lyndsay Borschke on 2010-12-13

Hi all! You should "like"  
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Tri-State-CAMP-Conference/138761642826934>. Great camping conference- it's worth the drive to Jersey:)

Will Shelton on 2010-11-17

Any advice for taking over a camp with strong traditions that you have never been a part of?

Sari Bell Grossinger

Having been in that situation almost 10 years ago we have tried to maintain the traditions as best as we could. Prior to taking over the camp we were given the opportunity to experience the camp with the former owners still involved. Focus groups with campers and staff took place which helped to find out what they wanted to stay and what they wanted to improve upon. We had spoken to other camp directors who had taken over camps who "cleaned house" - created new logos and traditions and ALL reported that the results in rebellion and loss of campers. Our suggestion is to keep key people on who can help bridge the gap and take it slowly - choose which things you want to change carefully but try and keep things as similar as possible over the first two years. Hope this helps!

Adam Brown

I second Sari's comments. Choose your battles carefully for the first 2-3 years. Build allies slowly, show a willingness to listen to the community, etc.

Adam Brown

But if there's something big and important...win any battles you pick. It's your camp now, after all.

Patti Thom
Great comments. I would absolutely support Sari's comments. Change is sometimes necessary but if its a mercedes you have-walk gently.
Randall Grayson
Hi Will . . . mmmmm . . . two recommendations. 1 = book called "The First 90 Days." Second, what you're dealing with is "Culture." 2 = I wrote a free book about CAMP culture -- what is it, how to deal with it, and how to change it, if desired. Find it at <a href="http://www.visionrealization.com">www.visionrealization.com</a> . Peace. Randy
Travis Allison
I'll echo what has been said - go slow, pick your battles. I would frontload my process with all of the staff (starting in small groups from the top down). 1) Every child must be safe always - any thing that isn't safe changes immediately (but I'll explain why it's not safe so you can understand why I'm making the change), 2) I'm not going to change everything at once, 3) Be prepared for a million Why questions - once I understand why it is done that way then I have a better grasp of the situation and we're more likely to have an outcome we both like.
Mark Young
I would agree with most of these posts. AS a board member for a camp that changes directors far to often, nothing pisses me off more than hiring a new director to only watch everything change. It only draws the camp down. Watch for the first year, and slowly change the second year
Joe Richards
Do what is best for the campers. If your change makes camp a better place - do it. If you changes are just for you to put your stamp on it and don't improve the campers experience then don't do it.
Will Shelton
Thanks everyone! Great advice. It's going to be an uphill battle, but it will be a fun challenge!
Adam Brown
Will, I would add one more thought to keep you sane and to help your changes have coherence:
Adam Brown
Go into it with a 3 and 5 year plan. They can be amended later, but it might give you peace to have the first years sketched out. Even when you have bad days, the bigger picture might still make sense.
Bill Hinton
This is a great opportunity to celebrate the great traditions that make camp special and to get rid of the one that do not have a place at camp or do not work towards your mission. I was in your position 6 years ago. I was the bad guy for 2 years for getting rid of some very counter productive staff focused traditions, but now staff and campers think that is the way it is.
Bill Stevens
observation is key. Spend some time seeing the way things operate 1st then make change as necessary. I agree with Joe - make the change beneficial to the campers.
Dan Weir

Will, what are the traditions you are considering changing?

Will Shelton

The struggle will be in getting the summer staff to realize the difference between tradition and policy. I want to keep all of the ceremonies and progressions, but want to take a look at the daily schedule, meal times, staff hierarchy, etc.

Randall Grayson

Keep the "Positive Compelling Vision" for the change in mind, and get people on board with that. Check out this presentation on the why of why - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qp0HIF3SfI4>

Travis Allison

@Will Read this book this winter - will help clarify your thinking and give you some ideas to get started making change: Switch by Chip and Dan Heath

Will Shelton

Just ordered it from Amazon. Thanks for the tip.

Mercedee Rogers

hi there - there is an article coming out in the January edition of "Pathways" that speaks of the Taylor Statten Camps going through this transition culturally at the camp - check it out. also - many times with big change our staff want a voice - they want the opportunity to give feedback as they are emotionally invested in their camp and feel entitled to that voice. Work with them - hear what they have to say - but at the same time be clear about your expectations and the WHY behind the changes, they will respond much better and hopefully jump on board as it shows you trust them and want to communicate with them - we work with a group of young people after all and they themselves are growing and finding their way still.

Rebecca Jess on 2010-12-05

We have horrible internet access at camp (satellite; we're out of the high-speed range) Considering trying a Turbo Hub/Rocket Hub. Has anyone else already tried this at camp?

Mark Young

Rebecca, have you tried wild blue or hughes net?

Joe Richards

We have both xplornet and rogers rocket hub on site. Rocket hub is great - but the speed depends on who is using the tower - so there are times that it is slower than my 1mb xplornet - but not often.

