

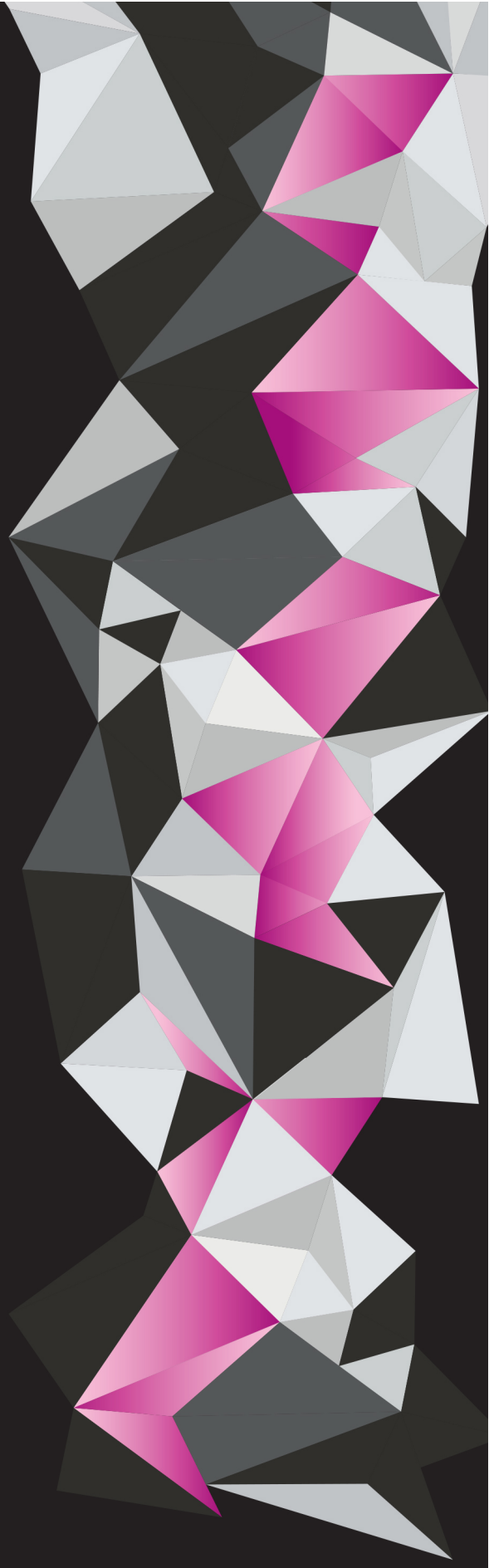


Sports Business Consultancy & Project Management  
provided by the Paul Regan Organisation LTD

Membership Growth Strategy  
Tennis Auckland and Tennis Northern 2013/14

*'Written by tennis people for tennis people'.*

Phase 1 Report





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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - Project overview

### MEMBERSHIP GROWTH STRATEGY

#### TENNIS AUCKLAND AND TENNIS NORTHERN REGIONS 2013-14

In July 2013, The Paul Regan Organisation (PRO) was commissioned by Tennis Auckland (TA) and Tennis Northern (TNR), with support from Tennis New Zealand (TNZ) to develop a membership growth strategy for tennis across both regions. TA and TNR are responsible for the development and growth of the sport across 86 clubs, boasting a total of approximately 16,000 affiliated members. This gender equal sport has the accolade of being one of the largest participation sports across New Zealand yet despite a rapid growth in population, it has seen no evidence to show a subsequent increase in tennis club membership.

TA and TNR are intent on growing the game of tennis and making it more accessible to more people, more often. PRO was subsequently tasked with developing a strategic plan to provide the vast and varied network of clubs with innovative and exciting interventions and ideas to help them strengthen their proposition and reach out to more people.

### THE PROJECT

The project has been split into two phases, largely due to funding but also to define a consultation, research and review period leading to a pilot phase before refining the finished product which we aim to make available to all clubs across both regions by September 2014.

