

Chief of Operations/Operations Sessions Coordinator - Annual Report 2021-22

Operations remained truncated in 2021 through to the Fall when F2F Operations were held in November and December.

The Executive considered the risk of operating in the Covid environment, considered the decline in infections in the last phase and the comfort level within the membership. It was decided to proceed with the November Ops Session but to only use mostly club modules. We were rewarded with a substantial and willing setup crew and a successful operating weekend, the first in 21 months. December followed. The layout was designed with an increased number of member modules and was as successful as November in terms of setup crew and general participation over the weekend. The volunteered member modules resulted in an interesting layout. During both sessions, all Covid protocols required by provincial health rules were followed with all members remaining healthy.

At the commencement of 2022, the next Covid phase put operations on hold until March. At this time, it was decided to call for operations on a month by month basis. Operations proceeded in March, April and May with a Rally size layout developed for the May Operations weekend.

On the volunteer side of the ledger, setup staffing remains a concern. While we had substantial turnouts for November, December and March, the enthusiasm waned slightly for April and May. The difficulty is that the first stages of the setup on a Friday afternoon continues to be handled by a small cohort of older retired members which is then grows to a workable crew by 17:00. As the layouts in the first four sessions recently held were smaller than a regular setup, the physical installation was completed generally by 19:30 to 20:00, with the populating process proceeding at that time but on occasion, not finishing until possibly 22:00. It was decided that, in order to allow the populating crew to finish earlier, those assisting the Freight Ops designer were to move from module setup to the populating activity after the dinner hour rather than wait for the layout to be finished. This seemed to work well except for the May operations, when populating staffing was inadequate. At that time both the layout setup and the populating went on until after 21:30.

"Automation" of the setup and staffing call was a significant change in the responsibilities to coordinate the setup and operating sessions. The process had been for the Operations Coordinator to email members asking for volunteers to cover the various positions listed in the Staffing Roster. As the replies were received they were logged in the roster following confirmation emails back to the responders – a labour intensive process. Additionally, reminders were sent periodically during the two weeks preceding an Ops Session to the membership reminding them of the need for a setup crew.

As there were concerns about whether sufficient members would turn out for the setup, members were also asked to confirm whether they would be present. Sufficient numbers was a condition to proceeding with the weekend. A spreadsheet was created to log times when individual members would be able to arrive which greatly helped the setup planning process.

and enabled the Executive to move forward with the November weekend. The initial spreadsheet was turned into a Google Sheets doc for the December operations and contained both the Setup roster and the Staffing roster. This single change greatly reduced the workload of the Operating Sessions Coordinator and continued to be used for the subsequent Operations weekends.

This practice will be continued as members are becoming used to the process and using it quite successfully.

The constant concern is how we may ease the workload on a small cohort of older members who consistently participate at the beginning of the setup process. The jeopardy is that these members may not always be available to initiate the setup process delaying when a layout can be completed, wired, populated and tested leading to successful operations for all.

I invite all members to share ideas as to how we can improve the setup process.

At the other end of the weekend, we are, on occasion, left with a smaller crew to complete the Takedown and like the scarcity of volunteers for Setup Foreman to spread the load, the Takedown Foreman's job has fallen to Steve Adamson for all of the five weekends since the resumption of operations. This activity may seem simpler than the Setup, but if it is not done correctly, we could not fit all existing modules back into the locker. We will be visiting this concern in more detail in September, so please stand by to become involved.

We have a great club with a growing and younger membership. This bodes well for the future of the club and to protect this hobby resource, we need to continually look at how we can spread the load, make our actions more efficient, ensure that the team works well together and that we support one another.

Respectfully Submitted

Robin Allardyce

Chief of Operations/Operating Sessions Coordinator

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