

Developing a Contest Incentive Program from Scratch

Stan Zawrotny, K4SBZ FCG.Contesting@gmail.com



How many of you have participated in a contest in the last year?

How many of you consider yourself a frequently contester?

Interesting.



I am a member of the Florida Contest Group......Why else would I wear an **Orange Shirt**?

In January, on the FCG reflector, I made the following observation

"It seems that the number of members participating in contests is quite low, considering we have over 300 members."

Lengthy discussion

One morning, a few days later, I received an email from our Vice-President, **George,**, **K5KG**., asking me to call him.

He asked me if I would chair a committee to look into this.

It fit with my background as a Management Consultant, so I agreed

FCG Incentivization Committee

• Ric WO40

• John K9OU

• Jim KM4HI

Steve NN4X

Wolf NN7CW

Jim K8MR

Stan K4SBZ (Chairman)

A committee was formed

- to evaluate ways of **incentivizing** FCG members to participate in contesting.
- This committee will discuss and evaluate various **alternatives** and make **recommendations** to the FCG Officers.

We invited several active contesters from the membership and all accepted

Mostly names you recognize from contest summaries

Many of you don't know me.

Problem Solving

- 1. Define the problem
- 2. Generate alternative solutions
- 3. Evaluate and select an alternative
- 4. Implement and follow up on the solution

The Incentivization Committee went right to work.

We took a structured approach to the question

- 1. Define the problem
- Generate alternative solutions
- 3. Evaluate and select an alternative
- 4. Implement and follow up on the solution

This is my management consulting background showing up.

Define the problem

- Differentiate fact from opinion
- Specify underlying causes
- Consult each faction involved for information
- State the problem specifically
- Separate the problem into individual issues.
- Identify what standard or expectation is violated
- Identify both driving forces and restraining forces
- Avoid trying to solve the problem without data

The first step is always to **Define the Problem**.

That involves many activities:

- Differentiate fact from opinion
 - · There were a lot of opinions swirling around on the reflector
- Try to determine causes
- · Get other opinions
- Define what our expectations are
- · What are our driving and restraining forces?
- Try to find data that will shed light on the problem and help solve it.
- A lot to do and we didn't have a lot of time

Data Collection

- Membership Survey
 - Membership demographics
 - Contesting activities
- Analyze previous contesting participation
 - 3830Scores.com

Now, I won't say that we didn't do some problem-solving first, but we did try to **base our decisions** on data.

- We spent considerable time constructing a survey on SurveyMonkey
 - Although the committee was primarily interested in contesting activity, we were able to incorporate it into a general membership profile survey.
 - The club itself would benefit from the membership demographics and understanding where the membership was coming from.
 - 41 questions
 - · Went out to 252 members
 - 48% response (half that is considered good)
- Analyzed 2018's activities
 - 3830Scores.com
 - Excel spreadsheet

Non-Participation Assumption Validated

3830	Survey
27% of members	27% surveyed who said
participated in one or more contests in 2018	they contested at least frequently

As expected, we found that the assumption that the membership's participation was low was <u>validated</u>.

According to **3830**, only 27% of the club's membership participated in one or more contests in 2018,

Matches **almost exactly** the number who responded in the **survey** that they contested at least frequently

The low percentage invalidated those claims on the reflector that "We don't have a problem."

Problem Statement

"FCG would like to explore ways to increase the level of participation over the previous years' levels."

Constraints:

- No pressure
- Not competitive
- · Focus on motivation

This led us to the creation of our problem statement:

"FCG would like to explore ways to increase the level of participation over the previous years' levels."

The problem statement has these constraints

We didn't want to set an amount of increase. – No pressure

- We <u>won't</u> tell members that they have to get out there and participate in this **big** contest coming up.

We also wanted to develop something that **everyone could benefit** from – essentially a **non-competitive program**

Our **goal** was to find a way to **motivate** members to contest more, not create **another contest**.

What Are Others Doing?