Paul Regan, Founder and Managing Director of the commissioned organisation is the appointed project manager, whilst working closely with Mark Lewis, Club and Schools Manager, TA and Nikki Howlett, TNR Regional Development Manager at a regional level. Although PRO is a UK based business, a strong working partnership has been developed across the team which will undoubtedly contribute towards the success of this project.

#### Project plan:

##### Phase 1:

August: PRO plan the approach and outline intentions

September: PRO visit NZ to conduct audit/review/consultation

October – December: Collate feedback and data and prepare report for Phase 1

##### Phase 2:

January: Identify pilot clubs and plan delivery

February: PRO revisit NZ to launch and implement pilot plan

March – June: Monitor delivery of pilot and subsequent outcomes and responses

July – August: Review and revise pilot project

September: Launch support to all clubs

This document outlines the findings of the research and makes recommendations to be implemented in the next 2 stages of this project.



## INTRODUCTION

Paul Regan Organisation LTD (PRO) has been commissioned by Tennis Auckland (TA) and Tennis Northern (TNR) to develop and deliver a Membership Growth Strategy working with the 86 clubs across both regions.

The project objectives as stipulated in the RFP are:

- Development of a strategic plan for membership growth that will shape the future direction of tennis clubs in the region and remain relevant and sustainable over time
- Reasons why people join/leave tennis clubs in the region across various age bands
- Investigation of current tennis membership models in the Auckland/Northern region, nationally and internationally as well as other sporting codes
- Detail the tennis needs and requirements of different age groups and ethnicities
- Best practice models for recruitment, retention and rewarding tennis club members
- Opportunities for non-members to access club and regional facilities that is not necessarily membership based
- How clubs can use technology to attract newcomers to the sport and improve efficiencies within the membership landscape

### Key Outcomes

- Overview of membership types
- Evidence based assessment of membership models
- Analysis of membership prices/packages today and recommendations for the future
- A prioritised list of recommendations on new innovations and initiatives to grow the number of club members
- Tools for clubs to access to improve and sustain their financial position

### Key Findings - Outcomes based on fact

PRO spent almost 3 weeks in and around Auckland and the Shore investigating the current tennis club landscape and meeting with as many key stakeholders as possible within the given time frame. During this period visits were made to 15 individual clubs, 3 regional centres and 1 primary school training session.

Clubs visited:

Tennis Northern	Tennis Auckland
Brown's Bay	Blockhouse Bay
Milford	Cockle Bay
Silverdale	Jellicoe Park
Birkenhead	Mission Bay
Takapuna	Parnell
Greenhithe	Pompellier
	Sunnyhills
	Te Atatu



#### Meetings Held

TNR/TA CEO's  
TNR/TA Board Chairs  
TNZ CEO x meetings  
TNZ Game Development Manager  
Sport NZ  
TA Club Support Committee  
TA Tournament Director  
Access Control Systems Ltd  
Active Security  
TennisLocal  
Hafele  
Woodland Park School

We conducted 4 presentations where club Presidents and Coaches were invited to attend and we are delighted that 53% of all clubs across the 2 regions were represented. The presentations were delivered to provide the club network with a clear understanding of the project and its objectives and to help the clubs to begin analysing what they currently do to attract and retain members and to understand what their particular USP is. This was a revelation to some clubs, and maybe the first time that clubs have looked inwards to review their membership offer and to begin to understand areas of their operation that they could do differently.

The presentation addressed the following areas:

- Programme overview and intentions
- Outlining some of the common challenges and change in trends and society
- Image, reputation and perceptions of tennis - how these can be tackled
- What your club says to the public – communication and signage
- Applying basic business rules to running your club
- Series of 'break out' discussions for the clubs to discuss/review:
  - The make up their membership
  - Competition - who or what are they up against
  - Attraction and retention techniques
  - Communication methods
  - Coaches and coaching



The response from the attendees was very positive and not only did people leave wanting to be involved in the success of this project and engage with us in trying to grow the membership at their clubs, but they felt that the suggestions, thought provoking approach and energy from the team has already got them thinking about how some changes that they could begin to implement to start making a difference.

