January 2006

Jim, Warren, et al.,

You might find these links of interest with respect to the WBCCI proposed new name and logo.

http://www.airstreamforums.com/forums/f286/wbcci-stats-20377.html

http://www.airstreamforums.com/forums/f286/ibt-vote-result-20156.html

http://www.airstreamforums.com/forums/f286/wbcci-new-name-logo-19605.html

Many others here:

http://www.airstreamforums.com/forums/f286/

Please, on behalf of OUR membership, and OUR continued membership in the WBCCI, the Sierra Nevada Unit and the VAC, our request is that you DON'T change the name or logo. It's not broken. It's beautiful, full of life and honorable.

There is so much confusion about WHAT the original motion was. Adding Airstream to the existing name (as was quoted by Jim Franklin's letter in the August Blue Beret) is what most people believed would happen and was why they voted yes. Recent lengthy discussions with other members lead to the discovery that what they had thought they had voted YES to was "adding Airstream to the existing name." They were not excited about a completely new name and image for their club, that has been in existence for 50 years. One important thought was that Airstream needed to be more prominent in club advertising.

CHANGE the manner of operations and work towards appealing better to existing members and potential new members. Listen to your membership voices and learn about the new dynamic of current A/S purchasers and vintage rig purchasers. Why are new members dropping out after their 1st year?

The WBCCI might find it possible to harness a large number of volunteers to bring about change and increased membership with a plan as simple as the creation of a new 'tag line,' and focus for the WBCCI. A strategic implementation and PR plan would follow. Breath life into the organization, don't change it.

I've been in the advertising, public relations and graphic design business for 20 years and most groups and businesses who change names and identities as drastically as your proposed plan is, fail! Look at Coke for instance. New Coke failed horribly -- even with millions of dollars to implement the new plan. The bad press did little for their numbers. They had to revert to the 'original' Coke and worked very hard to gain back their dis-associated consumer base.

History weighs heavy on the consumer and member. People like to buy-in on something historic, but with a modern twist. If you change things as drastically as your proposal, the membership is likely to think that something is really broken, which could bring about the question... 'do I really want to be a part of this fixer-upper club?'

Look at the Harley Owners Group - (H.O.G.). No pomp and circumstance here with 500,000 members nation-wide. The message is just get on that motorcycle and ride! Saturday bike runs. Weekend overnighters. Friendship without too much structure. Goes

well with the lifestyle of today. The WBCCI is well known for its coordinated long caravans. These are fine for a non-working, retired members but doesn't work for the working, family, busy, distracted, on-the-go member. It seems to me that the local units that are doing well are the ones that are employing a weekend-long rally or even an overnight rally and events that encourage participation.

Quotes from the article: http://www.hriders.com/news_details.cfm?newsID=2390

{{One way the company keeps connected with its customers is through the chapters of the Harley Owners Group, or HOG, an allusion to a common nickname for big Harleys. Each dealer must sponsor its own HOG chapter, and anyone wanting to join one must first become a member of the national, corporate-sponsored group. National dues are $40 for full members; local chapters charge $20. The HOG chapters provide an organized way for Harley owners to enjoy their Harleys. In addition to pleasure rides, many of their activities involve fund-raising for charity.

So who are these people? HOG groups have a range of members, from professionals to office and blue-collar workers, from guys in their 20s to some older than 70.

Harley-Davidson says 91 percent of its customers are men. They're also middle-aged, a bit over 45 years old. Because Harleys can range in price from about $7,000 to more than $30,000, it's not surprising that the median annual income of Harley customers is more than $80,000.

Those demographics don't speak to the traditional, and largely undeserved, reputation of Harley riders as outlaw bikers. Yet the rebellious image - the black leather, the pulsating two-cylinder engines, the cultish adoration of Harley trademarks - is carefully nurtured by the company, within certain carefully defined limits. For many, the attraction of a Harley is casting off the surgeon's scrubs or blue suit, or blue mechanic's uniform for that matter, and adopting, if only for a weekend, a more sinister, or at least carefree, persona.}

But the groups also function as customer-gatherers for Harley-Davidson and its dealers. Their charitable work creates community good will and publicity, and friends and relatives invited along for the ride often become customers.

How the owners interact with the clubs is left to them, company officials said.}}

The WBCCI is not the only club failing to harness new and continued membership. The Rotary, Elks, and Lion's are suffering, too! Memberships down up to 65%! Unwillingness to change has caused most of their problems. Old ceremonious activities are not useful and mostly a perceived waste of time. Yes, most of these clubs are civic-minded.

The Girl Scouts of America recently addressed their dwindling numbers by re-invented itself with a new tag line "Where Girls Grow Strong." They found that the old focus of the woman as 'homemaker' was hurting them. But what the new career-minded 'girls' were interested in was a 'strong' path of new programs such as sports, science, business and government with a side of surfing, rock climbing, kayaking and other outdoor/adventure activities. This along with a few basic operational changes and some new marketing ideas did wonders for their membership numbers.

My educated guess is that if the identity change goes through that the club numbers will fall even lower.

I don't think that new members and existing members are having trouble with the name and identity. We are new members (2nd year) in our early 40s and we 'got it' right away and understood Wally and bought into his vision. It's simple... 'who's Wally Byam?'... 'oh, he's the inventor and founder of the Airstream!'

It is the operation and focus of the club that is dissuading membership. Judging from the name change topic alone, communications could be greatly improved and be a good starting point to rejuvenate from!

Thank you for your consideration,

Kimber Moore & Timothy Kendziorski

WBCCI #17330 (resurrected!)

Sierra Nevada Unit, VAC, Airstream Forum member aka Buttercup