Unfortunately I have nothing new of substance to report since our February Board meeting. I’ve had a spring and summer busy with soaring competition activities and have not yet been able to engage on any new GRC efforts. Hopefully I’ll be able to get things moving in the fall, once the soaring season winds down a bit.

The weak results of the efforts to grow our membership by offering assistance and encouragement to clubs/chapters have caused me to re-think the importance of having an aggressive SSA soaring-marketing effort. I had been thinking that the marketing would be better done directly by the clubs/chapters. The difficulty with that approach is that many (most?) of our clubs/chapters don’t really seem to care if they grow, or may even not want to grow. I see this in my own club. The volunteers who run the clubs are already loaded up and not looking for more work, so growth is not a priority. In addition to the SSA providing assistance to the clubs/chapters, it is probably time to mount a strong SSA marketing effort, both at the national level and at the local level, which will drive potential members to clubs/chapters without the clubs/chapters needing to initiate the marketing efforts themselves. A “flood” of visitors and potential new members arriving at a club would put some much-needed pressure on clubs/chapters to grow.

The SSA CFI-G Incentive Scholarship program selected 13 scholarship recipients. Scholarship funds may not be claimed until the CFI-G certificate/rating is complete, and this must be done within 18 months. No claims for funds have been received yet.

John Godfrey is making great progress with his Planned Giving efforts, the benefits of which will eventually spill over into Growth & Retention. John will be reporting on those efforts separately.

What follows below is a repeat of my February report.

The basic game plan is still for the GRC to follow the guidance of our current Strategic Plan.

The primary focus will be on:
1) Helping clubs/chapters grow, in collaboration with commercial operators
2) More club CFIGs
3) Increased emphasis on cross-country training and flying
4) More youth involvement
5) Improved marketing, both national and local (clubs/chapters and commercial operators)
6) Leveraging our connections with EAA, AOPA, AMA, USHPA, CAP, and (yes) the FAA
7) Increased funding of clubs/chapters and the SSA through member donations and planned giving

Subject areas to be represented on the GRC will likely include:
- Cross-Country training and development
- Club and Commercial Operator collaborations
- Soaring magazine, assistance with finding good growth-related content
- Youth; bringing more young people into soaring, cross-country flying, and contests
- CFI-G development and training
- Marketing and promotion materials (for use nationally and locally)
- Marketing and promotion methods, emphasizing the use of social media
- Clubs best practices
- Club advisor program
- Airshows; national, regional, & local
- EAA, AOPA, AMA, USHPA, CAP, FAA leveraging
- Membership demographics and surveys
- Others?

We have already-established Committees that are positioned to be working on some of these matters: Clubs & Chapters, Commercial Operators, Cross-Country Training, Editorial Advisory Committee, and Youth/Junior. It should be possible for the GRC to collaborate with and support these existing committees on growth-related matters in each of their subject areas. The Chairs of these committees will continue to have a seat on the GRC. The plan is to “invite” other individuals onto the committee who will focus their efforts on the bite-sized pieces of the various growth projects that they are most interested in.

Since I am already engaged on the CFI-G development issue through the CFI-G Incentive Scholarship program, I will continue to work on that issue.

Chris Schrader will remain on the GRC, with his primary focus being on developing marketing materials, tools, and strategies that can be used both nationally and locally by clubs/chapters and commercial operators. This is a critical area that needs further development.

We have been nibbling around the edges of preparing a Clubs Best Practices manual for several years. There is a lot of information already available. Rather than spend our energy preparing a document, I plan to shift this effort toward collecting available information into a single location and then sharing that information with clubs/chapters through the SSA’s Club Google Discussion Group. The Discussion Group has been an effective communication tool for clubs/chapters to share information with each other, and club interaction/discussion on Best Practices would be good.
The Club Advisors project has stalled. I continue to believe that this approach to energizing and assisting clubs/chapters has promise. I intend to work on this and hopefully find someone else to “take ownership” of the program. This club outreach program would seem to be appropriately embraced by our Regional Directors and State Governors. Breaking the project into smaller pieces (SSA Regions) may be the first step in the reboot.

We have a number of individuals within the SSA who are knowledgeable about Airshows, the alphabet-group organizations, and membership data collection. I’ll begin searching for volunteers to take the lead on these projects and will appreciate strong Board member assistance.

Ken Sorenson
Growth & Retention Committee Chair