

# H Membership Recruitment & Retention

## Understanding your Membership Structure

To put it bluntly, the reason existing curlers are dropping out and “many” new curlers are not coming into curling clubs is because they do not find the existing benefits of membership attractive in relation to the fee they pay. Our curling clubs are not delivering the customer service required to “keep what we work so hard to get”.

Obviously, there needs to be a focus on customer service and perhaps current programs need to be adjusted and new programs need to be designed to **keep** existing curlers and to **attract** new ones.

From the standpoint of our existing and potential curling clients, there are four categories of members:

**Category # 1:** These are people that wish to curl on average three or more games per week (in excess of sixty games per season). In most clubs, this type of curler would make up 20% or less of the membership – in some clubs, 5% or less.

**Category # 2:** These people would like to curl about twice a week and participate in some bonspiels (40-50 games per season).

**Category # 3:** These are people that would like or are only able to curl on a once per week basis (25 games per season).

**Category # 4:** There are number of people interested in the sport of curling that are either unable and/or do not wish to curl on a regular basis throughout the entire curling season. There are an increasing number of people that find it difficult, if not impossible, to make a regular commitment to a curling program because of a) time, b) job, c) commitments to other recreational or community educational programs, d) winter vacations and, e) part-time community residents. **Few, if any, curling clubs have programs that can accommodate the special needs of this type of potential curler.**

In most clubs, the potential for increasing membership is in categories 3 & 4. The intensity of customer use of the curling facilities varies from very high in category #1, to very low in category #4. Some recognition of intensity of use must be given in the fee structure of various types of members. A member must feel that the value of his participation, whatever the degree of it, is worth it to him or her.

### Example

The Anytown Curling Club understands the need to be flexible in selling memberships. Here is how they came up with a plan attractive to those people in **Category # 3**. Monday to Thursday

evenings were labeled “prime time”; Friday night and Saturday all day became “secondary” or non prime; and daytime ice Monday to Friday and Sunday was called “tertiary” time.

By putting a price on the various time slots they had to sell, the committee arrived at a modified “pay as you play” structure. While this concept once had negative overtones in the curling business, this pricing option best suited today’s busy schedules.

Here is how it worked: every playing member would be assessed a base fee of \$100.00. They then would choose which league(s) to play in and add the league fee to the base fee. Each “prime” time league was priced at \$100.00; “secondary” leagues at \$35.00 and “tertiary” leagues at \$25.00.

Therefore, one night a week of prime time curling would cost \$200.00 (\$100.00 + \$100.00) while evening mixed curling on the weekend was priced at \$135.00 (\$100.00 + \$35.00). The price to curl one night of prime and one night of mixed, under the new format, would be \$235.00 (\$100.00+ \$100.00 + \$35.00).

Prior to changes in the fee structure, one night a week curling plus mixed constituted a full playing fee of \$360.00. This proposed structure continued to offer an unlimited membership at \$355.00 (equaling two prime leagues plus one secondary league). There were 19 different price points that first year – something for everyone!

The Board’s decision to accept this fee schedule came with risk. Many of the Club’s members had been paying full prices while curling two or less times a week. They would be receiving substantial decreases in their fees under this new format. To recover the lost revenue, the Board was banking the low priced once-a-week prime time curling category would be very attractive to new members especially to those leagues currently operating at about 70% capacity.

To enhance this new pricing structure, the committee also recommended the Board adopt payment plan options, both early and deferred; payment by any of the three major credit cards as well as by cheque, cash or debit card; and finally, financial incentives for recruiting new members.

There is no such thing as an ideal curling program that can be suggested to any club. The clientele of some clubs is very different from that of other clubs. The key suggestion is the development of curling programs that meet the needs of their members. If clubs can develop a more attractive product that is differentiated according to member needs, and subsequently manage that program effectively, it would go a long way to keep curling clubs a “hive of activity”.

## **Role of staff in designing membership programs**

A manager of a curling club can give leadership and take responsibility for the design and management of curling programs that would cater to the diverse needs of the members and to maximize the utilization of the ice facilities. This is a very major change from the way most curling clubs are presently operated.