During the presentations, we encouraged the attendees to help us reach out to their club members and lapsed members to obtain a clear understanding of their thoughts on our sport and the way in which it is provided through the very traditional membership model that is present at most tennis clubs. We achieved this through inviting the clubs to circulate web links to an online survey to their members/lapsed members. We are delighted with the 1153 responses to the current member survey and the 259 responses to the lapsed member survey. The following points provide an overview of the responses:

#### Current Members

1. Gender: 51% Female / 49% Male
2. Age profile: 46% = 50+, 29% = 35-49, 7% = 19-34, 18% = 5-18.
3. 61 % been playing tennis for 10+ years
4. Been members of their current club: 33 % = 10+ years, 27% = 0-2 years
5. Reasons for joining your club: Location, social + competitive tennis most popular
6. 60% play 1 or 2 times a week
7. Preferred form of communication: Email = 99%, Face-to-Face = 24%
8. 76% support their club providing pay and play opportunities for non members
9. 31% are members of other sporting clubs
10. 74% said they would consider volunteering at the club

#### Lapsed Members

1. Gender: 55% Female / 45% Male
2. Age profile: 30% = 35-49, 28% = 50 +, 14% = 19-34, 27% = 5-18.
3. 48% played for 10+ years
4. 77% were no longer tennis club members / 51% of whom no longer play tennis
5. 82% interested in pay for play opportunities
6. 51% left their club due to a lack of time / 25% due to cost
7. Factors to reconsider joining a club: To play competitive tennis, Location, facilities and cost

*\* A copy of the survey report is available on request.*

#### CLUB SUPPORT AND REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

As indicated earlier in the report, PRO has struck a successful working relationship with both regional development managers, who have contributed to the success of the first phase of this project. However, through the wide club and volunteer consultations, it is apparent that there is the usual frustration and uncertainty from some clubs around the role of their respective regions and subsequent staff and suspicion around any attempt to work with them on any such project.

We have been delighted with the buy-in and support from the network of clubs and we now need to build on this to make this project a sustainable success with the legacy firmly contributing to the growth of the game. In



order to achieve this, it is felt that it may be required to re-evaluate and prioritise the roles of the regional development personnel with the focus shifting to work more closely to help the clubs to help themselves.

#### MEMBERSHIP versus PARTICIPATION

The plateau in club membership despite a large and continued growth in population has inspired this project across the regions. Our consultation suggests that the large majority of clubs (that attended presentations/individual meetings) have done little to review and revise their club membership offer, which in most cases, is a very static and traditional membership that assumes that people want the same from club tennis as they have done for the past 50 years.

There are many powerful generational, cultural and economic changes that have influenced the new way that people spend their leisure time and disposable income, and with the acceleration of the digital world, people demand instant information and flexible options from a less bureaucratically challenged environment. People expect value for money from a more innovative and less traditional opportunity without getting embroiled in an antiquated club structure. People's busy lives suggest that they have less time to dedicate to one leisure activity and to justify such an investment of time and money, expect tangible and compelling value, throughout their time at the club and not just when they join. We would therefore suggest that the traditional offers and modern expectations are the factors contributing towards a static tennis club membership.

There is a vast and varied tennis facilities infrastructure across the regions that is more than capable of catering for a significant swell in tennis participants, particularly if, when referring to 'tennis participants' we infer a cohort of new people that want to play tennis, in a more flexible and affordable way, yet don't necessarily want to join a tennis club. The large majority of the facilities across the regions have traditionally busy times, which are occupied by the junior coaching programme, club nights and interclub competition. But what about the 'down times'? What about the day time courts, which, apart from 'Arthur and Martha' who have occupied the same court on the same day at the same time for 30 years, sit empty until 4pm when the clubs come to life. Although we have cited peoples busy lives as a potential barrier, this is often accompanied by greater flexibility in working hours allowing people to manage their time differently and having the ability to grab an hours tennis before work, mid morning or at lunch time, but does this 'occasional' and 'less formal' desire to play tennis constitute and justify an annual club membership fee of \$400? The world stops for no one and in the understanding that there is a need for change, maybe this is a good time to look at what they offer and how they offer it, thus reaching out to and appealing to more people?

