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Why do you want to run for the AMGA Board of Directors?

I have been involved in the AMGA on some level for a number of years.

At first I was involved as a student on the guide courses and attended the annual meetings. I became a certified rock guide, and following that I became a Single Pitch Instructor Program Provider. Then in 2008, I moved into a management position at an AMGA Accredited Guide Service. And finally, I became part of the team to write a textbook for the Single Pitch Instructor program.

Each of these experiences has provided me with a different perspective on the AMGA, on what it does and how it operates. And indeed, over the years that I've been involved I've seen a handful of things that concern me greatly. And while I know that I would be only one voice, I will bring the following issues to the table at board meetings.

First, it's my belief that if independent guides and guide services can't come together in a unified way through the AMGA, then the goal of credential based access on public lands is dead on arrival. Land managers hear things from a lot of different sources, and until there is a unified message coming from all members of the AMGA, the plod forward will continue to be painfully slow.

Second, I have concerns about the implementation of the new accreditation rules. I worry that if these rules are implemented in such a way that a number of accredited guide services lose their accreditation that there will be a serious backlash. Such a backlash could ultimately hurt the AMGA's image while providing power and ammunition to competing guide organizations. Many guide services – especially concession holders – have very close relationships with land managers and if enough of them are injured by the implementation of these rules, there could be serious and long term damage to the brand of the AMGA with land managers.

Third, I believe that the AMGA currently doesn't serve every aspect of the guiding community equally. For example, there are no courses or certifications for guides who work solely on glaciers and who don't work on rock.

This lack of equality also exists with certified instructors compared to certified guides. We have repeatedly seen highly qualified individuals certified at an instructor level who have run for the board of directors, but who have not been successful. We have an absolutely tremendous resource of business, not-for-profit, educational and legal knowledge amongst certified instructors throughout the country. I am concerned that there is a trend amongst some highly certified AMGA members to undervalue those who are not as highly certified. It's time for us to dig deeply into the membership and to not only find those people who can contribute at a higher level, but to also make sure that the needs of the certified instructors are being met as well.

And lastly, as a Single Pitch Instructor Program Provider, I understand the desire to impart knowledge to young and new instructors and I understand the dedication that it takes to run these courses and exams. There is a movement to separate the courses and exams, to have the exams run directly by AMGA staff members instead of by contractors.

I am concerned that such a move would decrease the number of exams available for SPI students throughout the country, specifically due to the fact that the AMGA has limited land-use permits. SPI candidates would have to travel greater distances in order to certify or re-certify, adding unnecessary expense. Additionally, dedicated providers would lose a portion of their income. Current providers are doing a very good job running SPI courses and exams. I feel strongly that this program should continue to be run by contractors, overseen by the AMGA, instead of by the AMGA itself.

What are your qualifications?

- Mountain Guide, 2000-Present
 - Formerly the lead guide in Red Rock Canyon for the American Alpine Institute, I have also professionally guided in the Cascades, the Sierra, in Joshua Tree National Park, in the Coast Range of British Columbia, in the Alaska Range, as well as in the Andes of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru.
 - AMGA Certified Rock Guide

- Director of Operations at the American Alpine Institute, 2008-Present
 - Supervise 40+ guides throughout the year, oversee a small office staff, develop trip itineraries, develop course curriculum, develop marketing strategies, manage land use permits, meet with land managers, lobby for recreational and guided use of public lands, and oversee AAI's social network.
 - Of specific interest to the AMGA is the fact that I manage 24 different land use permits. These include state parks, city parks, forest service, BLM, national parks, provincial parks, and land tenures. As a result, I have a strong understanding of how land management works in the United States and Canada. This unique understanding of a an extremely diverse group of land

managers provides me with a great deal of insight what kinds of changes concerning access for guides are and are not realistic.

- **AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Program Provider, 2008-Present**
 - In 2007, I became a program provider for the Toprope Site Manager Program, which transitioned into the Single Pitch Instructor Program in 2008. Since I started, I have worked with scores of students on both instructor and guide tracks and feel that I have a strong understanding of the needs of those who are just starting their guiding or instructional careers.

- **Outdoor Writer, Author, Entertainment Writer and Playwright**
 - Co-author of Washington Ice: A Climbing Guide and Single Pitch Rock Climbing: The AMGA Manual.
 - Author of Fun Climbs Red Rocks: Topropes and Moderates.
 - Author of dozens of outdoor, entertainment and film criticism articles for magazines, newspapers and websites throughout the U.S. and Canada.
 - Author of dozens of plays, which have been published in several anthologies and have been produced throughout the U.S. and Europe.