The Board of Directors, through various volunteer committees, is usually responsible for the design and operation of curling programs. Some of these volunteer committees are excellent at times; at other times, they leave much to be desired.

If a curling club has a manager, his/her duties are usually viewed as everything else but the curling programs. There are many facets to curling club management; office, housekeeping, ancillary services, etc. The one area that is often ignored and/or left up to volunteer committees is that of design and management of curling programs. **This latter area should be of first priority because, after all, curling services are the major product being merchandised.**

The major problem is to convince the Board of Directors of curling clubs to see the imperative need for more competent and professional managerial skills related to design and management of curling club programs. If that can be done, the next step is to provide training programs to upgrade the management skills of the people that are performing the functions within the curling club operation, much like the program related to ice making skills.

## **Recruiting or Attracting New Members**

Most curling clubs are showing a decline in membership and, while you might wait for the "cycle" to begin its upswing, you would be better advised to take positive action now to lure potential customers into your club. Many other activities are competing for the recreation dollar and we must ensure that the curling club is perceived as being worth its fees.

### **1) Find a competent chairperson**

The most important person in your club is not the President, manager or ice technician. That person is your membership chairman. The ideal person is one who is willing to take on the job for a minimum 2-3 years. Their immediate priority would be to find people worried about falling membership and willing to work at helping the club.

### **2) Committee responsibilities**

#### **a) Chair**

- Call a meeting of representatives from each curling section of the club.
- Establish an agenda and form committees.
- Ensure that committees are functioning and fulfilling their objectives.
- Ensure that all deadlines are met.
- Establish a budget allowance for each committee.
- Co-ordinate results and provides the president with a summary by a given date.
- Make it convenient for people to join.

#### **b) Finance**

- To establish a realistic budget for all committees. It is a good idea to get a chartered accountant to set up a system so that year to year consistency can be maintained simply by making the appropriate entries.

#### **c) Publicity**

- To discover ways and means of exposing the club facility to radio, newspapers and television. An article on an event will draw far more attention than a small though expensive advertisement.

#### **d) Committee Sections**

- If you break down the areas where you need curlers such as juniors, women, mixed, men, senior and super senior, you could also have a representative to help design each section's recruitment program.

#### e) Entertainment and Hosting

- An 'open house' should be arranged for all new and interested curlers. The club directors should be present and club facilities should be shown to prospective members.

### 3. Conduct a survey of past members

One of the first jobs the committees should do is conduct a survey of members who have left the club in the last 5 years. It makes no sense to bring in 100 new members this year if you lose 99 the following year. You might be very surprised why members have left and these areas must be corrected before you attempt a membership drive. The following examples are the result of such a survey made at one particular club.

- a) Lack of awareness on the advantages of curling both as a competitive and fun sport.
- b) Competition in the recreational field, i.e. skiing, extended winter vacations.
- c) The economic squeeze, whereby people are placing greater priorities against their disposal incomes.
- d) A need for more clear-cut communications with the membership on curling plans, prior to the commencement of the curling season.
- e) A need to change current draws to a more practical method to accommodate all curlers.
- f) Partial membership for persons with only a limited amount of time.
- g) A need to promote registrations at the start of the season by creating a fun environment and placing extreme emphasis on and awareness of registration times.
- h) A need to create a favourable environment for curling at our club to attract new members.
- i) A lack of recognition on our part of the number of members who would sincerely like to curl part of the season, retain their rights to use the club facilities, but not be expected to pay the full season dues.

### 4. Analyze your present membership

With reference to the reasons for members having left the club, analyze the current membership to see if it is possible to tailor your programs to meet some or all of their requirements.

