

How Might We:

Attract & Maintain Young Adult Members

When considering how to build player and member participation from young adults there are a range of approaches that might be taken. These include introducing policy and practices focused on *attracting new* young adults to sport, *re-engaging* 18-24-year-olds who have been part of sport in the past or *building and maintaining* younger players aged 14-17-years so there is a larger base of youth participants. This latter approach is predicated on two key assumptions:

1. the more people playing sport as youth, the greater the chance to sustain competition and participation even if a proportion of youth members disengage from sport; and
2. developing the skills and value of youth across different roles in their sport, the more reasons they have, to stay involved.

Suncoast Clippers Basketball Association

The Clippers Basketball Club on the Sunshine Coast have introduced a series of initiatives over the last 3 years intentionally aimed at building their youth membership and subsequently retaining young adult players. This focus on membership development emerged from a series of club realisations and changes including: the establishment of more basketball courts that allowed for more competitions and court play; the need to raise revenue to pay for their revitalised venue; recognition that many 18-24-year-olds were leaving the sport once they left school; and a concern there were very few young females playing the sport of basketball.

The Club's Approach

To address these challenges and opportunities, the club determined a series of initiatives to stem the tide of player loss and to support young basketball players into their sport. This case study considers two of the clubs targeted initiatives, namely:

1. Free basketball camps to support *young girls* into the sport of basketball; and
2. Upskilling and enabling *paid work* for young basketball players (16-24) to support them to continue with basketball and the club.

Free Basketball Camps:

While a goal for Clippers is to grow female participation in basketball including in the 18-24 age group, this could not be achieved merely by setting up Under 18 and/or 21 competitions (for example). Rather, the sport needed to first *build the numbers of girls playing* basketball and *raise the profile* of their sport. Subsequently, the club purposefully set out to drive recruitment and create a welcoming and supportive environment for girls. This included,

- ensuring they had facilities for girls and members,

- building girls interest in the sport, and
- *developing the competency* of girls to play.

To achieve these the club has focused on building the number and skills of girls 2-3 years younger than the 18 year+ age range:

- Holding free basketball camps for girls (8-16) to introduce basketball in a fun and developmental manner. These are run during the school holidays;
- Recognising that girls' self confidence is boosted by being able to develop skills and practice in a non-threatening, non-competitive environment;
- Introducing social competitions where girls and young women can play without having to commit to training schedules or be exposed to intense competition;
- Focusing on skill development for new and emerging players at any age, by providing a supportive and fun environment without pressure to perform or win.

Results

While the initiatives are still in development, the club has found the introduction of free come and try camps for school aged girls has translated to approximately **60% of girls staying with the sport** and playing competitively. This equates to an additional 40-50 girls who have joined and remained with the club. Further, the club has grown its age range competitions and built its base sufficiently to be able to offer Under 16 and Under 18 girls' competitions.

Importantly, they have also realised **the value of development leagues** across all abilities (ages and gender) to support players to build the skills and self confidence necessary to play at a level that suits ability, motivation, other commitments etc.

Employing Young Adults in Basketball:

At 17 and 18 years young adults are not only leaving school, but may also be starting full time work, entering into committed relationships, studying, leaving home and/or transitioning into adult responsibilities. Clippers Basketball Club realised their young adult players were often leaving the club *and* the sport during this time as they struggled to independently sustain their lifestyle and embrace new freedoms. The club found their young adults did not seem to be able to work, study and play basketball, and determined there might be value in trying to combine some of these commitments in the one context of basketball.

The Club began creating opportunities for their young adults to **work in basketball** to earn their income and/or to **alleviate their playing costs**, thereby keeping their players within the club and freeing up opportunities for them to play.

While only relatively small scale, this club has provided opportunities for 16-24-year-olds to:

- Be **upskilled** with Level 1 Coaching and Senior First Aid (paid for by the club);
- Participate in Referee Development **training**;
- Access opportunities to **referee**, initially as 'green shirts' who are paid to referee junior games before progressing through Community to State League refereeing. Each refereeing role is paid on an incremental scale and across a week can provide a living wage;

- Be **employed** to coach junior basketball within the club and/or introduced and supported to work with local schools with established basketball programs. This provides work during the week as well as with club games on the weekend; and
- **Waived fees** to hire a court for practice time or for some game fees available to all those who assist with coaching juniors.

Results

The club has been re-engaging young adults through these initiatives and building and retaining others. They have provided sufficient skills and opportunities for interested 18-24-year-olds to earn money or allay some of their playing costs in ways that are financially sustainable for both the individual and the club. For example,

- the additional coaches and refereeing skills in the club allows Clippers to **run more competitions** and to train more players;
- the club is **building reputation** and consistency through providing quality coaches to local schools who find their youth respond well to young adult coaches; and
- the 18-24-year-olds working in basketball are **earning money** through participating in their sport and contributing to the development of others.

If you have any questions about Suncoast Clippers Basketball initiatives, they are happy to share information. Please contact: Shane Truscott – President at manager.suncoastclippers@gmail.com

SUNCOAST CLIPPERS BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION KEY LEARNINGS

