

How Might We:

Engage Young Adult Members

It is not only the competing demands that impact on young adults' participation with sport, but a range of other factors including a focus on performance-oriented competition, restrictive sport structures, lack of opportunities or say in the club or association, and/or a lack of real 'social' opportunities. Engaging and attracting 18-24-year-olds as active members of sport means redressing each sport or clubs individual constraints and providing real opportunities that motivate participation. This might be through creating the environment for young adults to have fun, experience a sense of achievement, interact with others in ways where they are accepted and approved and/or to develop mastery.

Surf Lifesaving Queensland

Surf Lifesaving Queensland is recognised for engaging young adults both in sport and community service, but they need to remain vigilant in their efforts to retain and encourage young members. The Association have a range of clubs located throughout the state and each can respond in ways that suit their resources and local community. In the North Barrier Region, one club realised the need to better engage and encourage their youth members to maintain their interest. For this club, this meant not just engaging them in patrols and training, but in all elements of Lifesaving, Leadership and Involvement.

The Club's Challenges

The club became extremely concerned for its own future as it was seeing an increasingly rapid decline particularly in its 15-25-year-old members.

Talking with its young members helped the club to narrow down some of the controllable aspects impacting on their youth membership and helped shaped the club responses.

The Insights

- Young adult members felt they were seen, but not heard in the club;
- Just capturing young adults' experiences and opinions is not enough. The resulting responses need to suit young adults, not just older members/ decision makers;
- Creating change can be hard for some members as the shift from the 'way things have always been done' can be confronting;
- Valuing and respecting young adults and empowering them to be leaders and take responsibility, can have a positive impact on member engagement and retention;
- Treating young adult members as equals and with respect, and allowing them to nominate and hold assistant positions within committees and in roles of authority (e.g. secretary, development officers, coaches, trainers, age managers) strengthened the club and supported young adult member engagement;

- Standing beside young adult members and supporting their contributions can yield results and a refreshed club future;
- While it takes time to create lasting change this clubs adjustments have led to a growth in Youth members over the past 5 years. This includes an increase in overall member retention to 68% in 2017-2018. Junior membership has also increased (8%), and Youth voluntary patrolling over 100+ hours/ per season is achieving a 75% retention rate.

The Interventions

1. Reflect - Examine the Why?

The Club went back and examined its 'Why' – Why does this organisation/ club exist? What's its purpose, cause or belief that inspires what it does?

This acted as a reminder of the basics of Surf Lifesaving which is 'Saving Lives'.

2. Train and Educate

This premise and reminder gave rise to all youth/ young adult members becoming trainees of the Surf Club systems and practices. This resulted in the implementation of active training in:

- Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB) practices, motor pull down and rebuild;
- First aid;
- Committee Management;
- Coaching
- The running and maintenance of a Surf Club etc.

As a result, young adult/ youth members were not just being trained as top-class Lifesavers, but as leaders and administrators, managers and skilled volunteers across the range of Club activities and responsibilities.

3. Honour and Reward

The Club also introduced an active approach to *honouring their youth members* and all volunteers for the skills and hours they contribute to their community – whether through patrolling local beaches or other volunteer contributions.

Rewards for the time and efforts volunteering include:

- Free tickets to the Club Annual Dinner;
- Reduced membership fees in recognition of the hours committed to patrolling;
- Nomination and support to attend Future Leader development programs such as - SLSQ Annual Youth Leadership Camp (15-17-year olds), or the SLSQ Leadership Excellence Program (18-30-year olds).

Results - Young adults are *included and not excluded* in decision making through participating in club committees and in leadership roles. They now feel part of the organisation, not just external members.

Further Information

If you have any questions or want more information about SLSQ initiatives or the specifics of this Club Case, check out the SLSQ website: <http://lifesaving.com.au/about/>

or Contact: Kristine Fowler, Regional Development Officer North Barrier: kfowler@lifesaving.com.au