- The **High Competitive Curlers** - those who wish to curl or practice several games/week, to develop skill levels to allow them to succeed, and to compete in top level bonspiels throughout the season.
- The **Intermediate Level** – those who wish to curl twice a week at a high skill level, will participate in bonspiels, but are unlikely to compete at provincial levels.
- The **Strictly Social Curler** - who would like to curl once or twice a week in a non-competitive situation.
- The **Casual Curler** - who is interested in the sport but who is unable to curl on a regular basis. There is an increasing number of people who find it difficult, if not impossible, to make a regular commitment to a curling program because of job, community demands, winter vacations, etc. Few, if any, curling clubs have programs that can accommodate the special needs of this potential type of member.

The highly competitive curler will always make good use of the club, so it is with the other three that we most likely gain some ground by tailoring programs to their special needs. When determining fees, you must take into account the frequency of ice usage. The degree of ice utilization is the key to a successful program. While it may be mathematically true that the cost of operation to have 100 curlers using the ice three times per week or to have 300 members curling once per week is the same, you must also take into account the effect that the extra

"traffic" will have on bar operations, pro shop and food services. If we can develop a more attractive product that is differentiated to our member needs, and manage that program effectively, you can go a long way toward making your rink a "hub of activity".

### **5. Promotional Campaigns**

- To increase current membership.
- To make the club a welcome atmosphere.
- To increase public awareness of your club.
- To enhance your programs for the enjoyment of all.

**Short Term Methods** - Any combination of the following can be used depending upon your situation:

- Hire a qualified instructor or develop your own instructors and offer curling clinics both prior to and during the season.
- Media Awareness - Have someone in publicity aware of the guidelines for local media to ensure maximum coverage.
- Flyers - can be used to "blanket" new area of the city, apartment buildings, Newcomers Clubs, etc.
- Free membership given, using whatever criteria you wish, draw from early registrations, from those who have brought in a new member, only those who are new members, and so forth.
- Jackets - Give a discount on jackets embroidered with the club name.
- Newspaper ads.
- Written invitations or brochures given to members to hand over to two friends who are likely candidates.
- Prepare a package for new members containing a discounted membership, a letter of welcome, a free introductory social, a clinic, and follow this up with personal contact.
- Hire a student (one of your junior curlers) to type, mail, and phone on membership blitzes.
- Offer a social membership to former members to keep them involved with your club.
- Offer a bar bonus.
- Use an End-of-the-Season Spiel in conjunction with Open House Week as a first contact for the Fall Campaign.
- Use the personal contact method - two telephone and/or personal contact calls to be made to each club member.

## **Retention of members**

**First Call** - The objectives of the first call are as follows:

- To determine each member's intentions for curling club membership for the coming season.
- Request opinions on last year's operation of the club and obtain any new ideas or constructive criticisms that members have to offer.
- Request members support on obtaining at least one new member prospect. Outline your plans for making new curlers welcome. Initiate personal follow-up if indicated.
- Supply information on Golf Day.
- Indicate timing of next call at which time you will provide full registration details.

**Second Call** - The objectives of the second call are as follows:

- Secure commitment on attendance of the Golf Day.

- Inform members of your overall **NEW** plans for the year. (Information to be supplied by mid-August.)
- Determine extent of new member potential from membership. Initiate a follow-up plan for any potential members. Review new member program.
- Provide details of registration day plans and build member interest towards attending.

**Example of a Membership Plan Scenario**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
March	Open House Week (optional)
July	Complete 1st calls
August	Mail out Brochure to potential curlers.
August	Complete 2nd call
August	Golf Day
September	Complete mail out of Registration Plans to Member.
September	Newspaper Campaign.
September	Radio Campaign
September 30	Registration Day.
October 10, 11, 12	Open House - New Curlers.
October 13, 14	New Curlers Bonspiel.
To be determined	New Curlers School.

**Use of celebrities.**

- Hire a well-known curler to do ads and video promos in the high schools and over local media.
- Set up displays in larger shopping centres - brooms, stones, junior stones, and other equipment showing:
  - Curling is a family activity with something for each member.
  - Curling is a fun game, a healthy and legitimate sport.
  - Curling has league times to suit the needs of most individuals.
  - There is a place in the league for all levels of ability and proficiency.

