



# AMC Boston Chapter

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New Member Focus Group  
Web Site Redesign  
February 16, 2006



# Executive Summary

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- Major Issues

- All participants joined to go on trips, and all participants found it difficult to get the information they needed to go on a trip
- Trips are organized by chapter, but participants do not have a sense of “chapter” – they just want to find trips in the area they are interested in



# Executive Summary cont.

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## ■ Major Issues

- Trip listings assume members understand the geographical jargon of the club
- Participants felt that they were just “thrown into their membership” – no orientation is provided
- If members do not quickly find information they want they get frustrated and give up and do not try again



# Executive Summary cont.

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- Recommendations
  - Provide a home page link to trip listings
  - Make trips sortable by date, activity, and type of activity
  - Include printable copy of trip listings
  - Explain the geography of the club and how the Boston Chapter is organized



# Executive Summary cont.

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- Recommendations
  - Include an interactive map (use Google Maps API)
  - Include new members page, with orientation information
  - Develop FAQ for site, focus on needs of new members



# Location

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- Center for Marketing Technology
- Bentley College
- Waltham, Massachusetts



# Participant Recruitment

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- Participants recruited using member data provided by AMC for December, 2005
- Members contacted by telephone
  - Phone number included in member data
- Total of 54 members contacted
  - 19 men
  - 28 women
  - 1 gender unknown



# Participation

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- 9 members participated
  - 8 female
  - 1 male



# Participant Demographics

<b>Length of Membership (Months)</b>	< 1 (1), 1 (1), 3 (1), 6 (1), 8 (2), 11 (1), 12 (1), >12 (1)
<b>Age</b>	26-30 (2), 41-45 (2), 51-55 (4), 56-60 (1)
<b>Gender</b>	Female (8), Male (1)
<b>Education</b>	Some College (1), Bachelor's (3), Master's (2), Juris Doctor (1), MBA (2)
<b>Job Title/Profession</b>	Attorney/College Professor, Administrative Assistant, Disabled, Information Risk Advisory, Marketing Consultant, Research Technician
<b>Internet Usage</b>	Daily (9)
<b>Computer Expertise 1=Novice, 7=Expert</b>	2 (1), 4 (3), 5 (4), 6 (1)



# Computer Skill

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Total	Description
3	You surf the web, send and receive email, and use basic applications, such as word processing.
4	You can modify basic settings in applications and are comfortable doing basic trouble shooting and maintenance, such as making system backups.
2	You are able to configure your computer hardware and software exactly to your needs and to make major system changes by yourself. Others come to you for help with computers.



# Appendix 1

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Welcome and Ground Rules



# Welcome

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- Thanks for coming and participating in this focus group for new members
- My name is Avram Baskin and I am a volunteer with the AMC's Boston chapter
- This focus group is part of the redesign process for the Boston Chapter web site
- You were invited to participate in this focus group because you are new members of the club and the chapter
- The focus group is being conducted to collect opinions and information from new members , to provide guidance to the chapter to help us make the web site more responsive to the needs of our members



# Ground Rules

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- Everyone's opinion is equal
  - The opinion of everyone who is participating in this focus group is of equal importance
  - In this room there are no right or wrong answers
- It's OK to disagree
  - It's OK to disagree with one another, but do so respectfully
  - Remember, we're all friends here
  - Please respect the opinions of all members of the group
- One speaker at a time
  - Only one person should talk at a time
  - Please do not interrupt another participant when they are speaking



# Ground Rules cont.

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- I'm interested in all opinions
  - I'm interested in the opinions of all members of the group
  - You do not have to answer every question
  - If some of you are shy or I want to know what you think about a particular question, I may ask you about it
- This is not a gripe session
  - Keep in mind that this is not a gripe session about the club or the chapter
  - If you have had a bad experience as an AMC member, I will be happy to discuss the problem with you after the session is over



# Ground Rules cont.

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- Trouble finding information
  - We do want to know if you have had trouble finding information about the club or the chapter that you believe has prevented you from getting the most out of your AMC membership
- We have a lot to talk about
  - We have a lot to talk about tonight
  - While I am interested in your feelings, opinions, and stories, because our time is limited, sometimes I may have to move to a new topic
  - Don't let me cut you off
    - If there is something important you want to say, let me know and you can add your thoughts before we change subjects



