

## Somerton Bowling Club South Australia

*Somerton Bowling Club is medium to large by South Australian club size standards. The clubrooms and 19 bowling rinks are situated in a seaside residential area (on council lands) very close to Glenelg beach and approximately 15 minutes from the City of Adelaide. The Club has approximately 400 members, and 400 additional "Night Owl" bowlers who use our greens and facilities 3 nights a week during the summer season. The Club participates in the Bowls SA Pennant Bowling Competition. It also provides professional speakers, meals, dinners, dinners with entertainment and dinner dances for members and members of the community and employs professional bar and catering staff. The Club was recently described in the Adelaide "Advertiser" as the "prestigious Somerton Bowling Club"*

### **What was the problem?**

Until two years ago the club was a men only club and there was a general resistance to change. Membership numbers were declining, pennant bowling results were at best average and the general age of members was escalating without any sign of change. Actual membership numbers had been in general decline for 7 years.

### **What was your solution?**

1. The Board appointed a state bowling representative as a salaried Club Captain Coach with a clear mandate to recruit new and elite bowlers and in turn facilitate pennant bowling success.
2. The Board lobbied members to accept women as members and, after a somewhat feisty debate and discussion period, called a Special General Meeting in order that a vote may be conducted. A successful ballot allowed the Board to alter the Club Constitution and allow women to become members. This was a sound decision by club members and the resultant acceptance of women bowlers/members has contributed in a most significant manner towards a united and focussed club environment.
3. The Board reduced membership fees for all categories of membership.
4. The Board lobbied members with a view towards gaining their approval to proceed with an extensive clubroom renovation/upgrade. The renovations consisted of major upgrades to the clubrooms, the bar, kitchen, change-rooms, handicap facilities, first aid room, amplification and electronic projection systems
5. The Board took a decision to become proactive and support and focus on Night Owl bowlers as a recruiting ground for new bowlers. This was a factor in increasing membership and financial flow.
6. Established a Skills Register of member volunteers who are willing to assist with the myriad of tasks associated with the core business of a bowling club. This allowed for best practice use of volunteer skills and avoided confusion and overuse of the same volunteers. It also prevented the Club incurring costly outside repair bills when the expertise required already existed within the Club.



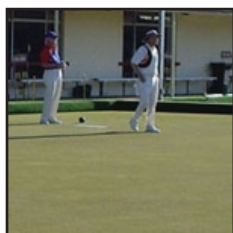
## How did you promote it?

1. Full page advertisements in the local Messenger Press.
2. Letter box drops detailing membership advantages.
3. Council approved street signage on clubhouse and surrounds advertising facilities and fees.
4. Publicised 'high profile' (eg Kevin Sheedy and similar), high standard speaking and dinner functions.
5. Introduced a regular and professional newsletter to all members and Night Owl bowlers.
6. Developed and maintained an improved web site.
7. Personally invited new external groups, such as retirees from several localised retirement homes to attend functions.
8. Ensuring we provide professional service, high quality food, and functions has contributed to our success and reputation both in the local and wider communities.



## How successful was it?

The whole process has been highly successful. It is evidenced by an increase of approximately 150 new members (both bowlers and social) since the commencement of the projects outlined above. Membership numbers have gone from a regular decline to an ongoing increase in new members and our pennant and social bowling activities together with the increase in usage of the club facilities by external groups has created a new and exciting environment within the club and club members.



The decision to recruit and maintain elite bowlers has also been a success as at the current time our Premier 1 side is top, Our Premier 2 and Metropolitan 1 sides are also top and the remainder of our sides are very competitive.

There has been a documented and noticeable increase in the number of Night Owl bowlers wishing to use the new facilities.

The success of the dinners, dinner/dances or dinner/shows we facilitate have all been well attended and very profitable.

The clubrooms are now hired out during non-bowling times for various private and corporate functions. This is no doubt as a result of the upgrade, which now provides a very upmarket environment eg. High-profile groups such as the Adelaide Crows Corporate Executive have used the new clubrooms for functions.

## What worked best?

The Club room upgrade, the admission of women as members, the focus on Night Owl bowlers together with the restructure and allocation of defined portfolios to individual Directors. This in turn led to our capacity to finance and appoint a Club Captain/Coach. It would be accurate to say that all of the above mentioned issues combined have been important in achieving the end results.

## What didn't work?

It is accurate to say that a small minority of club members are not supportive of our increased social activities. However the Board have maintained and stand by the premise that all decisions made are in the best interests of the club and for the general betterment of the majority of members.

## ***What advice would you give other bowls clubs?***

1. That the Board of Management develops a clear and united vision for the future of the Club.
2. That there be one Board of Management for the whole club. After consultation a decision was taken at Somerton BC to have one Board and not individual Boards for Women and Men, saving duplication and “turf wars”.
3. That the Board of Management appoint a Director who will (after consultation with club members), develop, maintain and monitor clear and precise short, medium and long term Business and Strategic Plans. The plans must be available to club members and be flexible but remain consistent and practical in order to ensure that the desired direction and results are monitored and achieved.
4. That the Board appoint a Director to be responsible for the development of a Risk Management Plan and Occupational Health and Safety, Framework.
5. That the Board of Management implements a Board structure which allocates specific portfolios (and responsibility) to individual Directors.
6. Dependent upon the bowling success of an individual club, the Board of Management should consider the appointment of a Club Captain/Coach who is answerable to the Club President on matters of bowling performances, team discipline and bowling welfare matters.
7. Ensure that the Board identify non-Board members to assist and participate in sub-committees which support each Board portfolio (eg business, bowling activities, social functions, catering etc). The Sub-committee manager in turn reports to a Director who raises relevant issues with the Board of Management. (this prevents unnecessary discussion and time wasting at Board Meetings..!!!)
8. That the Board of Management develops documented Club policies and procedures which are available to all members.
9. That the Board of Management establishes and maintains an up-to-date Skills Register of member volunteers who are willing to assist with the myriad of tasks associated with the core business of a bowling club.

