

Building Participation and Membership Workshop Notes

Why are people not joining our clubs? What are the barriers?

Cost	Fear of the unknown
Inconvenience	Bad prior experiences
Time requirement	Tired facilities
Availability of other leisure options	Poor coaching
Lack of awareness of your club	Poor organisation
Lack of awareness of your sport	Cultural factors (feeling out of place)
They're at the bigger/better club down the road	Perceptions of your sport being old/boring
Teens are playing for their school team instead	Adverse media coverage
Perceived elitism	

It's important to focus your efforts around the factors that you can control. Building and retaining your membership takes time and effort. Do nothing and your membership will decline.

What is research telling us?

Sport NZ's Voice of the Participant survey identified 9 key drivers of positive club experiences. If your club is doing these things well, you're more likely to attract and retain members.



Further information from this survey can be found [here](#). Some other stats from the survey:

- 63% are highly satisfied with their club
- 73% perceive value for money
- 81% are likely to re-join

These results are positive, but the survey also showed much lower levels of satisfaction among these groups:

- Asian, Indian and Pasifika
- 13 – 18 year olds
- Women and girls

You might like to think about how these groups participate in your club.

Being Friendly and Welcoming

How does your club do this? How would you welcome a new member into your club:

- Give them a written ‘induction pack’ with all the information they will need – key contacts within the club, where to find things (toilets, first aid kit, uniforms, etc), when things happen, season start and end dates, parking instructions, travel arrangements etc
 - Follow up with new members after a couple of weeks and ask how they’re getting along. See if they are having any problems, and follow up to answer their questions.
 - Respond to email enquiries as quickly as possible.
 - A genuine human connection can make a big difference. Rather than just an automated welcome email, make a phone call or talk to the new member face to face.
 - Acknowledge new members in your communications – maybe put their names and photos on your newsletter or Facebook page and encourage your old members to introduce themselves and make the newcomers feel welcome.
 - Of practical, put kids’ names on their uniforms. Kids love it and it helps to make them feel included. Alternatively, give them a little welcome present, e.g., cap, ball, wristband, etc
 - Introduce your new members at social events.
 - Use a buddy system – can be used for adults as well as kids.
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Creating a Great Social Environment

Playing sport is only part of the reason people stay at a club. The social aspect is also hugely important. How can you create an appealing social environment in the following areas?

1 *Making your physical environment/clubrooms as appealing as possible.*

- Cleanliness is important! Toilets, bar and kitchen areas, furniture.
- Fresh paint, bright colours
- Up to date displays / points of interest, e.g photos and stories of your current teams as well as your historical honours boards.
- Chalkboard – allow members to leave messages, shout-outs, etc.
- Photo boards/moving picture shows/videos on screens – people like to see themselves in action.
- TV for sports broadcasts
- Suitable furniture, make the areas comfortable. Could you provide couches, beanbags, somewhere to have a cuppa?
- Facilities sharing: could you potentially link with a ‘homeless’ club in another sport to share facilities, bring in extra money for facilities renovation, and add life to the facility - especially if there is a complementary winter/summer arrangement? For example, many netball clubs have no home base, and many tennis clubs have unused courts – could you work together?

2 ***How can you use food and drink to create an appealing social environment?***

- Provide a range of options – not everyone wants deep fried grease on a stick.
- Pot luck dinner events – could be ethnic food, e.g. bring something representing your culture
- Cheap and easy Friday/Saturday night dinners – save your members having to go home and cook
- Have water available (see Healthy Families Waitakere if you'd like a water fountain at your club!)
- Feed your visitors – develop a club specialty, e.g. visiting teams know they will be fed with the famous Waitakere roast potatoes.
- Craft beer night!
- Food truck night!
- Could you provide a cheap meal following training nights to keep people in the club and spending time together?

