

Mobile Botanical Gardens Needs Assessment

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Methods Section	4
Results	7
Reference	16

Executive Summary.

Mobile Botanical Gardens is a non-profit organization that seeks to instruct the community about horticulture. With over thirty-three years of experience, the organization feels that they have a good product and that they want to grow. Their ambition stems from the desire to expand the vision to reach the surrounding Gulf Coast areas. The main opportunity is to expand their activities to meet the needs of a new audience. Expansion clearly means that clients need exposure, increased awareness, and more activities for the new customers. With these objectives in mind, we conclude that a good strategy is to develop a vision that encompasses the new target audience, communicate the vision to the Board of Directors and to the existing members, develop long-term partnerships that support reaching the vision, and to develop meaningful instructional products that allow new members to learn about horticulture without leaving the comforts of home. More detailed ideas are stated in the report.

Introduction

The Needs Assessment Process

The needs assessment process involves developing strategies that achieve the organizational goals of Mobile Botanical Gardens. The first step of the process is to gain commitment from key stakeholders¹ by holding one-on-one meetings. This part of the process gains commitment from all parties and defines opportunities for improvement. The second step involves analyzing the information from the previous step and brainstorming ideas to determine possible solutions for improvement. To verify our results, the next part of the process surveys members in order to gain their insight on the organization. Afterwards, the best strategies are reported to Mobile Botanical Gardens for consideration.

Definition of the Problem

Based on one-on-one discussions, key stakeholders suggest that the main concern is lack of exposure. They state that they are not seeing the anticipated growth in members or in their operating budget. The stakeholders feel that they render a lot of educational activities that the community enjoys, but they also believe that not enough people are aware of their location and their services.

Gap between Current and Desired Performance

The one-on-one discussions ultimately defined the performance gap. The following list shares details around Mobile Botanical Gardens' current performance:

- In the process of restructuring organization
- New board of directors
- Money is a concern
- \$617,000 operating budget
- Not enough signs to identify location
- Have 600 members
- Most of the income is earned through membership and plant sells
- Most of the members are over 50 years old
- Have weekly advertisement in the Mobile Press Register
- Have limited television advertisement
- Service Mobile County area

The following list shares details around Mobile Botanical Gardens' desired performance:

- \$3,000,000 operating budget
- Membership exceeds 1000 members
- More signs to identify location

¹ The stakeholders are Marion Drummond and Karen LaSarge

- More grant monies
- Developed partnerships with USA and Faulkner University
- More diverse membership
- Service Gulf Coast area
- Marketed CBT sells
- Developed on-line training

The performance gap involves gaining more members by diversifying the target audience, increasing publicity, developing partnerships, and increasing educational activities.

Stakeholders

For the sake of this report, the stakeholders are the director, Marion Drummond, and the assistant, Karen LaSarge. They diligently work to plan and to implement organizational strategies for Mobile Botanical Gardens. Some of the special programs offered by Mobile Botanical Gardens are plant sales and educational seminars. Additionally Mobile Botanical Gardens offers free tours of a rhododendron garden, a camellia winter garden, a fern garden, a Japanese maple garden, an herb garden, and a long leaf pine habitat.

Target audience

The target audience includes individuals who have desires to learn about horticulture. Data suggests that the majority of the target audience are retired and over the age of fifty. The audience is willing to volunteer in order to support the efforts of the Gardens.

Perceptions of need and their implications

The overall perception of need is the lack of exposure for the gardens. It can be implied that lack of exposure leads to lack of funding and lack of resources. The stakeholders are aggressive in finding ways to improve the gardens, while maintaining the sole purpose of educating the community. Since the stakeholders are a non-profit organization, they emphasize the desire to not focus on commercialism. They want to offer an oasis for the Gulf Coast community to learn about gardening and to enjoy the outdoors. Through their commitment to education, the stakeholders believe that if they can do a better job of sharing their activities to the community, while gaining the support needed to maintain a steady growth in membership.

Methods section

Description of the Need Assessment process

Our team uses a systematic process to discover ways to meet organizational needs. In our case Mobile Botanical Gardens desires to expand their target audience to include the Gulf Coast region. Our process begins by identifying the current situation. The current situation is defined by meeting with stakeholders. The stakeholders develop the scope of

the project. Secondly, we determine what success looks like by defining the desired situation. This also involves meeting with the stakeholders. Once the current and desired situations are defined, a gap analysis is completed. The gap analysis determines the strategy for achieving the desired situation. Designing the strategy involves observing the operation, interviewing stakeholders, and interpreting data from a membership survey. The analysis of the data highlights which opportunities are more effective in causing organizational change.

