

If Your Get Up and Go, Got Up and Went

Has your club lost its energy? Are the meetings getting to be a drag? Are a few partners behaving more like wind bags and less like wind in your sails?

Really, there are only two ingredients you need to re-energize your meetings, and those are Gains and Laughter. If you make money and enjoy each other's company, you won't be asking how can we make our meetings better?

But, that's easier said than done.

What can you do in a falling market when finding a stock to buy feels like trying to catch a falling knife? Well, the good news is, your negative numbers are not your fault. The even better news is that all of the stock analysts are sending us the same message: look for consistent growth companies with solid balance sheets. Exactly the kind of companies the BetterInvesting methodology is designed to reveal.

There are all kinds of ways to pump up your club, but it does require that the majority of members are motivated to do that. Perhaps it is just a matter of initiating a couple of ideas that grab that imagination of your particular group.

Education is always the first thing we recommend, but if you are already yawning—stick with me. Perhaps we can give you some more exciting ideas than in the past.

Read a book together.

What if all of your members read the same book about finance or economics at the same time? Try to find a well written one that captures the imagination. It doesn't have to be dreary and boring. Peter Lynch's books *One up on Wall Street* or *Beating the Street* remain perennial favorites. There are many highly rated books by Bob Froehlich and/or Suze Orman, *Stocks for the Long Run* by Jerry Siegel, the *Lexus and the Olive Tree* by Thomas Friedman, the *Little Book of Common Sense Investing* by John C. Bogle, *The Intelligent Investor* by Benjamin Graham, *Snowball* about Warren Buffet, perhaps go a little afield and read *Lending to the Poor* by Yunus Mohannad. *Common Stocks and Uncommon Profits* by Philip A. Fisher.

Sell it All and Start Anew

I've known two clubs to just sell everything and start anew. How energizing! Because of tax consequences, it's not what we would recommend an individual do, and the same, to a lesser extent would be true for a club. But it's a very exciting proposition. At the next meeting you probably have thousands of dollars to invest, and a wealth of hard-won experience. Starting fresh puts a new spin on balancing the portfolio for diversity and choosing only top quality stocks.

Go on a Field Trip

Attend an annual meeting together. There are several companies in the Seattle-Tacoma-Portland area and it can be quite fun to go to a Starbucks, Costco, Expedito's International or Microsoft annual meeting. Weyerhaeuser?

Take a retreat

Go to a spa? Visit the San Juan Islands? Really? Yes, several clubs have combined vacation-type retreats with education. Sometimes spouses are included. Sometimes not. We'll not comment on that aspect.

But a club with a strong social bond tends to stay together longer. A club that takes its education seriously tends to stay together longer.

Spin the Dial, Buy a Letter

Some clubs like to mix it up a bit with competition. A common contest is the stock-picker's sweepstakes. Usually members pick one to three stocks (theoretical purchase) and who ever achieves the greater gain in the time period (often one year) wins either bragging rights, or a modest cash prize. But a club could get more creative, perhaps designing a Stock Trivia contest, hang-man, Wheel of fortune, Truth or Consequences, or Jeopardy-style game based on investment education, or companies in your portfolio. (Google Jeopardy and template). (This can be a lot of work, so if you do it, could you please share it with us, so we can share with other clubs?)

You might also try another game show take off from Name that Tune, or What's My Line? Prepare pre-judgment SSGs on all of the stocks in your portfolio. Remove the name and ticker symbol and spread them out on a table. How many can the members identify?

Musical Chairs

Mix it up. Agitate the group, play musical chairs with your Stock Watchers each year. No one is allowed to follow a stock longer than 12 months. Or, rotate your meeting leader. I belonged to a club in which each meeting had different 'Convener' who ran the meeting. Once a year the Secretary shuffled the deck and assigned us each a month to be Meeting Convener. We knew our assignment months in advance, so we could plan ahead. And, sure, we had to do some trading. But, it worked. We had a Convener's notebook which included all the information needed to remind people of their assignments, and our standard agenda. Each month the book passed to the next person.

Share the Wealth

Reach beyond your own club. Have a mutual meeting with another club. You can simply have officers meet, or have a full-blown mutual educational meeting or anything in-between. Learn what other clubs do and how they operate. Of course, you can also attend chapter events such as the Club Management class, or the regional Special Interest Workshops.

Mentor the Newbies

Recruit some fun and interesting people into the club. New members can bring in new enthusiasm and energy, but it also can be a burden to bring them up to speed. Assign a conscientious mentor to help them learn the ropes.

Eat what you Own

I've heard of clubs having a dinner party composed of products related to stocks they own. This is easy if your club owns Pepsi, Costco, Yum! or even Procter and Gamble (napkins). I'm not sure how you incorporate something like, say, Exxon, but apparently some clubs get very creative and have a lot of fun with this idea.

Mini-meetings

Doing an industry study doesn't need to be a solitary exercise. Don't be hesitant to meet in small groups between meetings and devote an hour or two to the analysis of a specific group of stocks searching for the diamond others have over looked.

Make Like a Boy Scout

Be Prepared. It would be nice if the Secretary would send out a reminder a week before the next meeting listing stock reports that are due. It would be even nicer if members would not wait until the night before (or morning of!) the meeting to research their assigned stock. Unless you really are a fan of coffee and late night cramming, a few minutes invested a couple days in advance can yield better results. It brings the stock to the forefront of your mind and you are more likely to take notice of related new events, look up extra information, or call investor relations. Some clubs have a Stock Watcher's form to fill in for the quarterly report. This can make the reports more consistent, and easier to prepare.