

We all know that there is no single silver bullet when it comes to growing membership. It will always take a combination of measures to achieve success.

Hopefully, the following list will provide your Club with a number of ideas to help reach your membership goals.

Getting Started

1. Form a Membership (Recruitment & Retention)

Sub-Committee ...or have at the very least, one person dedicated to this area.

- in many Clubs, this role can be just as important as the Treasurer's role as growing/maintaining membership is vital to a Club's financial viability

2. Dedicate some of your annual budget to recruitment initiatives

- too often, we can be consumed by only budgeting for our current bowlers and quarantine very little for attracting new bowlers

3. Define your membership targets – how many members would you like and what type/age/gender of members

- the desired types (bowling, social etc.) and ages of members you are aiming to attract will guide which of the following ideas may be more appropriate

4. Build a database

- when trying some of the following ideas that attract first-time/casual bowlers, it is imperative that you attempt to gather some information which allows you to follow up on your initiatives e.g. gather an email address (or phone number or Facebook 'like') for future communication – you can encourage this by way of offering a 'lucky draw' prize to those providing details

Recruitment

5. Similar to #2 above, if your Club spends \$X,000 annually on tournaments/carnivals for registered bowlers, please consider spending a percentage (10-20%) of X on events targeted at bringing new bowlers into the game e.g. a Bring a Friend Tournament

6. Host a Bring a Friend Activity

- appreciating that most members join at the

introduction of a family member or friend, hold an event to facilitate this concept – it needn't be an entire day, but a one/two hour activity – the key is making it enjoyable

7. Along similar lines, host a "Family Fun Day", where fun bowls activities are just one of many activities that would attract members from various parts of the community to attend – other activities could include mini golf, chocolate wheels, market stalls/car boot sales, BBQs or 'one-off' catering, jumping castles, face painting etc.

8. Offer Casual/Barefoot/Fun Bowls at your Club

- whatever you choose to call it, this the fastest growing area of bowls participation ...and it's people trying our great sport. Those worried about casual bowlers damaging their greens must be very comfortable with their membership numbers. Casual bowlers can always be supervised ...as you would for a new bowler learning how to play the sport

9. Offer a regular (weekly or monthly) short format session of social bowls

- It is a big leap to ask someone to walk in and begin playing regular four-hour sessions of social bowls – it is much easier to get them involved in a shorter activity initially – Jack Attack is one such activity - www.jackattack.com.au

10. Consider running a weekly game of social bowls outside of business hours or Saturday afternoons

- From 9am-5:30pm on weekdays, most potential new members are either working, studying or taking care of children/grandchildren. On Saturdays, many potential new members are involved with other sports, especially via their children/grandchildren, or other social activities. Consider holding a Sunday social bowls session if twilight bowls is not an option.

11. Hold a corporate/business bowls competition for local businesses

- Jack Attack or a similar short format is ideal

12. Hold a 'family challenge' competition, where extended family members are invited to play in a short competition or one day event

