

# Communications

Creating dynamic programming requires effective communication no matter what the program. Unless people are aware of the program, know the benefits and understand how to participate, a program is doomed to low turnout and marginal success. In preparing any recreational program, the challenges are great.

Communications with recreational parents and players are difficult for several reasons. Many recreational leagues lack of identification with the larger organization – recreational parents and players tend to identify only with the team the player is on and perhaps to a small degree with the division in which they play. Often they do not have the sense of belonging to a bigger organization i.e. the local club or the state association.

Recreational participants often have a lack of commitment to programming in addition to team activities – the parents sign their player up to practice and play some games. It's a recreational activity at a local park or play space. They do not automatically connect to additional playing opportunities such as camps, clinics and festivals promoted by their local organization or the state association.

Recreational programs are also often hampered by a lack of information due to the registration process – recreational programs have a reduced emphasis on internal communications. Sorting the players out onto teams and preparing/distributing rosters is generally seen as the cycle. Information such as player and coaches names and addresses are generally submitted toward the end of the season making it difficult to contact them during the playing period.

The use of all volunteers to manage the recreational programs can lead to a lack of structure. Just as the play is more relaxed, so is the administration at the base level of recreational programs. The end is to form teams and play. Once the games begin, there is little emphasis on administrative activities within the playing groups. The only focus may be on keeping track of games, assigning officials and getting the players to reregister for the next season. The volunteers are parents of the players and they are more involved in getting their player to games and practices than in league administration.

## **What can be done to compensate for the difficulty in communications?**

- develop and maintain structure and consistency in programming. For example, plan and execute coaching education on a regular and consistent basis. Courses should be scheduled well in advance and announced before the coach recruitment process is initiated. The goal should be to create an environment where the volunteers consistently know those courses will always be offered in their area on the X week of August and the X week of March for example. This removes uncertainty and assists in growing participation. Sure the dates will differ from club to club and community to community but for the local groups they will remain the same.
- create comprehensive but brief communications regarding programs. A one-page program description with concise enumeration of the program features, benefits, costs, mechanics and how to participate can be created as a template where the details can be updated as needed. Prepared well in advance and distributed to the volunteers in the field improves the potential of copies being made and distributed to coaches when they get their rosters or other information each season.

- strive to make the information available on-line all the time on the association's website and make sure it is constantly updated. Create an environment where volunteers know to look on-line for details and current information.
- make effective use of email to connect with contacts and provide up-to-date information and reminders. While it is difficult to get local email addresses, it is possible to create an email tree structure where information can be sent to local volunteers who can forward on to others.