**Long Term Methods**

**a) Juniors** – This is a large target group to consider, although chances are you've already got them recruited. They are the juniors who are the future of the game. Don't overlook them in your efforts to recruit senior members. Make sure there's a junior rep on your promotion committee. Don't overlook the possibility of finding new members in groups that are already in existence. For example, the University or Community College nearby, the Big Brothers, the Kiwanis, Rotary or other service clubs, Girl Guides or Scouts, your local churches. Enlist the help of the Welcome Wagon service. Put an ad in your local daily or weekly. Send a news story to the sports editor of the radio/TV station or paper.

**b) Our Prime Demographic** - Surveys have shown that there is a major group out there that has been largely untapped. That group comprises the 30-50 year olds. They are looking for a sociable sport, a healthy sport, a fun sport, and a club that gives them a real sense of belonging. Curling fills the bill ideally.

**c) Intermediates (21 to 30 years of age)** - A very difficult time for many - marrying, raising children, payment on car, trying to buy a house. This person is needed by all clubs but their activity dollar is very restricted. If possible, some concession should be granted to this group.

**d) Seniors (50 to 60 years of age)** - The life-line of the club. The more you can acquire of this type of member, the better off the club becomes. You may find with today's business environment that some draws may have to change to accommodate them, but "bodies" is the name of the game.

**e) Super Seniors (60 years of age and up)** - This is another group you shouldn't overlook. This group has paid off the mortgage, has built up some savings, has the time to travel and is looking for that healthy club atmosphere they remember from their earlier working days. Your club probably has a good number of this type of member already. Too many clubs do not take full advantage of this group. Most of them do not have financial problems and they have two great qualities - time and experience. Their skills range from handymen, carpenters, doctors, lawyers, accountants and executives. All you have to do is fit them in the right slot. This is a labour force no company could hope to afford and you can have it for free!

#### **f) Postscript**

- Enthusiastic senior or super senior members should be included on every club committee. This way, they are made aware of problems as they arise and what help is needed.
- Let them know personally that you always need help with financial problems, publicity, expansion plans, petitioning council and every other aspect of club operations. Get your retired banker, contractor, and politician involved, you need each other.
- Any group using non-prime time ice deserves equal if not special treatment.
- Your club is a business. Who has more experience than these retired businessmen to deal with its management?
- Many seniors make excellent coaches and instructors, who have the time to spend with juniors and new curlers.

#### **Key Point**

The main point all Membership committees must remember is when you have all your proposals ready, call a special meeting of all the club members and tell them of your future plans. Remember - a successful Recruitment Program begins when all members are involved.

## **Meeting Customer Expectations**

Customer service is generally acknowledged as a necessary component of operation for any provider of products or services. Since the 1970s, it has become apparent that the more successful organizations put the customer first. Most curling operations are competing for customers even if they are private clubs. This topic is designed to serve as an introduction to customer service.

### **1. Goals**

The first goal of this topic is to build an awareness of the need for quality customer service. The second goal is to establish the need for attitude development on behalf of the individual employee before customer service skills can be applied.

### **2. What you will learn**

After this topic, you will be able to:

- Describe the reasons why customer service is so vital to your club's success.
- Identify common curler /customer needs and expectations.
- Describe the procedural and personal aspects of customer service.
- Summarize common pitfalls that limit customer service at a curling facility.

### **3. Why Customer service?**

- Customers have choices in terms of where they spend their recreation dollars and time.
- The lifeblood of our facilities is repeat customers.
- Customer service attends to customers' needs and expectations.
- Customers' expectations are often set by the level of services you provide.
- Increased competition. Look at other winter entertainment options in your area. Do your customers have choices? The usual answer is yes. Lots of choices! Even if you currently have little or no competition, keep providing less than acceptable customer service and you will soon have that competition. The saying is "If you don't take care of the customer, someone else will"! Sometimes despite your best efforts things still go wrong. Negative impressions of an industry-wide nature, created by others may even drive your customer to spend their recreation dollars and leisure time elsewhere.
- Demographic changes. Consider what is happening demographically in our nation: shifts in population, the graying of Canada, rightsizing in the cooperate world, the threat of privatization of public services. What effects may these changes have on your curling operation?

