

Attachment 970821b

To The Minn-Stf Board Meeting Minutes (from the Meeting of 21 August 1997)

Following are two of the messages commenting on The High-Resolution Minicon 34 Proposal which were sent to the sponsors. They were read to the Board by Geri Sullivan at the meeting of 21 August 1997. —fallh

From: "Murphy, Andy" <amurphy@msmail.nmsmn.com>
Subject: High-Resolution Minicon
Date: Thu, 21 Aug 1997 13:06:00 -0500

I just read the Executive summary of your proposal to radically change Minicon 34. As a member of Minicon, and (almost) a member of Min-STF, I would like to give my first impressions of this proposal. I have not yet read the entire proposal, so there be more suggestions forthcoming

I am a person with professional project management experience, and know of a dozen other professional managers and project leaders that attend Minicon annually. All of them that have gotten involved with the Con have run professional, efficient departments, that have gotten NO response from the Executive Committee. If they come in under budget, their budgets for the next year are slashed, and then cut again to cover for those departments that need help. See this years Art Show budget as an example.

I have volunteered as a subhead for a department for the past several years. During this time, my head & I have managed to run our department with minimal support from the Exec, Ops, or Hotel (which is where we are attached). Last year, the head of Hotels appeared in our area ONCE during the entire Con, to ream us out over a SNAFU that occurred. There was no thank -you extended to anyone in the department by the Con or the Exec. Since I saw none of the con, other than my department, I felt that I should at least get paid to be there, to make up for the amount of work, annoyance and abuse I received.

That being said, I feel that your proposal leaves a great deal to be desired. I am a SF reader, however I do not write SF, nor am I a fanatic about it. I do watch SF on TV, in movies, and play RPG's. If you were to cut out those portions of the Con, I would not attend, and neither would my wife (a former department head), her best friend (also a former department head), my current department head, the future department head, or group of friends that attend with me. You would not offer anything that would interest us.

There are those elements of the Minicon population that may not meet the standards of the rest of us. That is going to occur, and short of alienating most of the Congoers, you will not get rid of them.

As far as burnout goes, you have a huge convention being run by volunteers. Burnout is going to occur as long as there is no backup from the exec and division heads.

On most projects this size, there are a small cadre of heads that make this their primary focus, and are dedicated to carrying it out, working professionally together. The rivalry and backstabbing that occurs at Minicon shocks and appalls me. If some of the tactics that I have witnessed at Con were to occur at my work, I would turn in my resignation immediately, as would most of my co-workers. This is the major reason why I hide as a subhead in a relatively small department rather than volunteering as a head of a division. I know I can do the job, but I will not work (for fun) in the abusive power-grabbing environment that Minicon projects.

MN-STF should perhaps look at bringing in several professional project managers, not to run the Con, but to help the Exec realize how their leadership, or lack thereof, affects the running of the Con. They have already signed a multi-year contract with a professional person to run the TV and cameras at Minicon, why leave professionalism to this one small section of the Con?

From: Patrick Nielsen Hayden <pnh@panix.com>
Subject: Re: Minicon 34 Proposal —
<http://www.ddb.com/change-minicon>
Date: Wed, 20 Aug 1997 21:14:05 -0400

Well, I think it's well-thought-through and well-written. As Joel says, the devil is in the details — but frankly there's no group of Minneapolis fans I would trust more than you guys.

I'm particularly struck by your points about using up people. As an annual attendee from out of town I kind of enjoy the "alternate culture festival" aspects of Minicon, but I don't have to pay the price in exhaustion and heartbreak. Reading the list these last few months has been an eye-opener.

Moreover, while I enjoy that stuff, I would do more than enjoy a 2000-person Minicon focused on sf and fantasy and featuring a first-rate program. I would stump for it, work for it, offer to work *on* it, and provide all the moral and professional and financial support I could manage. An opportunity to fix Minicon? Involving this crowd? Where do I sign?

You can quote anything I say on this subject, to anyone.

-P.