Data Instruments

Our data instruments are interviews and a survey. The interviews gain information about the problems. The following list shows the questions used in the initial interview with the stakeholders:

- What major concerns do you have about Botanical Garden?
- What *should* your employees be doing that they are not doing?
- What *should* be going on in your business that is not?
- What are your employees *doing* that they *should not* be doing?
- What is *going on* in your business that *should not* be going on?
- In a perfect world, how would you see your business?
- What effect does the problem have on the following? What effect will the problem have on the following?
 - Quality
 - Productivity
 - Cost
 - Time
- Who else would be a good source of information?
- What other information do you think would be helpful to know?
- When would be a good time to contact you again?
- What is the best way to contact you?
- Do you feel that our project will be helpful to you?

In addition to interview, a survey is used to reach a wider audience to gain insight from members. The survey was installed on Survey Monkey™ in order to facilitate the distribution of the survey to the members. The following list shows the questions used in the survey:

1. What is your age group?
 - A. 20 – 30
 - B. 30 – 40
 - C. 40 – 50
 - D. 50 and above
2. What is your gender?
 - A. Male
 - B. Female

3. What is your profession? _____
4. What is the highest educational level that you have completed?
 - A. high school
 - B. two-year college
 - C. four-year college
 - D. graduate school
5. What part of Mobile do you live in? If not in Mobile, write in area.
 - A. North Mobile
 - B. West Mobile
 - C. East Mobile
 - D. South Mobile
 - E. _____
6. How did you find out about Mobile Botanical Gardens?
 - A. Web site
 - B. Friends and Family
 - C. Newspapers
 - D. Phone book
 - E. Direct mail
 - F. _____
7. What services do you enjoy the most?
8. During which season do you visit Mobile Botanical Gardens the most?
9. Which services would you like to see in the future?
10. What suggestions do you have for improving Mobile Botanical Gardens?
11. Why did you become a member of Mobile Botanical Gardens?
12. How long have you been a member of Mobile Botanical Gardens?
13. Do you feel that your educational needs are fulfilled at Mobile Botanical Gardens?

Results section

This section involves sharing outcomes from our needs assessment methods. The first section discusses the results from the one-on-one meetings. The last section involves analyzing the data from the membership survey.

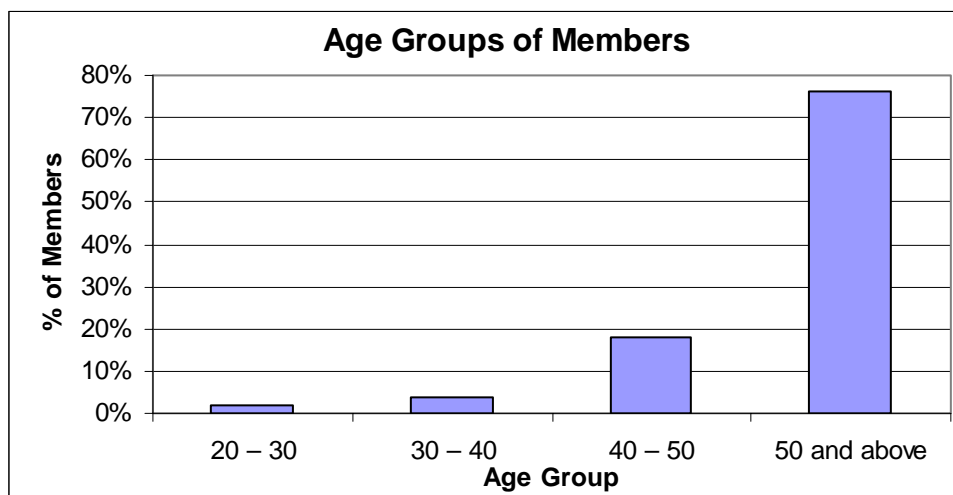
Possible Causes of the Problem Based on the One-On-One Meetings

