

Chapter 5.1

Growing the membership

Benefits of this chapter

Growing your membership takes time, requires some strategic thoughts and a precise action plan. Whether or not you already have a strong and stable federation and supportive members, growing your federation is always beneficial.

Expanding the reach of aquatics is not just about maintaining, but rather about reactivating, renewing, retaining and recruiting members. While your current members might be content with their status within your federation, as the leading aquatics body in your country, you need to constantly be thinking about the future.

Engaging your members and looking at ways of making your federation stand out is part of your role as the National aquatics Federation in your country. This chapter will discuss ways in which you can add value to your current relationship with members and the key skills which can help grow your federation.

Introduction

No matter the size of your aquatics federation, every federation wants to increase their membership. Most federations have a strong and solid membership base, however as your goals and success in aquatics grows so should your federations membership.

Growing your membership involves going back to your strategy. Your objectives and your goals as an aquatics federation become very important when you want to grow your numbers. Growing all around is not just about recruiting new members, it is about managing your current relationships as well as developing new ones.

Your federation's skills come into play, from leadership to coaching skills. By using the right skills, you can ensure the continued growth and satisfaction of aquatics in your country.

Getting started

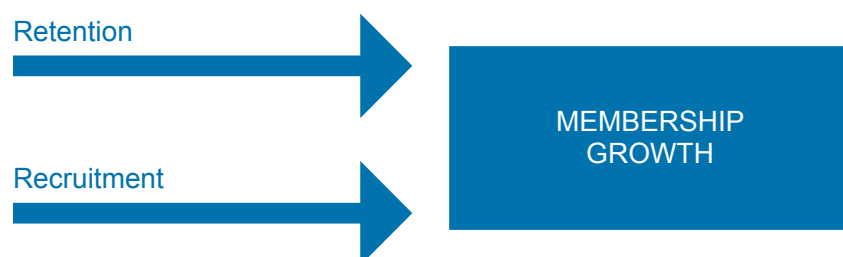
Membership development strategies and solutions

Growing your membership takes some thought, and a lot of strategy. It is important to keep a strong and solid base of members, as they will be the foundation you will need when recruiting additional members in the future. By managing your relationship with them and ensuring that they are happy and devoted to the expansion and development of aquatics you are setting your federation up for success.

As you look to the future of your federation, you must also look at your current situation. Growing your federation starts with the development strategy of your federation (see Chapter 1.2). This is a great starting point, mainly because this can help your federation put together the action plan for keeping your current members happy and recruiting future members.

When expanding your membership, you should have two focus areas in mind: retention and recruitment.

Diagram 5.1 a
Growth your membership



Retention of your current members

Take a close look at your current aquatics members.

And ask yourself the following questions:

- Do they have a positive feeling about your federation?
- If so why?
- What are you currently doing to make them feel this way?
- If not, what can you do to make them feel involved?

Building a loyal base of members by offering an innovative and positive environment can bring a new direction and sense of enthusiasm towards aquatics and your federation. A strategy based around loyalty lets your members feel secure in the present and dream about the future. This also means renewed memberships and long-term development for your federation.

Whether it is developing the skills, attributes and knowledge of your current members, making members feel positive and involved with the direction of your federation is very important.

Word of mouth is a powerful tool. By keeping your current members happy, this can lead to positive promotion. No matter how much effort, money and time you put into publicity and promotion, if your federation does not have a good image then all your efforts will be wasted. Being associated as an aquatics federation with happy and devoted members is the best publicity you can have.

Recruitment of new members

Gaining new members requires more strategic planning and an action plan. By coming up with a tailored strategy, your federation is more apt to finding the right path for successful expansion.

The key to growing your membership is having a plan and being visible.

Once again the strategic plan of your aquatics federation comes into play. As you grow your federation, keep in mind that growing your federation in numbers is one thing, but growing your federation with the right members is another. Having members who share the same vision and goals for the future of aquatics in your country can ensure that there is a constant stream of growth.

Developing an effective membership marketing and promotion plan that works cohesively with your overall development plan can ensure that you have the right strategies for success.

Visibility is an important aspect of growing your federation. Depending on your strategy, you may choose to be present and visible in certain areas versus others. Having a presence in the right areas can be an asset when promoting your federation's image.

Attracting new members can be easy, but finding the right members can be a challenge. Looking in the right places can help your federation in its quest to grow and develop.

There are several areas to look at when deciding to position your federation in the right markets, a few mentionable ones include:

- Developing partnerships
- Being present at the right events
- Website development

Developing partnerships can be interesting as your federation can open new markets which were once not an option. There is a variety of partnerships which can be interesting to your federation, such as governmental partnerships at the provincial, state, federal or through the educational level. Developing a relationship with the educational sector is an opportunity for your federation to expand to the youth within the internal structure of the educational system. As discussed in Chapter 3, promoting your sport by setting up swimming or water polo programmes through the educational system as part of the curriculum can enhance development of aquatics to youth in a very efficient and direct manner. Later in this development handbook we will discuss how to further develop partnerships and how partnerships are an important part of expanding aquatics in your country. (See Chapter 8).

Being at the right events is not only about attendance, but also about saying the right message when you are there. Taking opportunities to be a keynote speaker and give presentations about your federation, the (new) direction it is taking and the vision it has for the future allows you to promote your federation and the ability to be seen. For example, speaking at an educational seminar or an event with potential sponsors is a good platform to speak about your federation.

Developing your website is the opportunity to speak about your federation both internally and externally. It is your voice to the world, and you can decide how you want your message to come across. A website allows you to inform your members, staff and the public about new activities going on, as well as the successful accomplishments you have had. It also allows you to be seen in an age where most people are using the Internet to be seen. As was discussed in Chapter 3, having the right website and using the right digital media services allow your federation to not only be present online, but also to have a presence!

Useful tips

Growing your membership is about:

- Reactivating, renewing, retaining and recruiting members!
- Keeping good relations with your with your current members can reinforce loyalty to your federation and help in recruiting new members.