*\*There is insufficient data from SNZ to confirm the number and whereabouts of the indicated latent demand for tennis and as such, this does not assist us in our pledge to enable more people to play tennis.*

#### CLUTTERED LANDSCAPE – all things to all people!

We have referenced the extensive network of tennis clubs across the regions and whilst reviewing the geographical location of the clubs during our visit, we did note that there maybe too many clubs all fighting for the same people. This also poses a problem when funding and grant applications are made as there could be small applications made by 4 clubs, all within a 5km radius of each other, when the consolidation of clubs, or at the very least, the funding application process, would maximise the output from the funds raised and not diluting the small pot.

We acknowledge that many clubs are steeped in history and this should not be forgotten during this process, however, whilst we work with the clubs that require our assistance to grow their membership base and provide playing opportunities for casual non-members, there may be a number of clubs who simply struggle along until such time it is not viable for them to do so.



## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that there are common themes contributing to the lack of growth of tennis club members across the 2 regions and that a focused and strategic partnership with the club network will undoubtedly contribute towards increasing the number of people playing tennis at the clubs, although maybe not as 'members' in the traditional sense.

We are confident that with the knowledge we have gleaned through this process, the desire from the regions to support and drive the project and the positivity and buy in from the clubs and coaches, that we can make a significant impact through supporting the clubs with operational and programming support and guidance as well as helping them to better understand their clubs, their audience and how they are able to reach into the community to help more people play tennis more often.

## WHAT NOW?

We are in a privileged position to be able to capitalise on the positivity and passion from the regions the coaches and the clubs but how do we utilise the findings of our research and consultation to support all stakeholders and partners to increase the number of people playing tennis across Tennis Auckland and Tennis Northern Regions?

In February 2014, we will launch a pilot project to work with identified clubs within targeted areas of support to combat their individual challenges through a bespoke action plan. In order to be very specific and successful with our support, we need the clubs to run through a comprehensive 'self assessment' process to evaluate and collate as much information on the club as possible allowing us to tailor the action plan accordingly. This process is time consuming yet invaluable and we propose that this uniform procedure becomes an annual submission to help monitor output and evaluate success. For the pilot phase, we anticipate this process being conducted through a pre-formatted spreadsheet with the view of launching the programme to all clubs across the regions (September 2014) with an electronic platform.

## THE 4 P's

As we conducted our initial research and through collating the data, it was apparent that the areas of support fell into four areas: PEOPLE, PLACES, PROGRAMMES and PROMOTION. All four of these areas are very closely connected and we believe that a focus on a combination of areas that will have the biggest impact on the participation increase.

**PEOPLE:** Volunteers, coaches, club administrators/managers, members and non-members

**PLACES:** Club infrastructure and presentation, location, parking, access

**PROGRAMMES:** Ensuring clubs are delivering the right programmes to the right people and aware of new initiatives i.e. Hot Shots, Cardio Tennis, Tennis Xpress and can sell their benefits to their target market.

**PROMOTION:** Helping clubs to promote their club and to communicate to the right people through the correct modern medium, including the signage above the club gate.

Although we will not pay too much attention to the 4P categories, they should be used to ensure that our focus through the pilot project remains on these key areas, to achieve the maximum output and success.





## MENU OF SUPPORT

### **SELF ASSESSMENT** *(Evaluate and Evolve)*

A comprehensive process to collate as much information and data related to the running of the club and a critical practice for the clubs to conduct to define the type of club they are and who their key target audiences are.

### **MEMBERSHIP** *(Modernising Membership Models)*

Advice and guidance on member recruitment and retention that would include incentives and suggestions on alternative membership models and payment options.

### **COACHES AND COACHING** *(Making Affordable Tennis Pay)*

Guidance on the employment/deployment of a coach, suggestions on SLA/contracts and financial models. This area will also address coaching programmes and guidance for coaches to professionalise their approach to running a coaching business and consideration on alternative junior membership coaching programmes that are self-sustainable/profitable.

### **VOLUNTEERING** *(Valued Volunteers)*

Guidance, support and training to help recruit, train and retain a stronger volunteer workforce for now and the sustainable future of tennis at your club.