### **4. Why does any operation lose customers? One study indicated...**

- 1% of lost customers die
- 3% move away
- 4% just naturally float
- 5% change based on a friend's recommendation
- 9% can find it cheaper somewhere else
- 10% are chronic complainers
- 68% go elsewhere because the clubs they deal with are indifferent to their needs

### **5. What are Customer Needs and Expectations?**

The lifeblood of any operation is repeat customers. While North American auto makers built cars with short life spans (to insure a customer would buy another car within five years), foreign auto makers were building dependable, high quality auto that in time began attracting repeat customers. Repeat customers equal profit in the private sector and continued survival in the public sector.

Customers come with needs. They need to feel welcome. Remember Norm and his friends at "Cheers"? For over a decade we enjoyed this program set in a pub where "everybody knows your name." Curlers want to be insiders. They need you and your staff to be happy to see them.

The need to feel important. Ego and self-esteem are powerful human needs. We all like to feel important. Slow, rude or indifferent service erodes our feeling of importance and hence our enjoyment of the overall experience.

The need for comfort. Participants need physical comfort; a comfortable place to enjoy the friendship of the group after finishing the game.

### **6. What is quality customer service?**

Quality customer service is what the customer expects or perceives it to be. Customers come with several sets of expectations:

- Minimal expectations are the most basic requirements: ice, bar etc.
- Ordinary expectations are those that have become the industry standard for the area. The club will be reasonably maintained, clean, have a clubhouse with concessions, pro shop, etc.
- Unexpected expectations are those that exceed even the customers' expectations: an exceptionally well maintained arena lounge, exceptionally friendly personnel, reasonable



costs, etc. Many small things like flowers in washrooms, free coffee for early morning arrivals are standard at this level.

## **7. Attitude First**

### **Management Decisions/Considerations**

- Start by developing the right attitude about customer service; the skills can come later. Remember, the delivery of quality customer service depends on attending to both your internal and external customers.

### **Internal vs. External Customers**

- There is a customer service book entitled “The Customer Comes Second!” The basic premise of the book is that you will never treat those outside the organization (external customers) any better than you treat each other inside the organization (internal customers). Therefore, the delivery of quality customer service requires a management style that supports an atmosphere that is friendly and where it is obvious that everyone cares about each other.
- Attitude is commitment to service even when it hurts. We are seeking to create an atmosphere where every decision and action is designed to provide the best customer service possible.

## **8. Retention realities**

Many curling clubs pay attention to retention when it is too late – when a noticeable number of members have left. That may be because they have ignored membership retention realities. The first step in understanding retention as a strategic process is to understand realities.

- The curling club must emphasize retention as a priority.
- Membership renewal is only the **last** step in the long process of retention.
- Many clubs give the lion’s share of resources to recruitment and spend little if anything on retention.
- For growth to occur, two members must be recruited to replace one lost member.
- Members continually evaluate the value of their membership. To keep members, clubs must “deliver the goods”.
- Paying special attention to first-year members can convert them into active lifetime members.
- Retention is tied in part to how a member was recruited. It starts with the first contact, even before joining.

Source: Excerpted from Keeping Members: The Myths & Realities, by Arlene Farber Sirkin and Michael P. McDermott, published by ASAE, 1995. Reprinted with permission from ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT, copyright American Society of Associations.

# **Ideas on How to Retain and Recruit Members**

## **Retention**

1. Create a Retention Committee and give it goals.
2. Create a first-year member “Welcoming Committee”.
3. Send a special newsletter to first year members.
4. Keep members’ names, addresses and email current and accurate. Be sure to your club publishes an annual roster of members’ names, addresses and phones, officers and directors, bonspiel information, and league schedules if possible. This provides members with a convenient, all-in-one place resource for calling subs, their club management, and so on. It enhances identity as a club member. The cost should be nominal. Many clubs print a formal roster, sell ads, and make a little money.
5. When members do not renew, find our why. Work on identifying trends as to why members defect.