- **Volunteer with Bellingham Mountain Rescue, 2011-Present**
 - Have participated in a number of rescues and recoveries between 2011 and the present.
 - Regularly run training programs for the Bellingham Mountain Rescue Council.
 - This organization is a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity.

- **Mt. Erie Climbing Committee Member for Anacortes Community Forest Lands, 2009-Present**
 - One of a small group of people that oversee the politics of climbing activities on Mt. Erie and “interpret” them for the city council.

- **Board of Directors, Las Vegas Climbers Liaison Council, 2002-2008**
 - Worked with a small group of dedicated activists to better the relationship between land managers and the climbing community, to facilitate conversations and management of fixed anchors and anchor replacement, and to create opportunities for locals to be involved in stewardship projects.
 - This organization is a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity.

- **Producer, Poor Playwright’s Theater, Las Vegas, 1999-2002**
 - Oversaw play submissions and theatre bookings.
 - This organization was a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity.

- **Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Nevada, Las Vegas – 1999-2002**

- Taught Theatre 101, Playwriting, Directing, Acting and Senior Adult Theatre.
- High School Drama and English Teacher, 1995-1999

How will you work with the board of directors?

One of the biggest problems that I see with the AMGA is a lack of unity. In some ways this is to be expected because members are often business rivals.

It is my belief that the AMGA will be a far more effective organization if the membership can come together (i.e. guides from the same regions, independent guides and guide services). The place for unity to start is with the board of directors. It's important for the board to demonstrate that they can work together for common causes that are good for all guides.

It is also my belief that the best way to be effective is to treat everybody with respect. If guides feel respected by their peers, they are far more likely to work together.

Would you give an example where you have shown good participative management skills?

I currently manage a large number of guides on Denali. Every year our Denali guides get together and discuss a combination of logistics and technical issues on the mountain.

I have personally guided Denali twice, which isn't very many times when compared to our lead Denali guides. This is important to note because it shows that I don't have the gravitas with the lead guides to simply dictate policy. Instead, I have to weave together an understanding of complex issues before making any decisions.

It is common for the guides to have strong and diverse opinions about certain issues and it can be difficult to come to a consensus. Every year it seems like I have to work with the guides to determine what the best course of action is.

Often, at the end of this process, there are winners and losers. And though some guides lose out in these discussions, I understand how important it is to not only digest every opinion and try to understand where each one came from, but to also value every opinion.

The reality is that the guide who lost, might have been right. And a year after we made a decision, we might just as easily reverse the decision and embrace something completely different.

Being stubborn or biased or prescriptive are all very poor management skills. Being fluid and open and able to listen to every opinion and to make informed decisions is extremely important in a manager...as well as in a director on the AMGA board.

What do you consider one of your biggest failures and what did you do to overcome this?

There are many types of failures in life. Some of these are personal which resulted in the loss of relationships or friendships. Others are professional, which resulted in the loss of status in a mentor's eyes or the loss of potential income. But they all have one thing in common, you learn from your failures.

Unfortunately one cannot "overcome" a failure. A failure is a moment in time and we don't have the ability to replay our lives and make different decisions.

I've learned two things from my failures. The first is that it's unpleasant to fail and it's something that I don't want to do. The second is to understand why I failed, in order to make better choices next time.

What are the key strategic issues facing the industry, profession and the AMGA Board? How do you believe the board should respond?

I addressed many of the issues that face the industry and the profession in the answer to the first question. Following is a recap, as well as some other issues that need to be addressed:

- Lack of unity between competing guides, independent guides, and guide services, which leads to an overall weak voice from the guiding community to the public and to land managers.
- New accreditation rules – If these are not implemented well they could cause a significant rift in the guiding community that could further weaken the voice of guides to the public and to land managers.
- Unequal representation – Many AMGA members give less value to those who have a lower level of certification or training and so they are not as involved in the organization. They are not well represented by the AMGA, and we miss out on their knowledge and potential contributions.
- Image of elitism – This is a problem that the AMGA will have to overcome in order to be an effective organization.

These first three issues are completely interconnected. The issues are all related to unity. The accreditation rules (especially if they are not implemented well) will lead to a greater lack of unity. The perception that some guides are not as "worthy" as others is also connected to issues of guide unity and elitism.