13. Advertise bowls to your captive audience
 - if your Club is fortunate to have times each week/month where large numbers of social members are present (e.g. raffle nights), periodically spruik to members/visitors how they can try a game of bowls at your Club
14. If your Club has internal advertising, whether it be TV screens or posters, try to include a notice about how people can try bowls at your Club
15. Avoid advertising 'free coaching' to get people into the sport
 - people prefer to hear they can 'play' rather than being 'coached' ...even if what you are offering is in fact coaching
16. Place a registration sheet on your Club bar that advertises upcoming bowls events for new players ...or an expression of interest sheet to try bowls
17. Invite local sporting Clubs to have a free fun bowls session at your Club – meet with a Committee member of the local Club and invite them personally (or better still, ask to address the tennis/golf/cricket/football/netball players after a day's play and invite them as a group then)
18. Encourage sporting Clubs to hold their annual presentation events at your Club ...and as an enticement, offer them a free brief fun bowls session before or after their presentation
19. Invite local community groups (e.g. Lions, Rotary, Legacy, Probus etc.) to have a free fun bowls session at your Club
20. Invite your local school (along with family and friends) to have a free fun bowls session at your Club
21. Visit your local retirement village or Over-55/60/65 complex and ask to address residents during one of their weekly social gatherings to make them aware of your Club
22. Offer incentives to current members to join new members
 - whatever small amount of income that is forgone initially could be made up multiple times if each new member plays for a few years or more
 - examples could include half-priced membership for those current members that introduce a brand new bowler ...or running an annual competition with a prize attached for current members that attract the most new members
23. Along similar lines, some Clubs will double the prize money/award for social bowls events, if a pairs/triples team includes at least a member that has been playing for less than 12 months
24. Offer your members a discount for having a barefoot/casual bowls Birthday Party at your Club where they can both introduce family and friends to the game (and may even be able to assist with supervision/instruction)
25. When community groups, schools, charities ask your Club for donations and the Club may not be able to provide a financial consideration, offer a barefoot/casual bowls session instead
26. Whenever your Club has a large captive audience e.g. Aust. Day, Anzac Day, any large televised sporting event ...get some bowls out on the green (or run a bowls activity) and have some new people try the sport – working with a ready-made audience can be much easier than cold-call recruiting (e.g. letter box drops)
27. Partnering with local schools to run a Sporting Schools program
 - More info at <http://www.bowlsaustralia.com.au/Get-Involved/Bowls-Australia-Sporting-Schools>
28. Look at when your local Council/Community is holding community events and see if you can tie in an open/fun bowls session with those events and benefit from the free publicity that may be provided
29. Have a functional website (with key searchable words / metatags)
 - the days of new members finding your Club in the yellow/white pages are well and truly gone – if your Club doesn't have a web presence or main-street frontage, then it may as well be covered in an invisibility cloak
 - Bowls Australia can help provide Clubs with a free website
30. If you are part of a larger parent Club, attempt to have an attractive image of bowls placed in a good position on their website – with some easily found contact details

31. Similarly, if you are part of a larger Club and the Club has a periodical magazine or e-mails their members, see if an attractive notice about bowls can be included regularly ...and if the bowling section has a newsletter/website, ask if a link can be included in the e-mails/magazines
32. Have a regularly updated Facebook page
 - like it or not, Facebook is the current-day 'newsletter' – more potential new members are using Facebook than you would imagine ... remember the days when not many bowlers had a mobile phone?
33. Have a Twitter account
 - To help get bowls stories or events into the media (or shared amongst friends) ...in our time poor world, journalists regularly re-tweet stories to thousands of followers or alternatively use Twitter as a source for articles/stories
34. Make a short video (1-2 mins) of bowlers having fun on the greens and circulate via social media and your website
35. If your Club doesn't already, offer an inexpensive 'social' membership category so that other members of your community can enjoy the Club socially – frequent social members often become new bowling members over time
36. Approach your local TAFE / Community College / University of the 3rd Age and offer to run a four to eight week bowls course – some of the cost of the course could be used to offset paying for participants' Club membership
37. Host a 'Girls on the Green' afternoon/night or short competition with other offerings such as glasses of champagne and/or a 'fashions on the green' award
38. Have a stand in a shopping centre handing out flyers to try bowls at your Club
 - most shopping centres will offer a discounted rate to Clubs/not-for-profits to hire some space for a day
39. For those Clubs that still receive State Bowls magazines or advertorial magazines, drop in some copies to places in the community where magazines tend to gather e.g. doctors practices, community centres etc. A sticker can be placed on the front cover of these magazines with text such as "Like to try bowls? Call 9999 9999"
40. Include a line on your membership form to ask how they heard about your Club or the reason for joining
 - over time, the Club will be able to see which methods or recruitment are working best
41. Invest in some reusable roadside banners with appropriate text/pictures
 - don't overuse or leave up for too long as it can lessen the impact – generally use in the lead up to events
42. Set up a stand at local fetes
43. Set up a stand at Council or Community Festivals
44. Set up a stand at your local polling place on election days
 - in each case of setting up a stand, where space allows, small bowls (such as Junior Jack Attack bowls) and a target can be used on grass or a flat surface to give people a feel for the sport
45. Place flyers on community notice boards (shopping centres, libraries, Bunnings, community centres etc.)
46. For Clubs with large social memberships, place a poster on the bathroom wall or back of toilet doors
47. Write a story occasionally for your local newspaper – remind the community you're there and doing good things
48. If your Club hosts Trivia Nights or Poker Nights (or any other such regular activity), once a year, offer a free fun bowls session in the hour before they are due to play/quiz
49. Offer your sponsors a free fun bowls session as part of their annual sponsorship
50. Invite members of your local Council (or State/ Federal MP) and their staff for a free fun bowls session – it could also be a great networking opportunity ...these connections could be handy for future grant applications
51. Approach your local community radio station and offer to spruik bowls as a great sport, social activity, its physical and mental health benefits and a great way to make new friends