Stakeholders declare that the organization has a desire to extend their services to the Gulf Coast region. Currently, their target audience is Mobile County. With an operating budget of over six hundred thousand dollars, the organization feels that their income is too small to meet their objectives. Ideally, they want to target three million dollars operating budget. In order to gain new clients and to enlarge their vision, the stakeholders feel that exposure is key. However, their challenge is to determine the best approach to gain exposure and to increase economic resources. If the main objective is to expand their capabilities to reach a broader audience, the stakeholders need to use media that supports their aggressive vision. Once they reach the target audience, the stakeholders need to communicate the organizational vision and the anticipated activities that they feel passionate about implementing in order to gain support. One area that we feel is a viable opportunity to reach members in the comforts of home is computer-based training and on-line instruction. This is a great opportunity to educate the population and to gain monetary resources to expand the organization.

Possible Causes of the Problem Based on the Results of the Survey

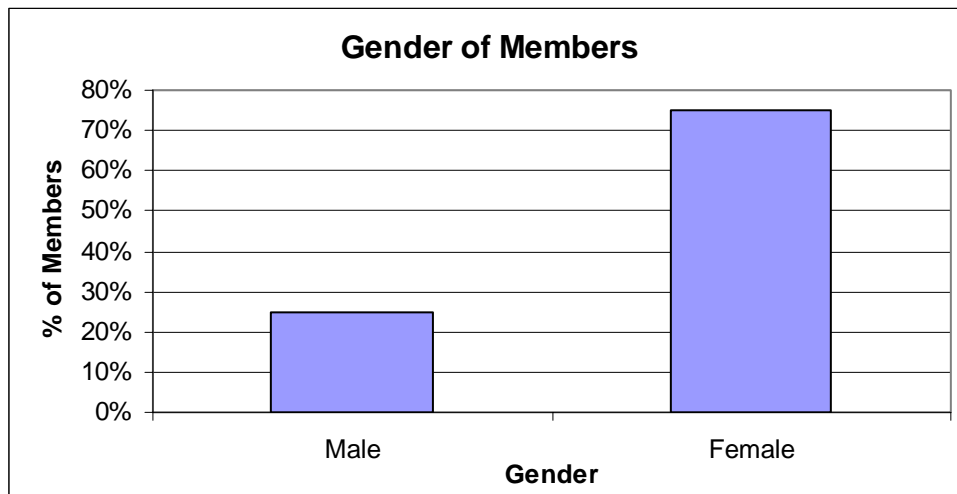
There are thirteen questions that were given to members to answer in order to get different perspectives on the problem. Out of six hundred members, one hundred and fifteen members responded to the survey. This represents nineteen percent of the membership population. For each question, a graph was created to find comparisons with the data. In some cases, categories were made in order to combine the data together. The appendix shows the raw data from the open-ended questions. The following list shows the graphs and major observations from the data:

Question 1: What is your age group?



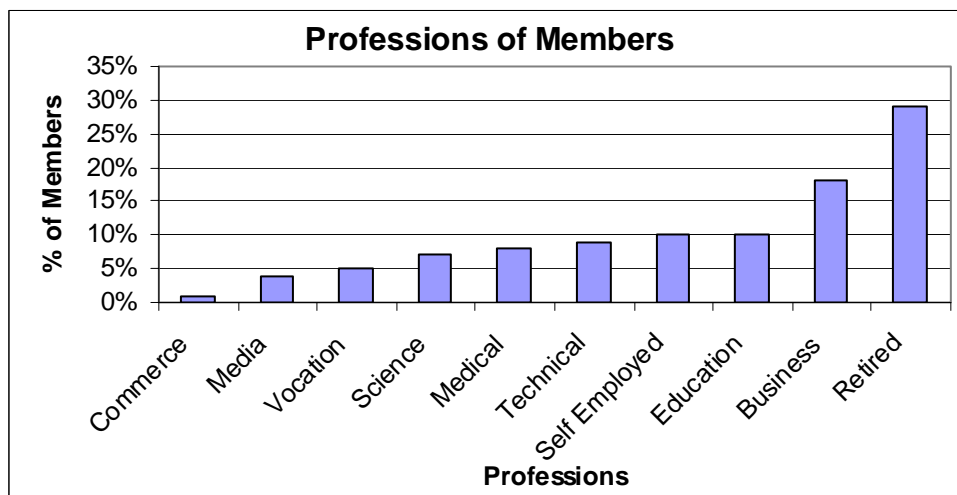
This data shows that seventy-six percent of the members are over fifty years old. This suggests that many of the members may have stable lifestyles that render opportunities for leisure. One suggestion is to diversify membership by delivering an educational product that attracts younger people. Additionally, develop some of the gardens for children. This will draw younger families.

