

tools of the trade

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Take a Giant Step *Take a Giant Step: A Guide to Major Programs. Patrick G. Boyle and Sheila Mulcahy. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Extension, Division of Program and Staff Development, no date. 29 pp. \$1.50.*

Take a Giant Step contains a simple, but powerful, message: Every year every Extension worker should throw something that makes a splash.

In this “people profession,” it’s very easy to fill our days, weeks, months, and years with routine activities. The demands on us are great; and unless we make a real effort to control our time, all our resources will go into maintaining our present Extension program. Now, maintaining the Extension program is important, but it’s not enough if Extension and the Extension worker are to survive. To maintain Extension and to keep it growing demands new survival skills. One of these skills is planning, preparing, and producing *major Extension projects* every year.

This isn’t only a survival skill for Extension, in general, but also for each Extension worker. “By their works ye shall know them.” The Extension worker who wants to survive had better have some well-documented “works.” The “good old boy” who avoids getting people mad at him just won’t hack it in the years ahead. There must be more.

What is a major Extension project? The first requirement is that it’s visible—something that’s identifiable as belonging to Extension and, just as important, belonging to you. You and the project need to be identified together.

The project needs to be fairly large, large enough to make a splash. That means you’re going to have to set aside a good chunk of time to work on this project. And a part of your time will have to be spent on public relations for that project. We’ve been winking in the dark for too long.

The project should probably last less than one year for maximum effect, but shouldn’t remain a major project for more than two or three years. After that length of time, it becomes routine.

The project should consist of a major event or events that can result in a publication *and can be evaluated*.

Major Extension projects sound like a tall order. Actually setting aside a piece of time is probably the most difficult part of the task. We’re all skilled in identifying needs. We have the intelligence to select needs that have visibility. We know how to write objectives, select activities that will help us reach these objectives, anticipate and document results, and evaluate our progress toward meeting the objectives. This is really nothing new. Successful Extension workers have been doing this for years. That’s why, in large measure, they’ve been successful. They throw something that makes a splash and take credit for it.

For an excellent handbook that will help you plan, develop, and execute your major project, get a copy of *Take a Giant Step* from the University of Wisconsin-Extension. You and your Extension Service will benefit.

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