6. Survey first year members to see how they rate your curling club.
7. Have a form prepared outlining to potential members what they can expect for their membership fees. Also, instead of calling them fees, call it an **“investment in membership”** at the Anytown Curling Club.
8. When important issues come up, call some of your least active members for their opinions.
9. Recognize members who reach milestone membership anniversaries.
10. Get members involved at some level because involved members do not drop out.
11. Publicly congratulate your members when they are recognized for something outside of the curling club.
12. Have a section in your newsletters or on your website honouring the efforts of those members who have helped out the club. Recognize them as often as possible.
13. Use newer technologies to send out renewal notices and accept credit cards for membership investments.
14. Give discounts or rebates for early renewals.
15. Do not forget rental league members – retention applies equally.
16. Rather than giving first year discounts, apply any savings to the second year renewal investment. Offer some form of **reduced dues or trial membership** for new curlers, with especially attractive packages for juniors, and special programs for seniors.
17. Make three to four contacts with first year members above and beyond the contact you might make with the more established membership.
18. Invite executives from local employer companies to speak at a General Meeting on topics about curling or your local community or the state of business in the area.
19. Make sure that you send each new member an orientation package.
20. Establish a Customer Service Program for your club
21. Educate staff on the importance of “first contact”. A prospective customer will usually make up his or her mind about your club in the first 15 minutes. Be good as soon as that front door opens.
22. Have at least one family related activity during the course of a season. Have a number of events during the season that combine a little curling with a party. Have a variety of music and other entertainment, to appeal to all age groups.
23. Limit competitive-oriented leagues to certain identified leagues and events. Strive for balanced teams in the rest of the leagues.
24. Assign one team to be league social chairpersons each week. The informal dinner or other activity they initiate will encourage curlers to come early and stay later.
25. Encourage members to curl with new curlers in bonspiels and leagues, but allow for members who wish to curl with a particular group of friends. This can be a tough balancing act, but it's worth the effort.
26. Be sure the directors include a proportionate number of social curlers of all ages.
27. Allow for the needs of the competitive player by setting aside a league (no onus to balance teams) and allow a competitive or “cashspiel” if the competitors want to run it. If your ice is busy, allow for a reasonable amount of practice opportunity at reasonable times. Have a club championship playoff at season's end.
28. Publicize your competitors' achievements on the club bulletin board and in the newsletter. Show them you're proud of them. Be sure the board of directors includes a proportionate number of competitive curlers.

### **Recruitment**

1. Provide members with printed invitations to club events to give to their friends and business connections.
2. Capitalize on golf - the seasons are complementary. Ask golf club management if you can set up a curling display with rock, broom, tartan, etc. Have a combined golf/curling tournament.

3. Capitalize on fitness. A curler walks a mile or two every game, and sweeping gets shoulder and arm muscles in shape. Contact fitness program leaders at hospitals and other places to recruit seniors.
4. Set up a booth at a street fair, to promote your club and maybe raise a little money, or demonstrate curling outdoors at winter festivals.
5. Invite the local school press to do a feature article on student member-curlers.
6. Encourage local high schools and colleges to add curling to their intramural programs.
7. Identify members who are good speakers, and have them join the local speaker's bureau.
8. Offer members some incentive (recognition or tangible value) for recruiting new members.
9. Take Polaroid photos of new curlers and post them on the bulletin board. Give them name tags. Both help other members identify the new people and make them feel more at home.
10. A periodic club newsletter can remind members of upcoming events, report league standings, etc. A newsletter will also remind members of benefits of belonging to the club.
11. Develop an inexpensive club fact sheet, updated annually, with your club address, phone, dues, contact name(s), and so on. Newsletters can cost under \$50 per year.

### **Attracting and keeping daytime curlers**

This group, generally comprised of retired or non-working adults can be as large a group as your club desires. They generally have the time and financial resources to enjoy bonspiels and league curling. Keys to attracting and keeping daytime players:

1. Get your current daytime members active in recruiting and managing daytime activities.
2. Encourage daytime curlers to participate in both overall club events and events tailored for them.
3. Most other organizations have retired or non-working adults. Contact them with the message that includes opportunities for them
4. Contact your provincial/territorial association to find out about special inter-club events for daytime players. If there are none, start some.
5. Include members of the category on the board of directors.