- Facebook Groups
 - Ham Radio Operators
 - Contesting and DX'ing
 - Amateur (Ham) Radio
- Other Contesting clubs
 - Bavarian Contest Club (BCC)
 - Northern California Contest Club (NCCC)
 - Yankee Clipper Contest Club (YCCC)
 - DFW Contest Group

Not wanting to reinvent the wheel, we looked at what others were doing.

I posted a discussion topic on three Facebook groups asking what others were doing to incentivize members.

 Biggest response was "Why are they members of a contest group if they don't contest?"

We also looked at what other contesting clubs are doing.

- Although we didn't find a program that we could **copy**, we found many **good ideas**.
- We also identified several things that we did not want to do.

From this, we started to build a program.

Duration

- Ongoing
 - Accounting for past years?
- Annual
 - New motivation each year
 - Recognition at annual banquet

Duration???

- · Our first question
- · Other clubsboth
 - · On-going
 - Annual
- · On-going
 - When do we start?
 - What do we do about the past?
 - How do we motivate lower scorers after others leap out in front -- forever?
- Annual
 - Everyone starts out at zero on January 1st
 - New motivation each year
 - More suited to recognition at annual banquet

Possible Metrics

- Contest scores
 - Members with high scores are already rewarded in the contests
 - · Members with high scores are already motivated
 - Eliminating contest scores helps level the playing field
- Number of contests
 - · Could get credit with just one hour
- Operating time

Possible metrics to be used

- Spent a lot of time discussing metrics How do we measure participation?
 - Several opinions
- Contest scores
 - Members with high scores are already rewarded in the contests
 - · Members with high scores are already motivated
 - Eliminating contest scores helps level the playing fieldThe next metric we considered

One metric that we looked hard at was

- Number of contests
 - What constitutes "participation?"
 - Minimum hours How many? What was fair that wouldn't eliminate too much activity?
 - · Possible credit with just one hour
 - Credit for just showing up

- Could lead to "gaming" the program
- Not fair to those who operate long hours

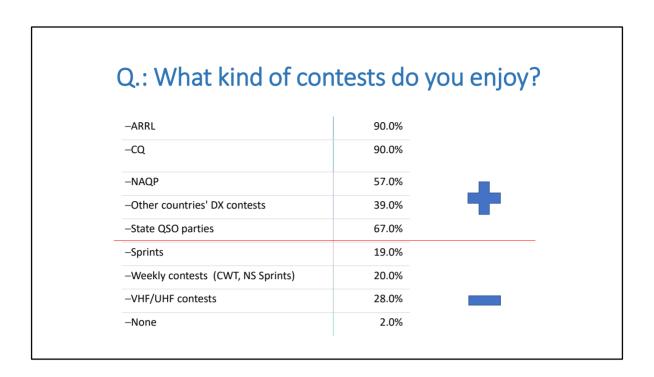
Operating time

- Butt-in-the Chair
- Same whether you are a Big Gun or Little Pistol

Which Contests?

- Other Clubs:
 - A few Majors
 - A select group of interest
 - Everything available

- We needed a list of approved contests
- Other clubs varied widely on what contests to include.
 - A few Majors
 - A select group of contests of interest
 - · Everything available
 - 3830scores
 - WA7BNM's Contest Calendar



- So we looked at our data: What do our members like?
- Survey of members' preference
 - Majors
 - · Other countries' DX Contests
 - · State QSO Parties

Approved Contests

- Major
 - ARRL
 - CQ
 - NAQP
- Minor
 - Other countries' world-wide DX Contests
 - Popular smaller contests
 - CWOps CW Open
 - World-wide Digi DX Contest
- State QSO Parties

We created a list of

- Majors
- Minors
 - · Other countries' DX Contests
 - A couple of other small but popular contests

CWOps CW Open

World-wide Digi DX Contest

State QSO Parties

Almost 150 contests

Why so many?

