



Finding and recruiting new committee members

A stale committee is in danger of losing its focus and while it can be reinvigorated by retraining or inspiring existing members, succession planning to include new members is often the best answer. Even in the case of a well-run, effective and stable committee, members will leave so it is important to always have a recruitment strategy in place.

Recruitment strategies need to ensure that the committee is representative, responsive and consistently effective. Reflecting the needs and interests of the group's members, offering skills and expertise that will allow them to navigate the terrain, and respond swiftly and productively to change.

Step One – Identifying the gaps

The first step in the search for committee members is to think about what your organisation wants to achieve in the next one to three years. These directions should already have been defined if your group has a strategic plan.

Think about what skills may be required to help achieve your goals. For example, if your organisation is planning to undertake a major building program, then someone on the committee with expertise and experience in the building industry or major project management would be desirable. If an enhanced internet presence is a key objective, then someone with a technology background may be appropriate.

Assess what skills are already present on the committee, and where the gaps are.

In summary, you should think about:

1. What are the key objectives for the group over the next one to three years?
2. What skills are needed to assist the staff/volunteers/group to achieve these objectives?
3. What skills do current members offer in these areas?
4. What skills will depart with the retiring member/s?
5. Where are the gaps?

Step Two – Assessing the existing board

Once you have worked out what skills are needed on your committee and what cannot be filled by existing members, think about some other aspects of your existing committee and how well it is currently serving your community group.

Think about: Is your committee the right size?

As clubs change and grow, so too do the requirements of the committee. Start-up/small clubs may need only a handful of members, while expanding clubs may need a good deal more. When undertaking a recruitment process you should assess whether your committee needs to be expanded or contracted.

Think about: How balanced is your committee?

Is there a good mix of skills and interests? Is there a gender balance? Is there a youth voice? If not, the recruitment process is the best time to address any shortcomings.



Think about: How representative is the committee?

Do you include different voices? Do you have members drawn from the groups your club is set up to serve – e.g. are you catering to a disability group? Do you include people with disabilities? If the membership includes people from a variety of age groups, does your board represent this diversity?

Step Three – Determine what other qualities are required

Once you have identified the sorts of skills and experience your committee requires, consider other desirable qualities that will help to build a harmonious and productive committee.

- Contribution of time, creativity, patience
- An ability to work cooperatively, listen, take account of the views of others
- A personal commitment to the organisation's mission
- A sense of humour (A committee that can laugh at the right times is usually one that can move on and take a balanced, more objective approach to its decision-making)

People join committees for a variety of reasons – because they're asked, because they are hoping to boost their professional resumes, because they want to improve their standing in the community, because they want to "give back" to their community, and so on. While none of these reasons should preclude a potential member, it is essential that members are committed to the group's mission and are prepared to work to achieve its objectives.

Step Four – Focus on diversity

Diversity is a good thing, both for the club and the community. If you want to bring in new perspectives and new voices, think about whether you really reflect the community you represent. Should you be including all cultural backgrounds? Indigenous people? Younger people? Older people? People with a disability? More women?

When pursuing a diversity strategy, it is important to avoid tokenism – this is easily achieved if you ensure that all board members are treated equally; that they have appropriate skills and expertise and a strong commitment to the group, and that they share equally in committee responsibilities.

Inviting a variety of viewpoints, all valued equally, may make decision-making a little more difficult but it will make it more open and responsive to the needs of the organisation and its constituency.

Step Five – Active recruitment, ensure you communicate, communicate, communicate

Communication is critical to effective operations within any organisation, tennis clubs are no different, but often we overlook this fundamental requirement. Replacing volunteer committee members needs to be voiced to allow your tennis community to realise and consider possible contribution.

- Value your volunteers. Provide a visible space to celebrate your volunteers - who they are and what their roles are. Along with thanking these valuable people this will also advertise the volunteer roles required at your club, often members just don't realise. Channels – social media, collage of people and roles displayed in the club foyer, newsletters, social events, website volunteer page, volunteer of the month, volunteer birthday recognition.
- Existing committee member profiles on website with short role description.



- Break ALL volunteer roles down - info on skills required, time required, job description. Display on website, advertise in newsletters/social media. “bite sized chunks” that volunteers can understand and commit to.
- Develop a committee succession plan (terms, time period and election process) Invite all members to have a say in the process.
- Communicate committee successes regularly.
- Word of mouth. Grow those Love Tennis volunteers to the future of your committee.