52. Going one step further... if you start a discussion with your local community radio station, see if you can have regular bowls news/updates added to their program – offer to send them some copy they can read out or perhaps even offer to be a volunteer presenter
 53. If your Club has a lot of passing traffic, place a sign out the front (such as an A-frame) in the hours before a social/casual bowls session that states something like “\$10 Bowls – Today 1pm-3pm”
 54. Host a Rock ‘n’ Roll social night at your Club that may either include some ‘Rockin’ Bowls’ on the green as a warm-up activity ...or spruik bowls during the social night
 55. Hold a local ‘Food Festival’ at your Club inviting many local caterers to spruik their cuisine, while also running a fun bowls activity simultaneously
 56. Hold a Market Day / Giant Garage Sale at your Club while also offering a fun bowls activity
 57. Have a bowls noticeboard in a prominent part of the Club and try to include some photos of bowlers having fun or club champions, rather than just notices with text
 58. Have membership forms displayed in a high traffic section of the Club and make them easy to find on Club websites – offer an online registration if possible
 59. Consider offering a trial membership category (for a certain period e.g. three months), that allows potential full members to ‘try before they buy’ – this may be a reduced monthly membership amount and/or reduced green fees
 60. With some states moving towards new fee structures, multiple and flexible membership categories are worthwhile considering
 61. Host a fun bowls event to raise money for a charity – many people will be more inclined to try a new activity for a good cause – you can also invite a local well-known personality and then publicise the event as widely as possible – the right personality may even help publicise the event for your Club through their connections or social media
 62. Word of mouth (in general) – arguably the best form of promotion – encourage your members to discuss our great sport and your Club with their non-bowling friends
 63. Host a free health and wellbeing session organised by RDNS (Royal District Nursing Service) – through contact with your Regional Bowls Manager, RDNS will come to your Club and host an informative session for your members (on a range of topics including stress management, healthy eating, CPR/ Defib training, skin health, bladder health) – RDNS will use their extensive networks to help advertise the sessions to the wider community in your area to help bring potential new bowlers to your Club
 64. Advertising in a local newspaper
 65. Distribute flyers via letter box drops
 - These last two ideas are less effective than they used to be but can still work in some areas
- ## Retention
66. Survey your members annually/bi-annually
 - Design a survey that polls your members opinions on a wide range of areas – free online surveys can be set up via the use of sites such as www.surveymonkey.com or hard copy surveys can be distributed – the surveys needn’t be time consuming for members and they can be incentivised to complete it by offering a small prize. If surveys are annual and fairly consistent, you can measure performance improvements/ deteriorations in any area
 67. At other times, be willing to accept feedback or constructive criticism to see how you may improve your Club
 - you can do at any time this via a website form or suggestion box
 68. Touch base with members that have left or are leaving the Club to examine the reasons why
 - as above, identify any reasons that could be remediated to prevent unnecessary future membership losses
 - after becoming aware of common concerns (that be gathered through points 64, 65 & 66), then a Club can address those concerns and turn them into opportunities

69. Be as welcoming as possible to new members to help them feel comfortable and like an important part of 'their' Club
 - Some Clubs assign a 'buddy' or mentor to new members that may be available to play at the same times as the new member – the buddy can help introduce them to other members and the Club's activities
70. Offer a regular (weekly or monthly) short format session of social bowls
 - some of our more experienced or less-healthy members cannot sustain a games of social bowls that lasts for three or four hours – consider offering half games or a separate session that runs for no more than two hours to retain these members (instead of losing them to bowls altogether)
71. Hold social events a few times each year to help bring members together and strengthen friendships
72. Recognise volunteers, life members and key supporters/sponsors as often as you recognise success on the greens