- Goal is to incentivize members to contest a lot, not just icertain big ones
- Sports analogy:
 - Want fans to attend all games, not just the big ones

Major Contests

	_
Contest	Date
ARRL 10-Meter Contest	Dec 14
ARRL 160-Meter Contest	Dec 6
ARRL Inter. DX Contest, CW	Feb 16
ARRL Inter. DX Contest, SSB	Mar 2
ARRL January VHF Contest	Jan 19
ARRL June VHF Contest	Jun 8
ARRL September VHF Contest	Sep 14
ARRL RTTY Roundup	Jan 5
ARRL Sweepstakes Contest, CW	Nov 2
ARRL Sweepstakes Contest, SSB	Nov 16
CQ 160-Meter Contest, CW	Jan 25
CQ 160-Meter Contest, SSB	Feb 22
CQ Worldwide DX Contest, CW	Nov 23
CQ Worldwide DX Contest, RTTY	Sep 28
CQ Worldwide DX Contest, SSB	Oct 26
CQ Worldwide VHF Contest	Jul 20
CQ WW RTTY WPX Contest	Feb 9
CQ WW WPX Contest, CW	May 25
CQ WW WPX Contest, SSB	Mar 30

38 Major contests throughout the year

- Different dates for different modes CQ WW DX Contests
- Seasonal versions
 - Stew Perry Topband Challenge
 - North American Sprints
 - ARRL VHF Contests
 - North American QSO Parties -- NAQP

Minor Contests

Contest	Date
All Asian DX Contest, CW	Jun 15
All Asian DX Contest, Phone	Sep 7
All Austrian 160-Meter Contest	Nov 16
ARI International DX Contest	May 4
Baltic Contest	May 18
BARTG HF RTTY Contest	Mar 16
BARTG RTTY Sprint	Jan 26
Black Sea Cup International	Feb 2
CQ-M International DX Contest	May 11
CQMM DX Contest	Apr 20
Croatian CW Contest	Dec 21
CWOps CW Open	Sep 7
DL-DX RTTY Contest	Jul 6
DMC RTTY Contest	Jul 20
DRCG WW RTTY Contest	Jun 8
Dutch PACC Contest	Feb 9
EA RTTY Contest	Apr 6
FT8 DX Contest	Apr 13
GACW WWSA CW DX Contest	Jun 8
His Maj. King of Spain Contest, CW	May 18
His Maj. King of Spain Contest, SSB	Jun 22
Holyland DX Contest	Apr 19

Contest	Date
Hungarian DX Contest	Jan 19
JARTS WW RTTY Contest	Oct 19
JIDX CW Contest	Apr 13
JIDX Phone Contest	Nov 9
Makrothen RTTY Contest	Oct 12
Marconi Memorial HF Contest	Jul 6
Mexico RTTY International Contest	Feb 2
Oceania DX Contest, CW	Oct 12
Oceania DX Contest, Phone	Oct 5
OK DX RTTY Contest	Dec 21
OK/OM DX Contest, CW	Nov 9
OK/OM DX Contest, SSB	Apr 13
Portugal Day Contest	Jun 8
RAC Canada Day Contest	Jul 1
RAC Winter Contest	Dec 28
REF Contest, CW	Jan 26
REF Contest, SSB	Feb 23
RSGB IOTA Contest	Jul 27
RSGB IOTA Contest	Jul 27
Russian DX Contest	Mar 16
Russian RTTY WW Contest	Sep 7
Russian WW Digital Contest	Oct 5

Contest	Date
SARTG WW RTTY Contest	Aug 17
Scandinavian Activity Contest, CW	Sep 21
Scandinavian Activity Contest, SSB	Oct 12
SCC RTTY Championship	Aug 24
South America 10 Meter Contest	Mar 9
SP DX Contest	Apr 6
SP DX RTTY Contest	Apr 27
UBA DX Contest, CW	Feb 23
UBA DX Contest, SSB	Jan 26
UBA Spring Contest, CW	Mar 3
UBA Spring Contest, SSB	Mar 17
Ukrainian DX Classic RTTY Contest	Jun 15
Ukrainian DX Contest	Nov 2
Ukrainian DX DIGI Contest	Jun 22
UN DX Contest	May 18
VOLTA WW RTTY Contest	May 11
WW Digi DX Contest	Aug 31
YO DX HF Contest	Aug 24
YU DX Contest	Apr 20
Yuri Gagarin International DX Contest	Apr 13