Question 2: What is your gender?



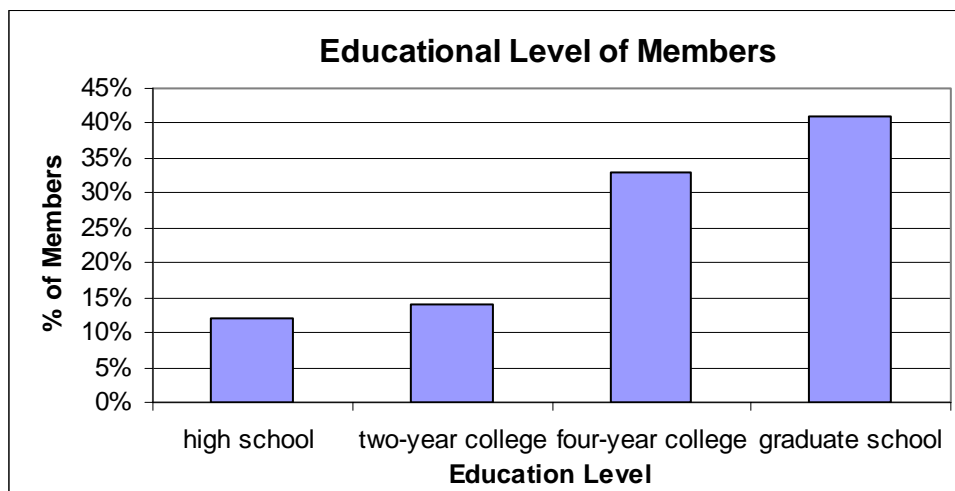
This graph shows that the majority of the members that answered the survey are female. One strategy may be to add landscaping activities to attract the males. However, more research is needed to determine ways to leverage the male population.

Question 3: What is your profession?



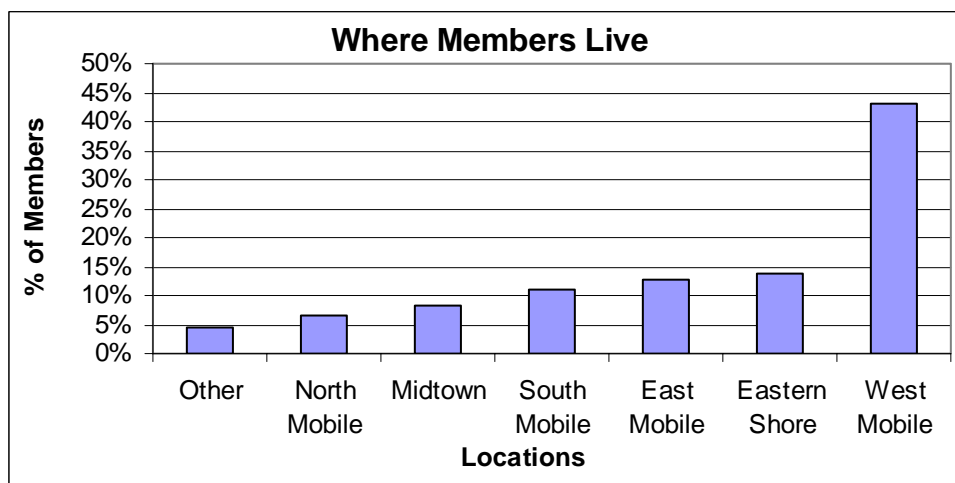
The survey shows that about thirty percent of the members are retired. This data suggests that the target audience are retired people. To increase this audience, Mobile Botanical Gardens may want to partner with retirement organizations in the Gulf Coast region. However, one caveat is to make sure that the facilities can accommodate older people. The Gardens needs to have accessibility for wheel chairs and golf carts.

Question 4: What is the highest educational level that you have completed?