3 ***How can you make your social environment appealing for kids and families?***

- Kids play areas / toy boxes
- Possible provision of child minding services/entertainment-keeping kids happy while parents play.
- Homework club – could someone be at the club to keep an eye on kids between the end of school and the start of training/games?
- Provision of events that enable whole families to 'play' together, e.g. family quiz/challenge
- Make sure you have done a thorough hazard identification process so parents can have confidence in their kids roaming around the club.
- Allowing 'drop and run' if possible
- Set expectations around alcohol so that the environment does not become child-unfriendly.

4 ***How can you make your social environment appealing to women and girls?***

- Women only special events – think about what would appeal to your female members and run events just for them
- Targeting stay-at-home Mums with young children – could you provide child-minding while mothers play sport, followed by a coffee-group get together?
- Acknowledge the performances of your women's teams equally to the men's. If women feel like second class citizens of the club, they're less likely to hang around.

5 ***How can you create an appealing social environment for teenagers?***

- Have teenagers coach junior teams – keep them busy and make them feel valued and involved
- Teen-only events, e.g. youth games night – allow your members to bring friends who aren't members
- 'Shout-outs' on social media – recognise their involvement
- Encourage your existing teenage members to post and share about their club involvement
- Music: juke box/laptop – let them choose the music
- Ask them what they want
- Could you have a PlayStation set up in a corner of the club?

6 *How can you create an appealing social environment if you haven't got facilities of your own?*

- Other local clubs may have vacant and available spaces in their off season – get in touch with Sport Waitakere if you're looking for space, we may be aware of spaces that would suit your club.
- After club night/games, could you gather for food, drink, music – picnic style in summer?
- Would a local café/restaurant/bar support you by providing special offers if you took a group of your club members there regularly?
- Encourage your teams to get together socially off the field. e.g. Pot luck dinner at someone's house.

Remember that no-one ever left a club because they had too many friends or were having too much fun. Try to create opportunities for your members to bump into each other!

Also try to create different events that will appeal to different sections of your membership. Are your events inclusive of the diversity in your club?

Communications: Providing Information when necessary

Never miss an opportunity to let the community know that you exist, that you are active, and that you are looking for new members.

Think about how you deliver your clubs messages? How are those perceived by your club members?

Club Website

- Keep it up to date == there's nothing more off-putting than a website with links to last year's information but nothing current.
- Include attractive photos of your players in action and your social events too.
- Make it easy for people to enquire, register, and pay (and donate!).

Social Media

- Post regularly. Actively encourage your membership to share your posts and spread the word about your club.
- Use the social media platforms most widely used by your membership. If you don't know what platforms they use, ask them. You might use Facebook but your teens may be more likely to be on Snapchat, Instagram, or something else.
- Monitor the chat that happens on your social media – is it sending the right message about your club?

Video

- Don't forget the power of video. Video doesn't need to be a grand production. A 30 second clip filmed on your phone can create a lot of interest. But someone in your club will know how to edit and make them even better.
- Include in your videos the target market you're trying to attract: Don't focus on your elite team if you're trying to attract social ladies. Showcase your existing ethnic diversity if you want more of it. Show your social side – have some fun with it.
- Has someone in your membership got access to a drone for some cool aerial footage?
- A couple of overseas examples (these ones are a bit more produced)

[Langley Tennis Club](#), [Manly Gymnastics Club](#)

Understanding your Community

- Look at your membership demographics and compare them with your community's demographics using the Sport NZ Insights tool (<https://sportnz.org.nz/managingsport/insights/>)
- If there's a difference, does that present an opportunity?
- Use this information to help you plan. Who can you target?
- Identify the 'holes' in your membership. Can these 'holes' be filled by targeting particular groups within your community?
If you have a Pacific Island Church/Indian Community Group/RSA in your neighbourhood for example, could your club approach them with a particular event/programme in mind, or just as another place to deliver flyers/raise awareness?

Glen Eden Tennis Club, for example, offer free initial membership to recent refugees in their community.

Know your Current Members

- Survey your members. Online survey tools like Survey Monkey or Typeform make the surveying process quick and easy.
- Look hard at what your members are telling you.
 - What needs to change?
 - What is going down well?
 - Do your members' views align with your committee's thinking?
- If a member doesn't renew their membership, find out why.
- **Take a customer service philosophy to everything you do.**

Look after your current members. Happy members become advocates for your club and are your best tool for recruiting new members.