### **ACCESS** *(Unlocking the Potential)*

This area covers the physical entry access systems, online bookings and membership management systems, online payment and maximising the court usage and utilisation.

### **MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION** *(Markets, Mediums and Messaging)*

Develop a professional editable suite of promotional materials that are cost effective and flexible for clubs to use on promoting activities. Also guidance on reaching markets, mediums and messages

*NB: Each of these categories has detailed guidance and support notes with a number of different suggestions and interventions, that will be used to assist in the implementation of the pilot project.*

## MAKING AN IMPACT

When delivering such projects there is often a request to identify quick wins and short cuts to success. We strongly believe that the successful delivery of this project will result in a long lasting legacy of clubs offering tennis through modernised models to many more people. This involves establishing and developing strong relationships with the club networks, gaining their trust and support and changing public perceptions of our sport, all of which take time, effort and face-to-face contact.

Although many of the topics within the 'menu for support' will be familiar and widely used terms, this project will delve deeper into the real issues and provide bespoke solutions and support to those clubs that request and require our assistance and provide a personal hands on service. The role of the regional development managers is crucial in implementing this bespoke support and walking them through the processes to overcoming their individual challenges and breaking down their barriers.

Many strategies for such projects focus on 'what' they aim to achieve and often ignore 'how' to achieve them! This strategy is the beginning of a journey and one that has put the clubs and its members at the heart of the project, whilst looking to attract new participants to our sport. It provides evidence based findings that will enable us to make informed decisions and provide factual and informative solutions for the club network. This



strategy also confirms TA and TNR's commitment to grow the game through the continued dedication of a development manager whose time will be focussed very much on *'how'* we effectively deliver this exciting and sustainable plan. There is a danger of developing and introducing gimmicky initiatives to try to combat such challenges but this project and its subsequent solutions and suggestions are tried and tested interventions that can be adapted to every situation, as in our experience, a 'one size fits all' solution doesn't exist!

As this project is entirely focussed on driving participation and increasing the number of people playing sport, we would like to investigate the possibility of a central funding/grant application to a number of the Gaming Trusts to develop an operational budget to support the implementation of some of the suggestions within this report, i.e. A regional media campaign to communicate that tennis is 'Unlocking its potential' and has its shackles off – *'always wanted to play tennis, but didn't want to join a club, well now you can.'* Funding could also be raised to work with a design and print agency to develop the aforementioned pre-formatted templates for clubs to download in editable formats. There are also potential costs in developing the online platform for the 'Self Assessment' tool.

### THE PILOT

In February 2014, PRO will return to Auckland to work with the regional teams to begin implementing some of the solutions and suggestions with a small number of identified clubs by developing individual development action plans (iDAP). The clubs will be identified through consultation and from requests already made from clubs wishing to be involved in the pilot project.

During PRO's visit, we would like to repeat the club forums/presentations to build on the strong relationships developed during the September visit and to ensure the continued engagement with the network by providing a comprehensive update and summary of the research findings and to outline the next steps. This would also provide an opportunity for any identified partners such as TennisLocal to present to the audience and explain their involvement products and costs etc.

PRO will also work with the regional team to meet with all pilot clubs during the stay and to complete the self assessment process and to work through and develop the iDAP with the club and to begin implementing them prior to PRO's departure. PRO will then monitor the success and challenges of the project through frequent email and Skype communication, where PRO will support the regional delivery team to support the clubs deliver their bespoke plans.

In July/August we will review the success of the pilot project and revise where necessary, before agreeing on the best format to present the 'Club Guide To Growing The Game' resource. We anticipate that a designed electronic web based format is preferable due to ease of access and reduction in printing cost etc. We should however investigate the possibility of sourcing funding/sponsorship for such a resource as it is far reaching and may attract 'grant aid' due to its function and aim of assisting with the growth of the sport.

The message to the clubs is 'if we keep doing what we have always done, we will get what we always got', and that simply isn't working. We are excited about delivering the next stage of this project and to begin seeing the benefits of hard work and effort that has gone into project that has been ***'developed by tennis people, for tennis people'!***