

# 4<sup>th</sup> Talkin' Co-op

## Membership Matters

### 12<sup>th</sup> December 2009

Participation: Dave Dunn (facilitating), Pauric Cannon, Mark Malin, Tim Cookson, Max Cannon, Fionnuala Ward, Péars Hussey, Marie Bouret, Giacomo Bazzo, Reini Bock, Arthur Duignan, Aodhagan O'Broin.

This fourth Talkin' Co-op session used the format of guided conversation based on the framework of a strategic planning session. The content of the discussion focused on the mechanics of the membership and in particular the customer service that is provided by the Co-op to new and existing members.

The discussion fell under the following headings:

1. Tell us what the issues are
2. Some data and information provided
3. Recommendations
4. Actions
5. What's the Co-op's value proposition?
6. If there was a Members Group, it would ...

#### 1. Tell us what the issues are:

- Necessity to have accurate data on Membership
- Conversion of visitors to members (conversion = transformation)
- Mechanics of the welcome desk to be examined.
- What is the diversity of the membership
- What's the attractiveness of the Co-op
- How do we connect with other social justice / ecological orgs.
- Accept that there are active and passive members
- Recognise that the tills are a key point of contact for engagement with the members (also the café, the welcome desk,
- Why do we loose members
- Does the Co-op offer leadership to the outside world?
- What's the Co-op's value proposition?
- Has there been a Members Group in the past? [Answer = yes ]
- What outreach does the Co-op do with other ecological and social justice organisations?

## 2. Some data and information provided;

- Faillte consists of: an invitation by email or letter, intro to the structure, history, aims and values of the co-op, intro to the help rota, bulk ordering and a presentation by a producer member or a volunteer.
- Less than 20% of invitees attend.
- We have on average 147 visitors signing in each week in 2009
- We had on average 77 visitors signing in each week in 2008
- Membership in 2009 is 965 (approx.)
- Membership in 2008 was 840
- In 2009: 26 % of members were new
- In 2009 20% of members first signed up in 2008
- 45% of 2008 new sign-ups are still here
- 25% of 2007 new sign-ups are still here
- 10% of 2006 new sign-ups are still here
- 20% of our members are from pre-1998
- There was a members survey in 2005 / 2006 that questioned 85 lapsed members for their reasons for leaving.
- Note: most people leave because they want to shop locally (to where they live)
- The management of volunteer projects requires a time and energy investment.

## 3. Recommendations

- Welcome host – to help transformation of visitors and induction of new members
- Perform an annual survey of the membership
- Put on membership form a q: Why are you joining?
- Put on the membership form a q: Where did you hear about the coop first?

## 4. Actions:

- 2005 survey (by Arthur) to be found and made available
- 2008 survey (by Jaan) to be made available

## 5. What's the Co-op's value proposition?

The coop is a space for social, health, ecological concerns. It is a living community for local people. It is not just a place for consumption.

- Question: Is education part of the value proposition

## 6. If there was a Members Group, it would:

- Provide good Induction of personnel: sincerity and good commitment
- Acknowledge is a risk of overselling the co-op in the effort to transform visitors to members
- Identify what the value proposition(s) is (are)
- Communicate the benefits of membership
- Capture and analysis membership data
- Look at new members and also look at existing members.
- Transform instead of convert visitors to new members
- Lead on Welcome Hosting
- Facilitate communications from the bottom up.

## Parked Issue: Democratic Structures at The Co-op

Why: Access to info and organisational memory.