

# Board Study: Member Engagement

May 19, 2015

Looking five, 10, 15 years into the future, what do we want member engagement to look like for La Montañita? In this month's Board Study, we will consider where we want to be, and how to get there.

In the corporate world, 'engaging customers' is often in service of 'brand loyalty' – that customers will purchase products because of the brand, even if the competitors' products are better in terms of quality or price. While co-ops value a similar (but with important differences) sort of engagement with the idea of service to the co-op through shopping at the co-op, our recent values trade-off exercise showed that we want our members to have a more meaningful engagement with La Montañita. The following videos and texts will help inform our discussion at the Board meeting.

- To set the stage, re-read [Reinventing our cooperative democracy](#), the Sherwood & Wallace article that we looked at before the retreat. Is democracy currently a competitive advantage for our co-op? Why or why not?
- Watch Leslie Watson's video (7:24) [A Nested hierarchy of engagement](#). Where do we want our members to be in that hierarchy? How involved should members be with Co-op decision making? Does it depend on the nature of the decision? How does this fit with our existing governance structure?
- Watch the second half of the video [Better Outreach, Better Engagement](#) (starting at the 6:24 mark – The link should take you to the right part.) In the first half of the video Kari Bradley and Michael Levine discuss a member engagement process that was used to build support for a proposed expansion. In the second half, they explain how they used this to develop an ongoing engagement program. Could this approach be adapted and used by LaM? How could we avoid the pitfalls identified in the video, especially given our large and diverse membership?
- Read two short pieces on collective action by political scientist Hahrie Han. The first is [Moving from protest to power](#), a look at how to harness the power of people revealed in protests for the long battle to achieve change. [The second reading](#) is part of a Q & A with Hahrie Han on organizing vs. mobilizing. Though LaM is a different type of organization, some of the ideas presented here can apply. This is particular strikes a chord: "The highest engagement organizations in my study were successful because they were able to transform people's ability to act on their goals." How does La Montañita become transformative for its members?
- Most of the examples in the readings and videos above are about engaging people for a defined activity – to vote (on expanding the co-op, or for a political candidate), to be part of a letter writing campaign, etc. Most of the time, our engagement is something different. Emily Lippold-Cheney suggests a new vocabulary to help us think about these concepts in this video: [The Language of participation](#). (7:16)