

# FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

## STICKY REUNION SITUATION

### DO YOU QUALIFY

March 2021

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#### The Situation:

A couple of our current planning team members want to “interview” family members who want to join the planning committee, to see if they are “qualified” enough to help with the planning. The rest of us don't think that's a good idea. What do you think?

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#### The Fix:



**Doug Harris**

This "sticky" situation is “just wrong” for a number of reasons:

1. This is not a paid position.
2. There is high risk of alienation and resentment for anyone who is rejected.
3. It sends a message that there is a hierarchy, an "us vs. them" factor in the family.
4. How do you establish the criteria for "qualified?" While education and traditional work experience may help, they are not the sole criteria for planning a reunion.

Instead, I would recommend that a clear statement of expectations and time requirements be drafted and shared with anyone who would be interested. It need not be long, but should be candid about such things as:

- The number of in-person, phone and/or zoom planning meetings.
- Hours projected to complete certain tasks.
- Availability to travel to sites being considered.
- Expectations re: phone and email contacts.
- Maintenance of records.

This way, some who may be considering being part of planning will self-select or self-remove themselves from consideration. Many aspects of family reunion planning require professional, business-like procedures the same as those in the corporate world, especially re: finances, communications, etc. But use of formal interviews is not one of them.

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#### The Fix:



**Suzanne  
Vargus Holloman**

Planning a reunion is a family effort, not a business project. All family members should be welcome to serve on the planning team.

I'm sure those family members that want to conduct interviews are suggesting it out of concern that the planning effort be as effective as possible. But interviewing those new members could alienate them resulting in negative feelings. Be thankful that you have members volunteering to help – many families would envy your situation!

There is nothing wrong with the chair of the planning team having a conversation with each one to welcome them and utilizing it as an opportunity to determine how they would best fit on the team. This should be standard protocol with any new members joining the effort. Find out what type of experience they have with event planning as well as how they see themselves contributing. In addition, ask about their job, talents, interests and hobbies to identify areas of expertise that match reunion planning needs.

Keep in mind that families need to be mindful of succession planning. The most common concern the Family Reunion Institute hears from families is the challenge of turning over the planning to the younger generation. If these new members are young adults, this is a great opportunity! The exposure to what is involved is important, and they can take on more responsibility with each reunion.

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