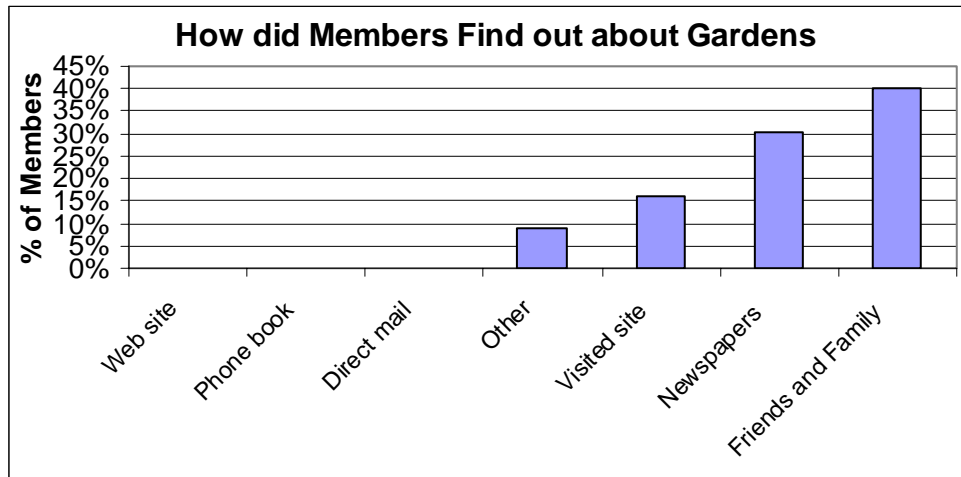
This data suggests that the majority of the members are highly educated. It is possible to combine the results from this graph with the results from questions three and questions one. The majority of the members are over fifty, highly educated, retired, and presumably have more time and money to support the Gardens. This indicates that there is a high potential to market educational materials.

Question 5: What part of Mobile do you live in? If not in Mobile, write in area.



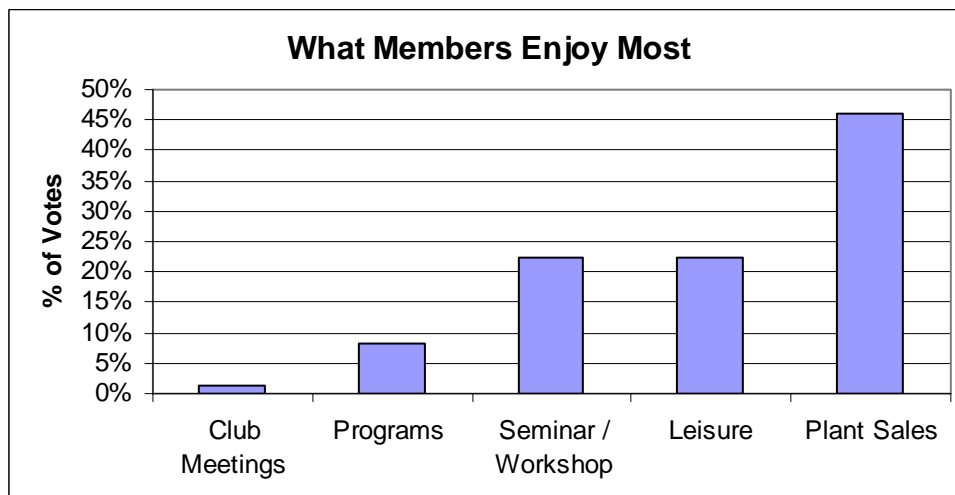
Close to forty-five percent of the members stated that they lived in West Mobile. Data suggests that there are opportunities expand membership in other parts of Mobile. It can be argued to first capture members in the unsaturated areas of Mobile before venturing out to the Gulf Coast regions. However, the results from the Eastern Shore show that there is a substantial market in the Gulf Coast regions.

Question 6: How did you find out about Mobile Botanical Gardens?