Joe Richards

My thoughts are that the xplornet is a consistent cost that does not depend on usage - same price each month. The rocket hub pricing is based on usage so could fluxuate to ridiculous amounts - tried netflix last month and doubled my \$60 bill to \$120 - so with camp staff I am preferring to go with xplornet - they know it is too slow for youtube and the like - and so keeps them from trying...

Rebecca Jess

Thanks Joe, that really helps. We use xplornet as well and, although I'd rather not have to get a Rocket Hub or a Rocket Stick as well, I think we'll have to for the sanity of our Administrator (and us as Directors). Despite the price fluctuation with the Rocket Hub, would you ever recommend/think it's possible to use it exclusively at camp (and get rid of

xplornet altogether)?

Joe Richards

I talked to one of our family campers who is a Nerds On Site guy - he said that you can program routers to only let certain bandwidth through to certain computers - so if using a rocket hub we could limit summer staff use while still having fast use in the office. right now I use the rocket hub at home as a test case - I needed to buy an antenna as well for it and now there are times I get 3 to 5 mb download - but it drops my iphone all the time - need to renew lease at lease once a day on my iphone to get my connection back. xplornet has been consistant - expect for the weather - we pay for 1mb download - but recent changes by the CRTC in canada may affect the ability to have it be unlimited usage...and it too may move to usage pricing...no win/win

Rebecca Jess

One more question for you, Joe: how is your cell reception at camp in general? Ours is pretty darn good, so I'm wondering if that will make a big difference in my hub vs. satellite debate.

Joe Richards

Cell reception is great with the antenna - it dosen't have to do with the reception - it has to do with the tower and who else is using the cell tower - it depends on the time of day as well...hope that helps.

Dan Weir on 2010-12-02

The Northeast YMCA Camp Conference Program Committee invites you to submit a proposal to present January 26th to 28th 2011 at New York YMCA Camp in Huguenot, NY.

The deadline for submissions is Wednesday December 15, 2010 and notification of accepted presentations will be sent by late December 31st, 2010.

If you are interested in presenting, please go to the following link:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/NYCCSpeakers>

The Northeast YMCA Camp Conference is an incredible gathering of YMCA camp professionals working in fields ranging from Resident Camp & Day Camp, to Outdoor Education and Team Building. We come together to network, gain new skills and share best practices in the field. Well be offering over 40 seminars ranging in subjects from how to properly use GPS for camp programming to how to use the new Y brand with your camp. Held at New York YMCA Camp, a year round conferencing YMCA facility that also has a summer camp, the feeling of camp is present the entire time.

Lyndsay Borschke on 2010-12-02

Accepting submissions for the December edition of The OCA Newsletter until December 10th. If you would like to submit your thoughts on any camping related topic, please send your article to [lyndsay@rightsleeve.com](mailto:lyndsay@rightsleeve.com) before the 10th.

Lyndsay Borschke on 2010-12-01

National Wear Your Camp Tee Day: <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=179643985386159>

Scott Rothschild on 2010-12-01

Thanks for adding me to this group - great stuff!  
Don't forget to register for the Tri-State CAMP Conference - Seth Godin is our opening keynote speaker!

<http://www.tristatecampconference.com>

Travis Allison on 2010-11-30

A great question today from Theresa McDonald-Lee in our our Goodreads forum: We have such a short time with the summer staff - at most four months - and we can't spend all of that time fighting about change. Is there something we can do about the environment that will make their lives easier, change easier to handle, and to help them succeed at their jobs? For more details:<http://bit.ly/fWdPLw>

Randall Grayson

Setting up the culture is key.

Randall Grayson

(whoops) -- there are a couple free e-books. One I wrote about specifically culture at camps, available at [visionrealization.com](http://visionrealization.com), and another is the <http://www.barefootguide.org/contents-guide.htm>. Also, check out the 16 responses to Will Shelton on the Facebook summer camp professional group -- also about change and culture.

Travis Allison on 2010-11-18

Our CampHacker podcast is now available through your browser - iTunes downloads coming soon. [Http://camphacker.org](http://camphacker.org) Posted this week: Staff Hiring. Coming next week: Interviews - 4 camps do it 4 totally different ways.

Featuring Joe Richards , Dan Weir and Gabrielle Raill

Travis Allison

We'd love your feed back as we begin our new Camp podcast.

Travis Allison on 2010-11-13

#introductions: Hi Everyone! With my wife, Beth, I was a camp director for 13 years at Glen Mhor Camp in Muskoka (the "cottage country", 2 hours north of Toronto). In 2004 we helped manage the transition to Cairn, a newly designed camp umbrella programme that ran 5 family and children's camp. I was the Co-Executive Director at Cairn for 2 years.

- I run the CampHacker.org blog
- I produce and cohost the brand new CampHacker internet radio show (a podcast launching this week) with Joe Richards, Dan Weir and Gabrielle Raill
- Used to produce and host the Camp Nation podcast.

Travis Allison on 2010-11-11

A place for some on-going discussion for professionals in the world of summer camp.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Travis Allison

I know most everybody but it would be great to have everyone take a moment and introduce themselves.



Travis Allison
Please invite all of the camp pros that you know!