

Donvale Bowls Club Victoria

Donvale Bowls Club is a small, friendly, suburban club in the Eastern suburbs of Melbourne, hidden in the surrounds of the Mullum Mullum reserve.

What was the problem?

Our membership had fallen below 70, our artificial rink was not in good condition, we had problems getting our grass green to suitable condition, we were not financially sound and our future was very short.

What was your solution?

Over two years we instilled business management practices and processes into the management of the club including reviewing everything at the club. We focused on the following areas:



- Establishing a strategy and way forward for Donvale Bowls Club and communicated this to all members.
- Ensuring financials and projections for the future were included in the strategy. We stabilized our financial situation in the first year resulting in a surplus. We followed up with a further surplus with our focus on the need to increase membership in a controlled manner, whilst retaining current membership. Income needed to grow from increased members, more green fees and from external sources i.e. fundraising and sponsorship funds to reduce pressure on our small membership base.
- Created new sub committees for “Membership and Promotions” and “Sponsorship” These addressed two of our past weaknesses.
- A Communication Strategy was developed to ensure all members are aware and involved in the club going forward.
- New members – developed and implemented a process for inducting new members into the club, including meetings to get feedback on how they feel – what can be done better and getting them to understand and be involved in the operations of the club. We also focused on retaining existing members.
- Try Bowls Days – we successfully conducted three new member days and now run four each year.



Potential members are gained by members bringing along friends, neighbours etc. and also advertising by letter box drops, articles in local newspapers and in neighbourhood watch newsletters to local areas. This process ensures a regular introduction of new members at a rate we can integrate them into the club successfully. Other recruiting initiatives have been introduced since.

- Sponsorship – planning of a sponsorship package to approach local businesses was developed and successfully launched.

- Other initiatives – we have developed and successfully conducted a further initiative to increase income from green fees and bar takings. This involves social days for businesses, other sporting clubs and other social groups to use our facilities.
- We focused on both social and pennant bowls and worked so as to not segregate the club but to be one club.
- Replaced our artificial green and developed a plan to get grass green up to standard.
- As finances improved replaced shade cloth, installed lights and updated equipment.
- Selected teams on performance and used measurement to support selection processes.
- Set our goals high.
- Celebrated our successes.



How did you promote it?

Explained where we were at to our members and started working forward. We did not have a lot to promote in the early stages, other than a plan and enthusiasm. Our focus was internal and to work to ensure all Donvale bowlers enjoy their bowls.

How successful was it?

Started slowly and gained momentum as our focus on recruiting new bowlers got underway, this enabled finances to improve and artificial rink to be replaced, with Manningham Council support based on the fact we were progressing on a plan and exceeding the indicators we had set ourselves which would enable us to meet commitments. We set measures for all our plans to enable us to monitor progress rather than wait and hope.

What worked best?

- Reviewing and understanding fully our club, its advantages, issues and opportunities.
- Focusing on recruiting new bowlers (not recruiting from other clubs), training them and getting them into playing the game.
- Fully understanding our club, having a plan and working towards building our goal – “a vibrant, growing and successful club”

What didn't work?

No major failures, in fact if it did not work the first time, have a look and see what went wrong or could be done differently and do it again, or find another way to reach the target.

What advice would you give other bowls clubs?

Understand your club, have an understanding of what you would like to be and a plan to get there, involve your people and do not let anything stop you. When you have an understanding of your problems and are building strategy to go forward liaise with other clubs, listen and learn. It is not new; it has all been done before, just find and learn from the doers.