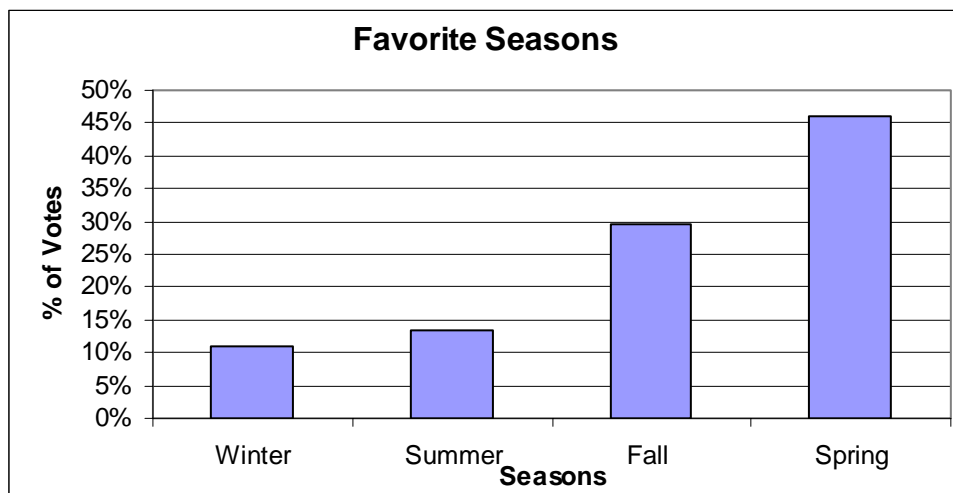
This graph indicates that the best way to advertise is by friends and family and by newspapers. However on the other hand, the worst way for new people to find out about the garden is by the web site, by the phone book, or by direct mail.

Question 7: What services do you enjoy the most?



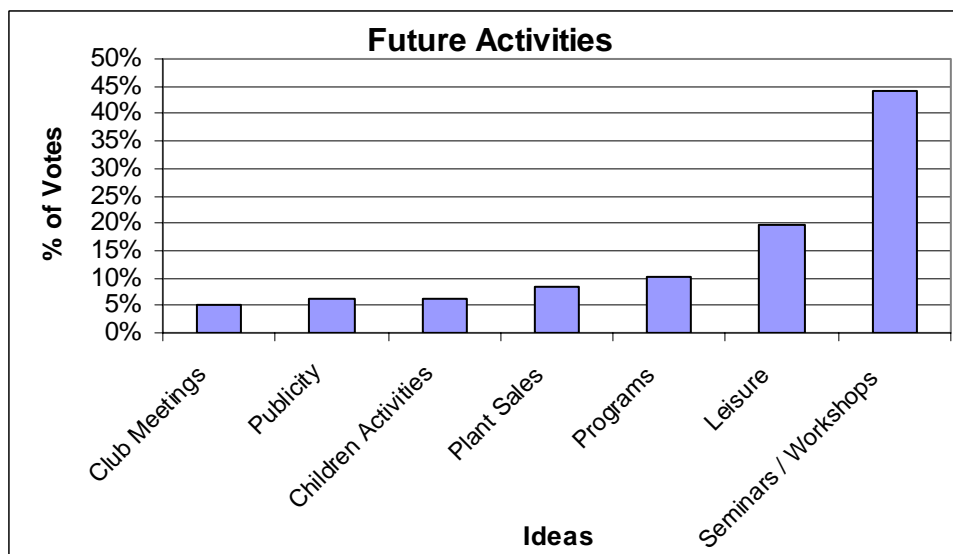
This graph suggests that the need for purchasing plants is being met. However there is still growth opportunity to develop leisure activities, seminars, and workshops.

Question 8: During which season do you visit Mobile Botanical Gardens the most?



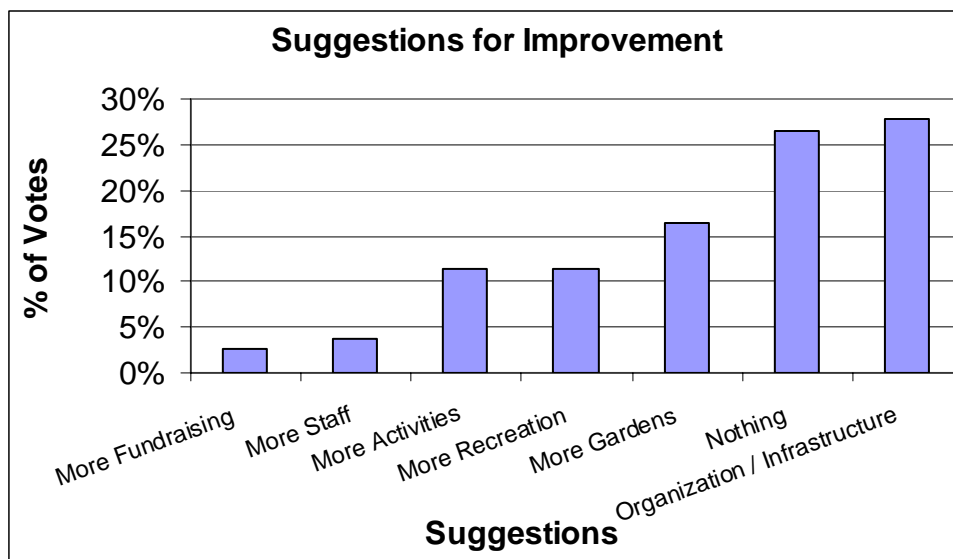
Spring and fall are the most productive seasons of the year. The data suggests that the Gardens should continue to focus their major activities in spring and fall, but also develop new activities for winter and summer. If members enjoy being outside in the spring and fall months, use the winter and summer months for educational seminars.