Many DX contests sponsored by clubs in other countries

Most provide an opportunity to:

- Work more DX
- Get awards in non-host country categories

Most Popular Contests (YTD)

(10 or More Logs)

Florida QSO Party	49
IARU	45
CWOpen	38
NAQP CW - Winter	37
ARRL DX CW	37
CQ WW WPX CW	33
NAQP CW - Summer	28
ARRL DX SSB	23
NAQP SSB - Summer	23
CQWW VHF	22
ARRL RTTY Roundup	20
ARRL June VHF	19
NAQP RTTY - Summer	17
NAQP SSB - Winter	17
NAQP RTTY - Winter	16
CQ WW RTTY	16
RAC Day	15
CQ WW WPX SSB	15
IOTA	15
WAE CW	13
WWDigi	13
CQ 160-Meter Contest CW	13
CQ WW RTTY WPX	12
Alabama QSO Party	12
Tennessee QSO Party	11
Texas QSO Party	10
Kansas QSO Party	10
Ohio QSO Party	10
NCCC Sprint	10

Most Popular Contests – so far

- 10 of more logs
- Of course, Florida QSO Party is on top
- IARU also way on in front
- Mostly Majors
- Also popular
 - CWOpen
 - QSO Parties
 - IOTA
 - · World-Wide Digi
 - Worked All Europe
- Even a VHF contest
 - ARRL June VHF

Non-Approved Contests

- Non-worldwide contests
 - Many RSGB contests, SARL contests,
- Short contests 4 hours or less
 - Weekly "practice" contests
 - Phone Fray, Cwops Mini-CWT Test, SKCC Sprint, NCCC RTTY Sprint, etc.
 - Most sprints
- Club Member contests
 - 10-10 International, PODXS 070, Fists, FOC, etc.
- Field Day

A large number of contests were not approved......to the dismay of members who enjoy them

- Non-worldwide contests
 - · Have local flavor
- Short contests 4 hours or less
 - Weekly "practice" contests
 - Phone Fray, Cwops Mini-CWT Test, SKCC Sprint, NCCC RTTY Sprint, etc.
 - Most sprints
 - Too many to be practical
- Club Member contests
 - 10-10 International, PODXS 070, Fists, FOC, etc.
- Field Day
 - Most hams operate with their local club stations
 - · Technically it's an event, not a contest

Contests: October 2019

		Start o	f Contest			Mode	es
Contest	Weight	Date	Time	CW	SSB	RTTY	Other Digital
Oceania DX Contest, Phone	4	Oct 5	0800Z		Х		
Russian WW Digital Contest	5	Oct 5	1200Z			х	x
California QSO Party	7	Oct 5	1600Z	х	Х		
Stew Perry Topband Challenge	10	Oct 9	1500Z	Х			
Makrothen RTTY Contest	5	Oct 12	0000Z			х	
Nevada QSO Party	7	Oct 12	0300Z	х	Х	х	х
Oceania DX Contest, CW	4	Oct 12	0800Z	Х			
Scandinavian Activity Contest, SSB	5	Oct 12	1200Z	Х			
Arizona QSO Party	7	Oct 12	1600Z	х	Х	х	
Pennsylvania QSO Party	7	Oct 12	1600Z	Х	Х	Х	x
JARTS WW RTTY Contest	4	Oct 19	0000Z			х	
New York QSO Party	7	Oct 19	1400Z	х	Х	х	X
Worked All Germany Contest	8	Oct 19	1500Z	Х	Х		
Illinois QSO Party	7	Oct 20	1700Z	Х	Х	х	x
CQ Worldwide DX Contest, SSB	10	Oct 26	0000Z		х		

