

Membership & Marketing



Get it rolling!

Tool 5

Cultivating a WELCOMING Culture

1. It's all about club culture

Can you identify the single item that will attract new members to your club and at the same time help to retain members? Is it the quality of your greens? Your club's ranking in the district league? The number of top players you have in your A-side or the well-stocked bar in your clubhouse? These qualities may be of interest to a player from another club, but there is something far more important for strangers visiting your club!

Looking at it from a different angle: If a stranger walks into your club right this moment, how will they be treated? As an alien or as a potential new friend?

Very often when a stranger approaches a group they will instinctively close ranks and ignore the stranger, avoid making eye contact and continue their conversation or activity. Just because this is a normal human reaction does not mean we must excuse or accept it. People need to be made to FEEL WELCOME AND TO BE ACCEPTED.

If your club is losing members and not attracting new ones, this may be the number one problem. Conversely, if your club is growing, then this may just be your club's "secret ingredient". If so, then enshrine it in your club's culture.

2. WHY are visitors important to a club?

- a. Every visitor is a potential ambassador for your club (or otherwise).
- b. Every visitor is a potential new member.
- c. Every new member helps to spread the financial burden and keep annual subscriptions fees under control.
- d. Every new member is another pair of hands to do the work that must be done.
- e. Every new member brings with them new enthusiasm and new ideas, both of which are vital for growth.

3. HOW do we cultivate a welcoming culture?

- a. The first step is to make EVERY member aware of the vital importance of making visitors feel special and welcome.
- b. EVERY visitor is a potential new member for the club. That includes the fridge repairman, the builder working on the roof, the police officer doing their rounds and even the truck driver doing deliveries. Every bowler was once a non-bowler, you included. Introduce yourself and ask how you can assist them. Listen carefully to both their words and their non-spoken words. Make them feel relaxed and welcome.
- c. EVERY member is part of the club's "welcoming committee" and must drop whatever they are doing and focus on that stranger, because that stranger might just become the

person who takes your club to new heights. Even if nobody else has noticed that stranger in your midst, YOU have and it is YOUR responsibility to act as host.

- d. Use the outgoing personalities in your club to form an official “welcoming committee” who will ensure that potential members get all the information they need, are introduced to other members and are integrated into all aspects of your club. Choose your welcoming people wisely – they must be warm, friendly and open people who will put the needs of others before their own. And make sure that all members are aware of their role for effective referral.

4. Provide the right information at the right time

- a. Ensure that you hand every potential member or potential new bowler an introductory brochure or welcome letter which gives all the vital information. Make sure it includes coaching requirements, dress code, tabs in times and days, when the club is closed, what opportunities there are for growth, costs and who to contact to answer any queries they may have. Simply handing them a membership application form is not going to do the job!
- b. Give new bowlers a coaching voucher for one free lesson to make it even more attractive.
- c. Once a player has been accepted for membership, invite them to play in a specific game or event where they are officially introduced, welcomed as members and presented with a welcoming gift such a club towel, pin badge or something similar. In short, make them feel special and part of the group. They must feel that they now belong.
- d. Ensure that new members have access to everything that they need to know about your club:
 1. All the different committees.
 2. Who the committee members are.
 3. What the responsibilities of members are in terms of duty rosters.
 4. The club constitution and by-laws. Make sure they receive a copy of each.
 5. Coaching opportunities available to them.
 6. Details of all club and district competitions and tournaments in which they can participate.