# Ground Rules cont.

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- Flip charts
  - I will be writing down summaries of your responses on this flip chart
- Recording and release form
  - The session will be recorded
  - Did everyone complete the release form?
  - If you have any questions about the release form or the recording of the session, please ask them now



# Ground Rules cont.

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- First names and summary report
  - We will be using first names only during the discussion
  - Everything you say is confidential
  - I will be writing a summary report, but your name will not appear in the report
  - What you say today will not be attached to your name at any point
- Offending me
  - Don't worry about offending me
  - I want to learn from you and find out what your opinions are about the type of information that would be most helpful to you
  - Please don't pull any punches



# Ground Rules cont.

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- Time limit
  - The formal part of the focus group should be over by 8:45 p.m.
  - There will be time at the end for you to provide additional comments in case something was not covered earlier in the evening
- Thank you!
  - As a thank you for your time and help, at the end of the session you will receive a \$5.00 Starbucks gift card
  - You will also be entered in a drawing for a \$100 American Express Gift Check



# Appendix 2

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## Recruitment & Participation



# Participant Recruitment

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- Participants recruited from member data provided by AMC for December, 2005
- Members contacted by telephone
  - Phone number included in member data



# Participant Recruitment

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- Members contacted based on proximity to focus group location (Script)
  - Total of 54 contacted
    - 20 in Waltham
    - 14 in Belmont
    - 19 in Watertown
    - 1 unknown



# Participant Recruitment

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- Mix of male and female members
  - 19 men
  - 28 women
  - 1 gender unknown



# Participant Recruitment

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- Issues
  - Not all member records include telephone numbers
  - Not all telephone numbers are current
  - A prior attempt to recruit using e-mail did not produce any participants



# Participation

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- 13 members agreed to participate
  - 3 men
  - 10 women
- 9 members participated
  - 1 man
  - 8 women



# Appendix 3

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Questions and Feedback



## Before we began...

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- During the check in, one of the participants asked how many chapters there are.
- From this discussion:
  - Participants did not understand the geography of the club
  - Some did not know there were chapters
  - Participants did not know they could go on other chapter trips
  - Some did not know they were in the Boston Chapter



## Why did you join the AMC?

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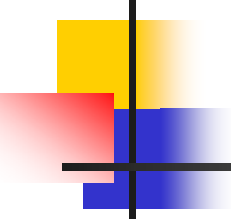
- Go on trips (All)
- Meet people with similar interests (All)
  - Participants did not think of AMC as a singles club
  - A participant mentioned that the club was suggested to her by a friend as a place where she could meet single men who liked doing the same activities she enjoyed
  - A participant mentioned that she was aware that the club was a mix of families and single people; she would not want to join a club that was mostly families
  - There was speculation about the number of singles who joined the club
- Get out into nature (All)
- Activities with other people (All)
- Ideas about things to do on the weekend (1)
- Lectures and speakers (participant specifically mentioned the speaker at the AMC annual dinner) (1)
  - One participant mentioned that she didn't know there were speakers
  - One participant wondered why the chapter stopped the monthly speaker series [after I mentioned we had one in the past]



## Why did you join... cont.?

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- Find new places to explore (All)
- Learn outdoor skills (6)
- Become active in conservation and advocacy (2)
- Meet people to network with for ad hoc recreational activities (4)



# From all sources – publications, web sites, and mailings – what do you think of the overall quality of the information provided by the AMC and the Boston Chapter?

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- There should be a master list of all trips and activities
- I haven't gone a trip yet because I can't find what I need
- "How tos" would be helpful – when to sign up for trips, what type of equipment is needed
- One participant mentioned that she doesn't get the magazine every month
- Some participants mentioned that they don't read the magazine
- One participant mentioned that she was unable to find the information about the New Member Nights in the MUD.
- Trips should be searchable by keyword
- Participants who have been on a web site could not differentiate the club and chapter site
- I've been on the web site and I've given up – I don't use it
- I have to spend an hour to find an activity I'm interested in
- Can different web sites with trips be linked
- It would be helpful to have a "bring a friend day" – would make joining less intimidating
- Participants don't understand what INTRO does or what the purpose is