Approved contests for this month – A typical month

- Two majors
- 7 State QSO Parties
- Modes something for everyone
 - 8-10 each for CW, SSB, RTTY

Contest Weights

Contest Type	Weights
Major	10
Minor	5
State QSO Parties	7
Bonus (FQP, ARRL 10-Meter Contest	20

Established Contest Weights – encourage more participation in certain contests while giving credit for others

- Major 10
- Minor 5
- State QSO Parties 7
- Bonus 20 Special significance to FCG
 - Florida QSO Party
 - 10-Meter Contest
 - FCG always tries to make a good show in this one

Scoring

- Metrics
 - OpHours
 - From 3830Scores
 - Contest Weight
- Contest Points = OpHours x Contest Weight
- Total Points = Sum of Contest Points

Having our metrics defined, we developed a Scoring Algorithim

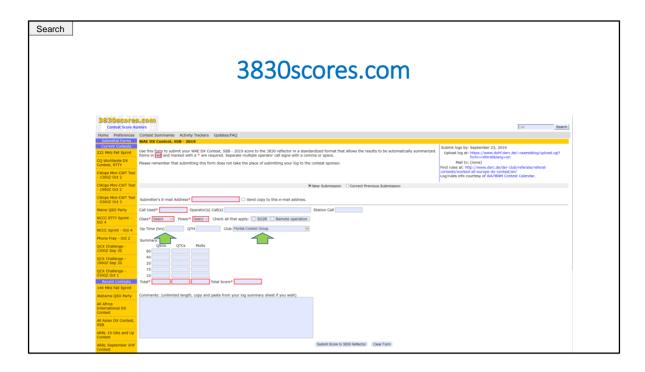
- Metrics
 - Operating Hours (BIC)
 - Contest Weight

Scoring

OpHours x Contest Weight = Contest Points

Sum of Contest Points = Total Points

Simple, now that we have it.



We decided to use 3830scores. Com for input rather than develop our own

- Already in use by most contesters
- Didn't want members to have to input to still another source

In order to receive credit, contest results must be submitted to 3830scores.com

Op Time Florida Contest Group

3830 records are not "clean"

-Require manual editing

Delete non-Approved Contests Hours/minutes vs. decimal Multi-Ops /M /P suffixes

Example: K4SBZ – As of 1 Sep 2019

Contest	Weight	OpHours	Points
7th Call Area QSO Party	7	2.66	19
ARI International Contest	5	1.00	5
ARRL DX SSB	10	16.50	165
ARRL RTTY Roundup	10	6.00	60
CQ WW WPX SSB	10	17.23	172
Florida QSO Party	20	17.2	344
IARU	10	2.75	28
Indiana QSO Party	7	2.00	14
IOTA	5	6.00	30
Mississippi QSO Party	7	1.00	7
Missouri QSO Party	7	1.00	7
NAQP RTTY - Summer	10	5.33	53
NAQP RTTY - Winter	10	2.00	20
NAQP SSB - Summer	10	8.50	85
NAQP SSB - Winter	10	10.00	100
New England QSO Party	7	1.50	11
Total		100.67	1120

Using an Excel spreadsheet with pivot tables, I am able to generate totals for each member

For example......Contest....Weight....OpHours.....Contest points

Can also calculate averages and other statistics.

Recognition

• "Frequent Flyer" plateaus

Points	Level
100-499	Bronze
500-999	Silver
1,000-1,999	Gold
2,000-2,999	Platinum
3,000+	Diamond

Using the **history** from the **2018** activities as a **prototype**, we established **plateaus** for **recognition**

- Resembling a Frequent Flyer Program
- Motivate members to attain the next level of recognition

Bronze

- Minimal effort
- 1 or 2 contests

Silver

- Occasional operation

Members are not ranked – only awarded

levels Gold

- A frequent contester

Platinum

- Serious contester

Diamond

- One of a few

More Motivation

• FCG Annual Banquet door prize tickets

Level	Award
Bronze	Certificate
Silver	1 ticket
Gold	2 tickets
Platinum	3 tickets
Diamond	4 tickets