Question 9: Which services would you like to see in the future?



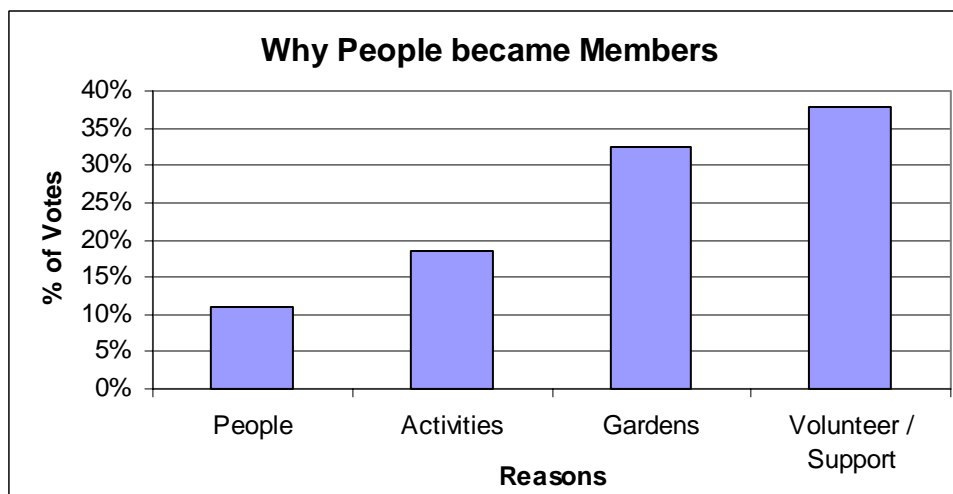
This graph shows that the greatest future need is the development of educational seminars and workshops. Interestingly, a lot of the members mention that more leisure activities are important. Another interesting observation is that some of the members mentioned the need to create family activities that include children.

Question 10: What suggestions do you have for improving Mobile Botanical Gardens?



The greatest need for improvement involves the organization and infrastructure of the gardens. This category involves optimizing the organization of the facilities.² Another interesting point is that a lot of the members are satisfied with the performance of the Gardens.

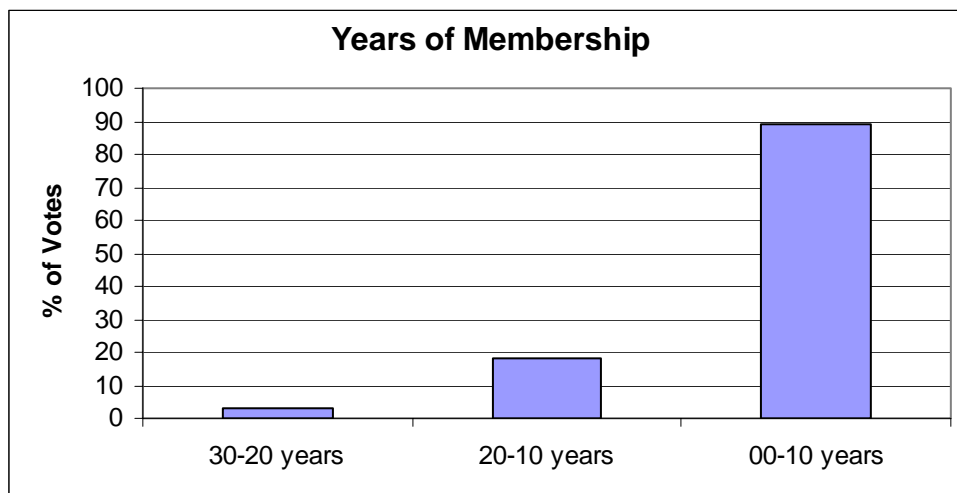
Question 11: Why did you become a member of Mobile Botanical Gardens?