### **Attracting juniors and kids**

Juniors who do curl develop a great affinity for the game. A large percentage of active curlers started as juniors, often because their parents curled. Most kids can start curling at ages nine to eleven, or at age six or seven using "little rocks."

Young people start curling for the same reasons adults do: 75% for social reasons and 25% because they want competition. Like adults, they need the opportunity to fulfill both needs. Let them seek their own competitive level.

Most successful junior programs started small, with two teams of kids, one adult and a sheet of ice. Don't worry about quantity at first. Good quality early will bring quantity later. Once your program gets off the ground, if the kids like what they see, they'll handle most recruiting for you by word of mouth!

Your junior program will require dedicated adult leadership who can fulfill these requirements for a successful junior program:

1. A structured, well supervised program that allows for fun. "Well supervised" means the right mix of supervision/observation and letting the kids get on with it.
2. Various competitive levels, from social oriented league or practice games to playdowns.
3. Excellent instruction on all aspects of the game. Qualified coaching for competitive juniors.

4. Organized recruiting among member-parents and in the schools. Summer contacts with athletic directors, teachers and scout leaders.
5. Register your curling program with other junior sports programs.
6. Scribe a temporary house half-way down the sheet, for the smaller kids to throw it.
7. Teach the “Spirit of Curling” from the start. Once learned it reigns for a lifetime!

### **Databases**

It is imperative to buy or develop an effective computerized membership database program. Many clubs simply keep track of the first and last names of their members and perhaps their telephone numbers. This is not enough. Develop a registration form with matching fields in your database programs. Ask these questions:

- Name and address
- Telephone numbers
- E-mail address
- League information (what league they will curl in and with who)
- Where do they work and what do they do
- What are their hobbies or skills
- What age group do they belong
- Would they be willing to volunteer?

### **Writing a survey**

#### **1. Analyze your current situation**

Identify areas of concern or areas which you feel could be improved within your curling club (e.g. participation numbers, operating revenues and expenditures, public image, etc.). Now ask yourself which of these areas should have the highest priority or is of greatest concern.

#### **2. Set your research objectives**

To address your concerns or areas for improvement you will require various types of information. The objective of your search will be out find the information you need! e.g. how do our members feel about; what do our sponsors think about, etc.

#### **3. Organize and Carry out your research**

a) Determine your target groups - If, for example, your major concern is a lack of new members, then the people you want to survey are potential users. Decide what kind of people would potentially be interested in your programs (e.g. seniors, teens, males, females, etc.).

b) Choose a method to contact them - There are generally three methods of research you can use: face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews and direct mail questionnaires. Decide which of the three is most suitable for your purposes.

c) Prepare your survey questions - Draw up a simple one-page form consisting of no more than 10 questions that you want to ask your target groups. Remember, only ask questions that you are prepared to act upon when you receive the answer. For example, only ask “Would you like to see a decrease in fees?” or “Would you like to see a new rink built?” if you are prepared to follow through.

d) Pretest your questionnaire - Once you have done three or four interviews, review the responses and decide whether they are providing the information you need. If not, it might be a wise idea to analyze your questions and decide how you can reword them to invite a more in-depth response.

e) Collect the information - Carry on with your survey, interviewing everyone on your list.

**4. Analyze the responses**

Summarize the responses and decide what all this information collectively tells you.

**5. Prepare a written report**

Based on these responses, write a one or two page summary report. Make some general conclusions and recommendations for a plan of action.

**6. Follow Through**

Together with your fellow board members, determine ways to implement the recommendations and execute the plan of action. Be sure to inform the survey respondents and the general club membership of the survey results and your intended plan of action. Do not miss this opportunity to market your product!

**7. Evaluate your efforts**

Over a designated period of time, be sure to evaluate the success of your action plans to ensure that your efforts are creating the desired results.