## Overall quality of publications... cont.

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- Poor (1)
- MUD not best way to get the information out
- The only thing I look at in the magazine is the trip listings (1)
- Too many sources of information
- Don't read the magazine
- Print in MUD is too small
- Print is not the best way to get information out
- In the MUD, I found it difficult to find something to do this weekend
- Hard to find information you want – information overload
- Inexplicit directions for trips
- Activities not sorted by date
- It's difficult to find something
- Been on the web site, I gave up, I got frustrated
- Activities should be sorted by activity and date
- New member potlucks are intimidating
- Couldn't find dates for new member nights in MUD
- Don't understand trip listings (where is Crawford Notch)
- Trip locations should be more explicit
- Trips should be sortable by date and activity
- It would be helpful to have a printable version of the trip listings available on the web site



## Overall quality of publications... cont.

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- Participants were interested in trips that taught introductory skills
- Participants who have signed up for trips found it very intimidating to go on their first trip
- Participants suggested it would be helpful to call out trips that were good for beginners
- Much confusion about what INTRO means
- There is a need for a committee to meet the needs of new members
- Participants wondered if they were supposed to receive a welcome packet to help them understand their membership
- Give me something to figure out how this club works
- Participants were concerned about appropriate ages for trips
  - Can anyone go on a Young Member or 40+ trip
  - What about if you are older – over 50
  - Will there be trip participants in my age range
- Need for a place that explains what type of equipment is needed for different types of trips



## What sources do you check on a regular basis for the AMC activities and information you are interested in?

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- AMC Outdoors (5)
- MUD (6)
- Young Members web site (1)
- One participant went to the club site, but only used the link to the chapter site
- Some participants expressed an interest in using the web, if it was more user friendly
- There was agreement that the club web site is not user friendly
  - “tried and was discouraged”
  - “ran away screaming”
  - “I don’t like the design of the club site”
  - “My problem isn’t the layout of that, it’s that the information is hard to find
  - “It’s like you’re not in on the secret”
- One participant recommended the Boston chapter web site over the club web site
  - “the Boston Chapter was much better than the club web site”



## When you look to these sources, what types of information are you interested in?

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- Upcoming trips
- Courses
- Local day hikes that aren't too far away
- "I didn't know I joined the Boston Chapter, I just thought I joined the AMC club"
- Need better orientation resources
- Trips sorted by date (4)
  - "I want to know when I can go before choosing an activity"
- Trips sorted by activity first, then date (7)
- "It would be nice if you could sort trips both ways"
- Participants did not know about the "trip finder" on the club site
- If they did a search on the trip finder for Boston Chapter trips and not a lot of trips came up, they would lose confidence in the system
  - It would be helpful if trips in nearby chapters came up automatically
- Participants don't want to have to check more than one source for activities



## When you look to these sources... cont.

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- “I don’t want to have to know that there’s a Boston chapter and a Worcester chapter and a...”
- “Even if you explained the organization of the chapters and chapter trips in the web site, maybe 200 people would get it and 2,000 people wouldn’t have a clue”
- “If you’re not looking for the distinction [of being in a chapter] you might keep that in your mind but not be aware of it”
- “I didn’t know there were other chapters I could partake in. I just didn’t know that I could sign up for Berkshire, or Southeastern; I just didn’t know”
- Why can’t listings come up for all of the chapters
- You’ll figure it out, eventually
- “I’m looking for information being a new member”
- “If the goal of the Appalachian Mountain Club is to have a lot of members, but not a lot of participants, keep it the way it is”



## When you look to these sources... cont.

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- “If the goal of the Appalachian Mountain Club is to have a lot of members, but not a lot of participants, keep it the way it is. If they want a lot of participants, there’s a missing piece”
- “There’s professional staff?”
- “Does the professional staff do the MUD and the magazine”?
- “It will be easy for the chapter web site to be better than the club web site”
- One member stated that the club site is “esthetically pleasing”, and there was agreement, but there was also agreement that it’s hard to find information on the club site
- One member mentioned her difficulty finding information about the AMC annual meeting on the club site
- “People are finding out about things word of mouth, and they can’t get it verified”



## As new AMC members, what specific questions would you like to get the answers to?

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- What are the age ranges for club members
- How do you sign up for a trip
- What do activity levels really mean
- Why are there limits on group size for some activities
- What is “show and go”
- How do you become a leader
- When are the new member nights
- Does AMC’s insurance cover injuries to members if they are injured on a trip
- What is the ombudsman
  - Two people mentioned that they had bad experiences on trips
- Why do activities fill up so quickly
- What are the trip leader’s responsibilities
- It was agreed that a glossary and/or FAQ would be helpful
- Are there activities that provide hands on experience – on this winter hike we will learn how to snowshoe
- Information is power – an you’re holding onto it
- What are the protocols for signing up for a trip



## As new AMC members, what specific questions would you like to get the answers to?

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- Is there a leader rating system (but group discussion pointed out that this would not be appropriate; leader issues should be reported and handled administratively through the ombudsman
  - Two people mentioned that they had had a bad experience on a trip
- It would be helpful to have a system for rating activities (Applebrook is a great place to go for a trip)



# What information is most important to you – what information would you expect to see first when you go to the Boston Chapter web site?

