



Forming a Ghost Hunting Club – Part 2

Formulating a plan of action

Knowing that you want to develop a ghost hunting team and actually doing it are far different things. You can go hang out with your friends in cemeteries looking for spooks but will you get much respect or will you just be considered odd? Becoming a team of paranormal investigators takes time and work. This chapter will focus on some of the things you can do to make your team stand out from the other wackos who hang out in dark houses talking to people they can't see. We've all seen other groups on TV or in magazines and have had dreams that someday that will be us. Here's where you figure out how to make that happen.

The first step is to formulate a plan. This plan should encompass the things we've already talked about in the previous chapters, such as membership, investigations, and group leadership. Just remember when writing your plan, to make it forward thinking. Where do you want your group to be in one year, five years and ten years?

Look at other local and national groups. How are they structured? Will that work for you or should you make adjustments for the needs of your members and clients? As you investigate other groups, look at their investigation techniques, their reporting policies and client relationship abilities. Armed with this information, take a few moments with your members to brainstorm and then put it all down on paper.

Create your plan like any club or small business would. This plan should state your philosophy for working with clients, team members and the public. You can look on the internet for examples of business plans for ideas of what will work for your team, but there really is no need to get too formal. General, concise ideas are better at this point. Below are some things to think about including.

First and foremost, what is the mission of your group? Come up with one sentence that states your philosophy regarding ghost hunting and dealing with the public. Keep it short and simple like this example. "The mission of My Ghost Hunting Group is to investigate claims of the paranormal and to seek evidence to answer the question of life after death." This mission statement will define your group and will help you focus how you plan to deal with the public and the media regarding your group.

You will also want to include an organization description in your plan. This should be a paragraph or two describing the basic organization structure and the goals of your group. This will explain who you are, what you do, and what your goals for the future are. It should be in keeping with your mission statement but contain more detail.

The most important part of your plan is the operational outline. Here's where you can start getting into detail of exactly how you will operate. Think about the important things that will keep your group functioning. Who will be responsible for tasks and how will you make money for operating expenses. This operational outline should include:

Group Administration: Who are your members? Will you have a closed or open membership? How will new members join? Will there be an application process or will the group be open to anyone? Will there be dues involved and if so, who will manage the finances of the group? Who will have spending authority and will regular

audits be performed? How will you handle fund raising to pay for out of town investigations and other operational costs?

How will you handle communication between members? Will email or telephone conferences be sufficient, or will you offer some kind of newsletter?

Who will be involved in decision making Will there be a membership hierarchy? Or will everyone have the same voting rights. If you have a close membership with a small number of members it is fairly easy to have consensus whenever a major decision arises. If you have a large open membership, you will want to consider forming a board of directors to make the major decisions. Remember, your group will most likely evolve over time, so there is nothing wrong with starting with a small closed membership and then opening it and expanding as you become well known and requests for membership start coming in. Your organization outline is not carved in stone and can be easily be adjusted when necessary.

Investigations and Client Relations: Describe how you will advertise for clients and how those clients will communicate with you. Who will be responsible for the initial client contact and who will follow-up with the client? Also outline your investigation protocols. How will you approach each investigation? Will your investigation style be primarily technical or will psychics and sensitives be utilized? What are your goals regarding case management, reporting and evidence review? Although we'll talk about investigations and protocols later in the book, it pays to have an idea of how you plan to handle them before you walk into that first client's home.

In chapter two I asked you to think about how you will manage the equipment. Outline in your organization plan the development of your equipment kit. If you plan to build a group kit over time, explain where the money will come from and what avenues you will pursue to find the best equipment. If each member will supply their own equipment, will you have minimum requirements for type and function?

Since we're thinking about technology, consider whether you will have a website. If so, who will create and maintain it? How often will it be updated? Will you post your investigation results on the website and how detailed will these public reports be? Today, I recommend that all groups create their website early in their development. It's a great way to network with other groups. If you provide links to their sites, they will return the favor.

Community Outreach and Advertising: It's important when you are just starting out to make your presence known in your community. You can do this a number of ways that will be discussed later in the book, but when you begin, your plan should include a list of other organizations in your area that may be of assistance, such as historic societies, genealogical societies, cemetery preservation societies and other ghost hunting groups. Networking within these groups will help you get access to locations that you might not otherwise be able to investigate. Make a goal for developing these relationships and list what you can offer to them in return; your relationships should never be one-sided. Good relationships lead to good word of mouth, which is better than any advertising you can pay for.

Although early in your development you most likely won't want to expend the money for advertising, there are lots of free methods to promote your group. Look for free online sites, put up flyers at your local library and supermarket. Develop

relationships with the local media. Find out who in your area writes features and special interest stories for your local newspaper. Do you have a local magazine-style television program? Who are the host and producer? This information will be invaluable later on when you start investigating noteworthy sites and you want the publicity.

While you're networking in your community, don't forget the police. Your plan should include how you will deal with the police. If you are planning to visit cemeteries and parks after dark, you will want to make sure that the police know of your presence in the community. Remember that trespassing is against the law. To avoid unpleasantness, make sure that you know who to inform if you plan to be at a location after dark.

In short, your plan should include everything you can think of that relates to who, how, what and when your group will operate.