

Scottish Rugby Moving Clubs Forward Workshop

How to: Attract and retain families

Overview

The Family Unit is a valuable commodity for any club since they can provide participants, revenue, volunteers and networks for the club. Discussions with a wide range of clubs has highlighted that in monetary value alone, a family is worth between £300 and £2000 a year through the purchase of membership, events, merchandise, food and drink over the bar etc. Therefore it is essential that the club is proficient in a) attracting the family to the club and b) retaining them since every family is potentially worth a minimum of £300. It is also therefore essential that the club attracts the whole family and that the children aren't simply "dropped off" before training and picked up afterwards with only a junior membership being purchased.

Key Points

The club needs to understand the "wants and needs" of the parents for their children. When trying to "sell" the club to the parents this information needs to be included in the letter or flyer.

If the Father is involved with rugby it is usually him who will bring his child/children along to rugby.

If the family doesn't have any involvement with the game, then it is usually the mother who decides if her children are going to play rugby or another sport.

The club's aim is to get the whole family involved with the club. This will involve the parents staying during the training and not simply dropping off their child. If one or both of the parents is already involved with rugby this is straightforward. If not then it is essential that the club communicates with the parents (especially the Mother) and tells them "what's in it for them" if they get involved. This might be simply a coffee and bacon sandwich in the club house or a fitness session for Mothers.

Once the club has involved the family it must work to retain them because of their value in all of the areas highlighted above.

What are the "wants and needs" of the parents for their children?

We know from research carried out by Kellogg's in Ireland that the "wants and needs" are;

- Challenge for the children
- Experience success and failure
- Develop confidence and self esteem
- Learn about team work
- Make friends
- Have fun

The Environment

- Safe

- Coaches who understand child development

This information needs to be included in any “sales letters” that go to parents to encourage them to involve their children in the sport. We know that rugby does develop positive attitudes in children but we don’t always tell people this when encouraging them to become involved.

What are the wants and needs of the Mother?

As was mentioned previously it is essential to consider the “wants and needs” of the Mother if you want to get the whole family involved. As a basic starting point she will need to be told “what’s in it for her” to come into the club house and to become involved. The main areas to focus on are;

- Clean Toilets -if your toilets aren’t clean the Mother won’t come back
- Social – is it possible to create a “social gathering “at the club house during training? Can you run events just for parents? Perth RFC is running a “boot camp” for Mothers at the same time as the mini rugby training.
- Communication and organisation – does the Mother know what is happening and when?
- Welcoming and informed. Is the Mother welcomed into the club house and are the people she meets informed and have an understanding about her “wants and needs”.

Retaining the Family

This really comes down to offering “customer service” since the family are customers of the club since they have chosen to spend their time/money with the club. The points that need to be focussed upon are;

Understanding the customers wants and needs

Does the club understand what the Family wants and does it strive to deliver it.

Fulfilling their expectations

If the club offers the customer one thing then delivers another it will lose the customer to the competition. Does the training start on time and finish on time? Is it fun, challenging etc. as was promised in the “sales letter”

Make service personal

When the new family arrives at the club they need to be welcomed, it needs to be recognised that they are new and any follow up needs to be personalised, not just a general letter to “Dear New Parent”

Establish an excellent customer experience.

If the “customer experience” is good then not only will they stay with the club, they will tell others about it.

Develop staff understanding of the importance of customer service and commitment to customer service.

The volunteers aren't expected to be customer service experts but if they understand a) how important the service is and b) make sure that the areas in which they are involved embrace customer service, then it will make a massive difference. The point made above emphasises this; if a player or family is new to the club, welcome them and spend time understanding what it is they want from the club.

Strengthen the bond with your customer – communication

Resources will dictate how often you will be able to communicate with your customers and through which channels. However the basics are 1) collect data whenever you can from your “customers” and build up some basic profile information (what do they come to events, did they book the room for a birthday party etc.) 2) use the relevant channels – Social Media is the relevant channel for young adults whereas e mail is probably more relevant for older people. 3) keep your customers informed generally but if you have some basic profile information about them, target them with specific messages e.g. we know that your children came to the summer school last year and it is being run again this year. Here is the information...

Evaluate your service through questionnaires

Listen to your customers and if you have the resources send out a basic questionnaire to find out what they do and don't like about the club.