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- Index or tabs for navigation
- Topics
- List of important meetings
- News
- Highlights for the month
- Spot for new members
- How to book a trip
- Why should I be a member (member benefits – chapter and club)
  - Interest in member discounts at outdoor stores
  - There was some sense that there are hidden benefits that members don't know about
- Search by keyword/by name/by date
- FAQ tab or button (maybe have a few)
- Photographs of “cool” activities and locations
- Contact information (would prefer straight e-mail, no form – people like it easy)
- Trip pictures showing smiles and people having fun – what kind of activities do we go on
  - Liked photo gallery on Young Members
  - “That’s where you see 40+ is way plus”
- Enhanced search
- Site map



## What information is most important to you... cont.

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- “40+ is kind of an odd cut off”
- “I’m surprised at the age range being older. People in there 20s and 30s are generally very active – why are they not joining this club”
- Boston Ski and Sports caters to the younger demographic
- “AMC is going to get older and older and its going to become more of a problem”



## What types of articles and news would you be interested in seeing on the Boston Chapter web site?

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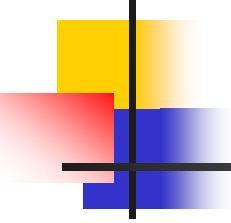
- There was not overwhelming interest in articles
- One person initially gave a flat out “no” and this was the opinion of at least one other person
  - “But an occasional trip report would be nice”
- Four people were interested in articles and news
- As long as articles are not the most important thing on the site
- Articles about AMC facilities
- One participant mentioned articles about issues like the Maine Wood Initiative
- Local issues around conservation or environmental advocacy
- But there was also an opinion from some participants that “I didn’t join the club to read any more news”
- “You are there” on a trip – what was it like, what were they doing



## What types of articles and news... cont.

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- But if there are facilities I can use I shouldn't be finding out about it in a newsletter
- But a nice puffy article about the facility would be good
- Tell us about the benefits, what are the facilities we can use
  - "I don't want to read about it immersed in an article about conservation"
- Not much interest in reading about "just another person"
- But interest in articles that provide insight into what it's like to go on a trip
- Monthly contributors – opportunity for members to volunteer and write about their experiences



## Is there information that you would not want to see on the Boston Chapter web site, or that should be given a prominent position on the site?

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- No ads (but if there are “AMC Partners” it’s OK to show that information
  - “Like if REI partners with AMC and we can get a benefit”
- I specifically asked what they thought about links to donate to the club – the participants thought this was appropriate
  - “As a non profit, you should absolutely have this information”



## Additional Comments

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- Where are places located
  - Provide a map that pops up when you click on a trip
- Bicycling cue sheet directory
- Where are the good trails for hiking (maps showing trail heads)
- Membership In a Bottle – what are the coupons
- Be able to register online
- Indicate when listed trips are full
- Why is trip location “privileged information”
  - They understand that for trip management purposes the leader may not want to post the exact start of the ride, but it would be helpful to know what town the activity starts in
- If the trip is full, allow people to show up to do there own hike (because it’s been preselected as an interesting hike)
  - “I’ve been denied to go on a lot of trips – tell me where it is, it sounds neat and want to go...sorry I can’t tell you that”



## Additional Comments

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- Where can you go to buy books about activities we are interested in
- As part of the discussion about where to go to buy books, someone mentioned that if you go to the Club bookstore you get a member discount. The other participants did not know this
- This participant also mentioned the coupon she got in her MIAB – participants were surprised that this existed, and wanted to know why they didn't get one when they joined
- One member mentioned that she thought the \$10 MIAB coupon could be used on chapter trips
- Forum or blog for member discussions, to meet people, and ask questions (require membership validation)
  - “This trip is sold out, does anyone want to head up to New Hampshire this weekend...”
- “I'm clamoring for access to information on the web”
  - Can we find a good solution that satisfies everyone