Annual FCG Banquet at Hamcation

Large drawing – many prizes

Every attendee receives a ticket

- Can buy more

Additional tickets awarded according to level

Must be present to win a drawing <Therefore>

Must attend banquet to receive additional ticket award

Reporting

- Motivation
 - Frequent reporting of status is essential
- Monthly report to all members
 - Each participating member's status
 - Not ranked
 - Attainment of new levels
 - Statistical achievement of the group
 - Averages
 - Percentages
 - Upcoming contests

Frequent reporting of status is essential to motivation

- Keep the program on the minds of members

Member status list is not ranked – sorted by callsign only

- No one is a few points better than someone else

Monthly Report

- FCG Frequent Contester Program (FCP) Monthly Report
 - Part 1 October RadioSport Highlights
 - A summary of the approved FCP contests that are scheduled for the coming month
 - Part 2 FCG Member's Achievements
 - A report of significant FCG members' achievements in the program
 - FCP Scores
 - A list of the total scores of all members who have contested this year
 - Not ranked
 - · Also maintained on the website
- Motivation & Planning
 - · Combined status information
 - Allows members to see what they need to do to reach the next award plateau
 - · Contest information
 - Enables members to plan how to achieve that goal in the coming month

Status - Motivation

Planning

Weekly Report

```
[FCG] WEEKEND RADIO
... from WA7BNM ...
IARU Region 1 UHF/Microwaves Contest
YLRL DX/NA YL Anniversary Contest
Russian WW Digital Contest Oct 5, 1200Z *
International HELL-Contest
Oceania DX Contest, SSB Oct 5, 0800Z *
UBA ON Contest, SSB
SA Sprint Contest
RSGB DX Contest
TRC DX Contest
California QSO Party
                          Oct 5, 1600Z *
SKCC QSO Party
FISTS Fall Slow Speed Sprint
Peanut Power QRP Sprint
* FCG FCP designated event
73/OJ - Frank ( K4EJ )
```

Another email report to keep the program on the minds of members.

Helps with the short-term planning

Rules

- Purpose: Rewarding for participation
- Time Period: Calendar year
- Eligible Contests: Listed in Appendix
- Scoring
 - Total Score = Sum of (Individual Contest Op time * Contest Weight)
 - Op Time & Florida Contest Group recorded in 3830
 - Exceptions: Multi-Op & "Other Club" reports
 - Multi-OP: Contest Score / Number of Ops
- Plateaus
- · Reporting
- Awards
- · Contest Schedules
 - By Mode

Rules

This all comes together in the rules—(These are things that we have already talked about):

- Purpose: A means for <u>rewarding</u> FCG members for their active <u>participation</u> in contests.
- Defines Eligible contests and their schedule
- Scoring
- Must enter OpHours and Florida Contest Group on 3830
 - Exceptions
 - · Multi-Op with non-FCG club
 - Part-time with other club (e.g., Snowbirds)
- Multi-ops

- Plateaus
- Awards



The big question: Does It Work?

- Major development effort
- Encompasses entire club
- Major record-keeping effort

2019 <u>YTD</u> vs. 2018

	2018	
Logs	412	
Contests	71	
Members Participating	88	
% of Total Members Submitting Logs	27%	
Op Hours	5,310	
Average Hours per Call	60.34	
Average Points per Call	732.78	
Average Contests per Call	9.30	
Median Contests per Call	2	
Most Contests by Member	20	

As of 10/1/2019

Is there any improvement?

Last years totals and averages.....

2019 YTD vs. 2018

	2018	2019 – YTD
Logs	412	818
Contests	71	105
Members Participating	88	142
% of Total Members Submitting Logs	27%	46%
Op Hours	5,310	6,817
Average Hours per Call	60.34	48.69
Average Points per Call	732.78	460.60
Average Contests per Call	9.30	5.84
Median Contests per Call	2	3
Most Contests by Member	20	47

As of 10/1/2019

Is there any improvement?