It is my sincere belief that to be successful, the AMGA must open up and become more unified in its voice and the voices of its members. When there is extreme friction, directors need to step back and look carefully at the issue to determine if the friction is worth it. Friction results in heat and fire, and when there is heat and fire, people get burned. The

board needs to constantly make sure that when there is friction, it won't ultimately lead to a situation where the AMGA gets burned.

Following are some other issues that face the industry and the board, and some initial thoughts:

- Competition from other guide organizations.

The more inclusive the AMGA is, the less this will be an issue. Additionally, the more benefits the AMGA can provide outside of training and certification, the less this will be an issue.

External benefits that the AMGA has previously been involved in have included things like providing links to life and disability insurance. There are many more external things that the AMGA could be involved with, which could include anything from additional personal insurance issues, to business and marketing help, to any number of issues that face guides today...

- Credential based access.

This is perhaps the most controversial issue that there is amongst guides. I have a strong understanding of land management in the United States and feel very comfortable talking about how land managers develop their commercial use plans.

As with so many of these, this is connected to some of the previous issues. One way to continue to develop credential-based access is to ensure that those who have good relationships with land managers are able to make it through the accreditation process. Additionally, those who are not accredited, but who have good relationships with land managers should be brought into the fold.

The AMGA board needs to find ways to incentivize certified guides and accredited guide services throughout the country to be more proactive with stewardship projects locally. These types of projects make guides look good in the eyes of land managers

And lastly, I believe that guest guide programs can be expanded with the help of the AMGA. As a guide manager, it's hard to bring someone on who you don't know. This is primarily because I've had guest guides who were certified but who didn't operate at the high professional level that I thought I could depend on. Maybe there should be a different kind of "accreditation" for independent guides and for guides who'd like to work at a lot of places. In other words, a program where the AMGA does all the background work on a guide to ensure that he or she is top-notch in all respects, not just technical areas. All certification tells a staffing manager is that the guide passed a series of tests. It doesn't tell

him if the guide turns in paperwork, follows permit rules, and acts professionally in and out of the field...

Describe an incident where you led through significant conflict on an important principal. How will this influence your participation on the Board?

When I was on the board of directors for the Las Vegas Climbers Liaison Council there was an incident wherein the president and members of the board were at odds with one another concerning the direction of the organization. This led to an unexpected coup and the president was replaced. The whole situation resulted in a lot of angry people.

It was clear that a segment of the board was not being listened to adequately. They felt they were being ignored, and that was the impetus for the take-over. However, following the election of a new president, it felt like much of the work and knowledge of the old leadership was lost.

I was right in the middle of this political struggle. I felt that I understood exactly what the president was trying to accomplish, and I also understood why the other side felt that their agenda was being ignored. It was a difficult spot to be in because I considered those on both sides of the fence to be friends.

I didn't expect any type of hostile take-over to take place. I didn't realize how disgruntled these individuals were. But I found myself in the unenviable position of being the person who picked up the pieces afterward.

The former president completely withdrew himself from activities with the LVCLC. This was a problem because he held a lot of institutional knowledge. There was so much anger that those involved didn't want to talk to each other. I was able to bridge the gap, retrieve the knowledge from the old president and support the new president and her followers.

This short description of what happened doesn't tell the whole story. The situation was so severe and the players were so angry, the organization came very close to splintering into two separate organizations, or even completely falling apart. Levelheaded individuals – such as myself – were able to keep the organization together and ultimately quell the discontent.

I'm happy to report that the LVCLC is still alive and healthy today.

It's clear to me that we were able to keep the organization alive by finding a coalition of people who were not reactionary, who were levelheaded, and who put the advancement and survival of the organization before their personal beliefs on any one issue.

I am levelheaded and reasonable and have an ability to empathize with people who have different perspectives.

In my "other job," I'm a playwright. The art of writing a character is about understanding his or her perspective; it's about feeling empathy for the character. I bring this skill into my guide-work, both as a company manager as well as a guide. I would certainly extend this skill to my work on the board, constantly trying to understand other people's perspectives in order to make informed and intelligent decisions.

How will you handle the time commitments required for this role?

While I have about two thousand guide days in my background, I currently guide approximately 70 days a year. The rest of my work time is spent in an office and is devoted to administrative tasks overseeing the American Alpine Institute. I would consider working on the board of directors as a part of those administrative tasks. I foresee no problem in attending all board meetings.