CASE STUDY

CITY OF DERRY RFC

Integrated Family Approach to Under Age Rugby at
City of Derry RFC

Overview

One year ago the City of Derry Under Age committee recognised that very few parents (especially Mum's) were involved in the club or even entered the clubhouse. Based on a New Zealand concept the decided to try and develop a family based club where resources/experience are shared/utilised to benefit the overall club experience

How they instigated the change

All parents/coaches and possible future helpers were invited to a meeting in June to plan the “year ahead. They were given a “vision” of how the club wanted to be structured and what it wanted to achieve in the following season. The main change was to be the introduction of Team Administrators for each team.

The structure would give Team Administrators (player mums) a greater say in how the minis operated and what activities were on offer. This gave greater ownership to a wider base spreading the workload & responsibility. A network of contacts widened.

Activities were planned to allow for joint social events with kids and adult only social events.

As a result, the underage coordinator and 1 lady TA were invited onto General Committee of club. This allowed a more family focus to be taken when committee were organising events.

Saturday Morning Routine

Before change:

Parents would leave their children at the club and head home for 1.5h. The Convenor tried to ensure that he has enough coaches to cover coaching. Parents would also leave their children at the clubhouse for someone else to take them to the away matches

After change:

Parents bring kids to training and stay to watch/support. Tea/coffee car provide refreshments for all. TAs mingle/talk, do admin with parents, distribute newsletters, sell tickets/ kit, monthly Heads/tails raffle. The coaches/convenor now focus solely on the coaching- No admin. Each primary group have at least 3 coaches.

Medical cover provided by 2 doctors in attendance each Saturday

Parents travel with kids to AWAY games- less onus on coaches to get lifts for players

Co-ordination:

Monday morning email to coaches/TA/Doctor from mini co-ordinator with notes for following week, feedback from previous Sat, updates on social events etc. TAs email + text notes/updates to all parents.

Regular newsletters – given to parents/kids

TAs collect subscriptions, update player lists, filter appropriate player medical info to coaches, act as link between parents and mini convenor. They also seek out additional volunteers from player parents. Coordinate transport to games.

Other points of interest

- Family membership offered to encourage greater participation and revenue, with discounts for larger families
- Xmas Party- food, disco + Santa visit with present for all minis
- Mini/Youth Black Tie Ball- whole club event used to promote underage rugby to wider club community
- Presentation Lunch- end of season. Mini players and parents have lunch and are presented participation certificates by club international – Stacey-Lee Jackson
- Mini presence at senior matches. TAs/parents sell coffee/tray bakes. More Kids come down to watch senior games on Sat afternoon. Play during half time. Older minis have travelled AWAY with 1st XV to play before their senior game.
- TA's have encouraged 2 senior players to come to the club on Saturday mornings to assist with the training sessions. This allows our minis to have closer connection to senior team and gives them a face to watch out for in games.

- Increased press coverage. Every opportunity to get local press down is used. Minis now have their own notice board in clubhouse where press photographs are displayed. The club Facebook site is used extensively to promote club activities and display mini/youth action photos.

The Outcomes

1. Having both coaches and TA dedicated to one class and their parents, specific roles set out, coach looks after kids playing skills and builds relationships, TA(mum) keeps parents informed with weekly contact , group e mail or text, deals with subs applications and any new children arriving are welcomed
2. Because of the above both the coaches and TA's have got to know parents better making Saturday mornings and post-match games more social for everyone which in turn is bringing more people into club .
3. We have been active in both fundraising (Black Tie Ball) which included whole club, raising mini's profile with "old guard". Also fundraising through events such as Bag Packing in local supermarkets has not only raised funds but also the much valued profile of whole club. Mini mum's regularly selling tea/coffee etc. at our big senior games , this has been hugely successful in pushing the mini's to the forefront of clubs mind, TA's are actively talking about and promoting in a warm friendly fun way which we can look back and see was a success.
4. None of the fund raising could of been done without the relationships with parents, they regularly take turns to supply tray bakes etc. to sell or give their time to help.
5. TA team have been active in organising catering functions expertly to suit everything from feeding whole Ulster squad to 180 kids after a match and their visiting parents!! All with a smile!!
6. Newsletter has been good in keeping both club and parents informed but I think in the future this may move to e mail version. Face book also has raised mini profile.