YTD Compared with all of last year:

- Double the logs
- Many more contests 29 more to go this year
- 62% increase in members participating
- More Op Hours with 3 months left Forecast 65
- Expect Average Points to drop with more occasional contesters Forecast 612
- Forecast number of contests to average above 8
 - Median (Half above half below) increased
- · Contests by Member
- Last year we had several contesters operating in 18-20 contests

- That's been blown away with two already above 40.
- Forecast final count to be above 60 contests in 52 weeks

Any improvement??



So, is the program working?

I may be biased, but I would say......





Is there any thing more that we can do to incentivize members to participate in contests?

Q.: Why do you contest?

- It's fun
- It's challenging
- It's competitive
- It's exciting
- It enables me to work more DX
- It's rewarding

In our survey, we asked

Q.: How Often Do You Contest?

As often as possible	18.0%
-Regularly	22.0%
-Frequently	14.0%
-Occasionally	42.0%
-Never	4.0%

We also asked.....

Responses are about what we would expect.

--As often as possible 18.0% --Regularly 22.0% --Frequently 14.0% --Occasionally 42.0% --Never 4.0%

These are the ones that we should be focusing on.

How can we motivate this nearly half of our membership?

Q.: What, if anything, keeps you from contesting or from contesting more?

-Family obligations	41.0%
─I don't think my antennas are good enough	29.0%
−I don't have time	22.0%
-None	19.0%
Other (please specify)	17.0%
-HOA limitations	16.0%
-Business Obligations	14.0%
-Other hobbies	12.0%
-Religious obligations	8.0%
-Health issues	7.0%
-My scores would be too low to submit	5.0%
-I would rather do something else	4.0%
-I am afraid that I will make mistakes	3.0%
-I don't think I could compete	3.0%
─I don't have a contesting logger	2.0%
-I don't know how to contest	1.0%
-The rules are too complicated	1.0%
−I tried it and didn't like it	1.0%
-Sports obligations	1.0%

So we asked what the barriers are...

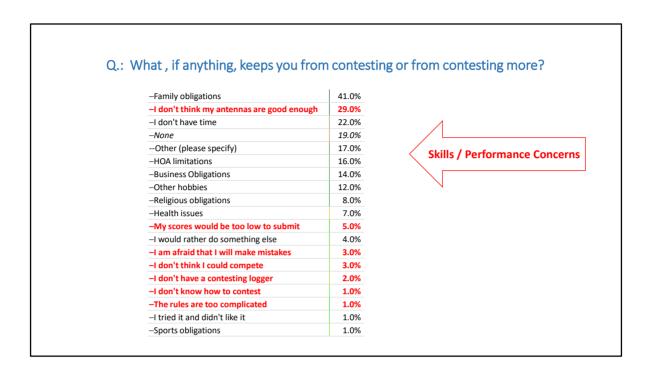
There are many barriers that we can't do anything about

Family

Time

Work

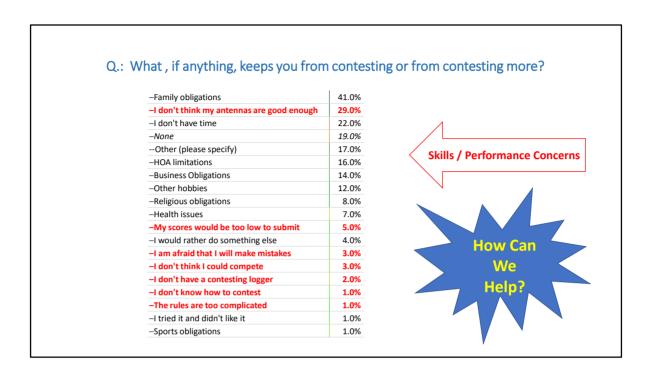
Religious obligations



There are many barriers that have to do with the operator's skills or hesitations

Some are just reluctant

Others are excuses for not being motivated..



Discussion......

Suggestions?

What can we do to help members overcome these obstacles?

