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The Car-Club Conundrum

For over 40 years, I've been a member of several car clubs, and as of late I've joined nearly 1,000 car-related Facebook groups. Consequently, most evenings I'm online seeking information and interesting content that I can use in our sister publication, *Hemmings Classic Car*.

For the most part, I find it to be a worthwhile way to spend my free time, and quite motivating, too. But, I do take issue with all of the out-of-date websites.

All too often, I come across car-club websites with antiquated information. I'm not talking about sites that still haven't listed show dates and conventions for 2018. I've visited literally dozens of club pages that have "upcoming" 2012 conventions still showing in the events listing. Yes, 2012!

During the summer when I'm out and about at car shows and club meets, I keep hearing that car-club memberships are declining, and that the younger generation isn't interested in joining. Why would they if the information shown on those websites is many years old? One site I came across showed photos of the club's 2006 car show. Really? Who would want to see that?

Regardless of one's age, if information isn't kept current on a club's site, you probably won't be enticed to join. While nearly all of these out-of-date sites are regional and local car clubs, some of the bigger club websites aren't all that current either.

The biggest challenge facing car clubs goes beyond a lack of younger enthusiasts and car owners joining, but rather it's an absence of members pitching in to help with club functions. A club can only be as successful as its membership allows it to be. If you are knowledgeable in website design and can do content updates, volunteer your time to get your club's site up to date. Just a few hours every week updating information will make all the difference in helping the club's membership grow, and possibly become financially secure.

Besides making sure that the content and events are current, there are a few other changes that clubs should consider if they want to attract new members.

First and foremost, people join car clubs to learn more about their car's brand and

model history, and to obtain information on how to repair and restore their cars. The more how-to, historical, and production facts made available, the more people will want to become members, and stay members. No one is interested in reading about the minutes of a meeting — that's the type of boring information that turns people away.

The other issue is party photos: The only members who want to see photos of those who attended a club's party, are those who attended. Again, that's boring content. And, seeing photo after photo of the club president handing members their awards is not only monotonous, but uninteresting. Not everyone can attend a club's national convention or annual regional meet, so members depend on club publications to show the cars featured at these events.

To help the club's editor, write a story about your car, and send it along with a selection of well-composed photographs. If you have an extensive collection of automobilia and factory literature that pertains to the cars in your club, share that content. Contact the webmaster, editor, or club president and ask how you can share and show what you've collected.

Webmasters, like magazine editors, are always seeking new and topic-related content to add to the club's website, but without the help of its members, their job becomes even more difficult and time consuming than it already is.

Perhaps the best way to get younger people interested in cars is to let them become involved in the club's website. Because they are so adept at using social media and other web-related procedures, and truly enjoy it, they're the ones we should rely on to not only make club websites current and relevant, but way more entertaining, too, especially in the visual sense. With a little guidance on our part, this can be a win-win situation for everyone. ■