Building Links Between Club and School

Think about ways that your club can build links with local schools:

People: coaches, referees, supporters, teachers, students

Facilities: fields, courts, club rooms, function rooms

Resources: playing equipment, coaching programmes

Examples:

- Have your best coach deliver a guest coaching session in local schools, or even become their head coach
- Invite a local school to play at your facilities
- Occasionally invite a local school to train with your premier team or attend your after-match functions. Acknowledge their successes and tell them about what your club has to offer.
- Approach schools if you are in need of referees or coaches. Some schools have programmes that encourage community volunteering.

- If you have the capacity to deliver sports at schools during lunch times or after school, talk to Sport Waitakere. We may be able to help facilitate a relationship that works for both parties and provide KiwiSport Funding to make it happen.

The ultimate goal when working with schools is to make sure every local kid knows about your club and knows they will have a good experience if they join up – you want to become the go-to club for your sport in your area.

Creating Interest

People are energised by things that are new, and clubs that are innovative. How can you avoid being the same ol' same ol' club? Some examples:

- Family Challenge Days (open to the whole community) e.g. Parent and child doublestennis tournament
- Inter-Ethnic Tournaments, e.g. Ethkick Football – invite ethnic groups min your community to put a team together and come along for a tournament.
- Ongoing challenges (e.g. Football: most juggles in each age group – keep a running scoreboard in the clubrooms)
- Fun nights: break up the usual training routine with something just-for-fun
- Club within a club (e.g. book club, parent and child groups, cards club, pub quiz teams, fitness classes)
- Social events based around enjoying big events in other sports, e.g Rugby World Cup, America's Cup
- How about playing abbreviated or modified versions of your game to mix things up? e.g. Fast 5 waterpolo, 20-20 cricket, speed golf, walking netball/football etc
- Mini-team challenges (e.g. Tennis: longest rally in tennis with the ball going to players 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3,)

Quality of Coaching

- Voice of the Participant survey found that 'learning and improving skills' was the main reason parents stated for signing their children up to a club.
- **If quality coaching is not a key strategic goal of your club, it should be!**

What support can your RSO/NSO provide?

- How can you make it easy for your coaches (or parents) to take up coaching opportunities provided? Can you subsidise the coaching course? Can you get your RSO to deliver coaching courses on your site so people don't have to travel?
- Be a squeaky wheel. Talk to your RSO. Seek their help.

What support can Sport Waitakere provide?

Contact Mick Coultard, Community Coach Advisor: mick.coultard@sportwaitakere.nz

Mick can help develop a coaching programme for your club.

Building Women's Participation

Sport NZ research asked women what they want from sports:

- To have fun and socialise
- To feel safe and participate
- They don't want to feel judged
- To keep fit and maintain their weight
- To feel confident doing what they are doing
- Activities to fit around their other commitments

Think about what you can do at your club to ensure you are meeting these needs.

Case Study: Norwest Football Club

- Norwest made a strategic decision to focus on women and girls' football
 - They use their one paid coach to take the premier women's side – this sends a clear message about the value the club places on women's football.
 - They work hard at grassroots level, delivering in schools to target girls in big numbers.
 - Have built their girls participation - they now have a girls' team at every age level 9th grade upwards.
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- Other clubs have seen good results from offering girls-only events, such as a girls-only open day at the start of the season which was promoted to local schools, and attended by rep level women players to provide genuine role models.
 - Another club has their premier men's hockey team coached by a woman – another great example of a genuine belief in women's all round involvement in the club

Sport NZ has recently announced funding for two major new programmes:

- Young Women's Activation Fund
- Innovations for Young Women Fund

Your RSO/NSO may have already made an application to these funds – watch nthis space for new programmes encouraging women's participation.

[HERA Everyday Goddess](#)

This website contains resources with tips for coaching women and some case studies of programmes encouraging female participation.

For further information on the Participation and Membership topic and others, please follow this link to the [Active toolkit resources](#).