Amazingly, the main reasons why people became members are not the gardens. It appears that the Gardens represent a community or social network of people. The Gardens can use the results by marketing more social activities to attract new members.

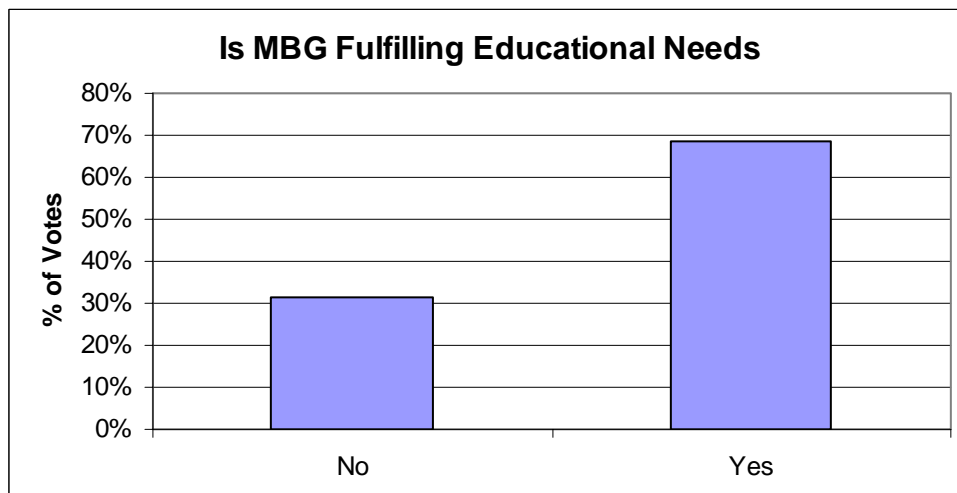
² Please refer to data in the appendix for more details

Question 12: How long have you been a member of Mobile Botanical Gardens?



The data suggests that the largest growth of members have been in the last ten years.

Question 13: Do you feel that you educational needs are fulfilled at Mobile Botanical Gardens?



The members enjoy the educational environment. Therefore, there is a demand for more educational product.

Priority of problems in the order that they need to be addressed

The following list shares the priorities in which the problems need to be addressed

1. Develop a vision and a mission statement that can be shared with you target audience. As we analyzed the materials on the website, we did not find the mission of the

organization. Since the direction of the organization is changing, it is important to convey a message as to where the organization is going.

2. Develop a plan to identify and to broaden target audience. Mobile Botanical Gardens wants to sustain high membership growth. Data suggests that the mobile market is not saturated. We believe that it is best to grow the Mobile market before venturing to other parts of the Gulf Coast. If the Garden decides to grow markets outside of Mobile, they will have to exhaust more resources without seeing the benefits.

3. Develop an advertising plan. Mobile Botanical Gardens has to reach every member in their target audience and compel them to join their exciting organization. Data supports the fact that newspapers and one-on-one conversation are the best way to find out about the gardens. The Gardens needs to network with other community organizations to gain new members. Advertisement in church bulletins and in newspapers can be feasible media. Most importantly, the organization needs to improve the signs that direct people to the gardens.

4. Develop a plan to expand their educational programs to reach a broader audience. Since they have the knowledge, develop CBTs that can be sold to gain resources for the organization.

5. Develop a pledge campaign. Once the vision is communicated, people will rally to help. The clients want to grow. Paint a vibrant picture that illustrates what growth looks like. People will pledge monies to achieve the vision.

6. Develop partnerships with surrounding colleges and universities. Most local universities have field botany classes. A partnership will allow students to use facilities as laboratories. Secondly, grant monies from the universities may be used to advance Mobile Botanical Gardens.

7. Develop activities that include young and old people. Some of the activities need to be centered solely on children. Develop part of the gardens that allow children to play and have fun. Also, make sure that all gardens are accessible to older people.

8. Develop a plan to hire more people. With more exposure, comes more work. Hopefully, more resources will allow the Gardens to focus on long-term projects that gain more benefits.

Reference

Rossett, A., (1999). *First things first*: San Francisco CA: Pfeiffer.