

Building an MC Fleet – by Jack Kern, 2/01/2014

Here are some thoughts that might help. These have worked for our RCYC fleet, going from 6 mc's to 32 mc's in 5 years.

1. You need numbers sailing, especially early in the rebuild process. This means you have to find people to sail borrowed boats, whether or not they ever buy an mc. People who sail are your friends. This requires assuring boat owners dings will be fixed.
2. Find a fleet captain who will communicate 2x a week, noting results, upcoming weather, and arranging race committee. You need to take charge of your fleet racing. Don't delegate this to your club.
3. Find good used boats for those members with noncompetitive boats. Eliminate all of these old boats from your fleet, even if you have to buy out and then sell these boats.
4. Either find a bank that will loan money to purchase used boats, or create a fleet account sufficient to purchase used boats. These boats should be capable of winning regattas. This means sail #1845 to 2300, so to compete, and still be cost effective to resell. Try to buy at a price that will allow you to provide a guarantee buy back at one year, for whatever reason. Emphasize the need for your fleet members to be loyal in reselling within the fleet
5. Find a pick up and delivery person to bring boats in. Don't worry too much about inspection. Most problems can be fixed, and with just a few exceptions, most mc owners are honest in describing their boats.
6. Create an ongoing instruction program directed at your lower level finishers. Once you eliminate the boat as a factor in poor finishes, it allows you to direct attention at improving skills. It does not make sense to put effort into building a fleet and then lose members every year due to insufficient coaching. Very important. Show them the fleet wants them to succeed.
7. Appoint a social director for fleet parties every 6 weeks or so, and award prizes for finishes during that series. Invite others from your club, non-mc sailors, to get a chance to see how much fun you have.
8. If your lake has a history of having to rescue turtled mcs, require all to use headboard flotation for every race. Nothing is worse than club members discussing having to use 2 boats to rescue a turtled mc at a recent club event.
9. Depending upon numbers competing, try to adjust the length of the weather leg to allow several boats arriving at the mark at the same time. More fun. More races. Suggest 3 minute starts.

I have been sailing an mc since 1994, and always wonder why fleets and clubs don't put more effort into trying to make racing successful for their fellow fleet members. If they have fun, you will have fun. Its not that complicated.

Cheers,

Jack Kern