



CLUB SUCCESS STORY

‘YOUR CLUB NEEDS YOU’

Leatherhead’s champion approach to succession planning

Leatherhead Tennis Club, Surrey

Leatherhead Tennis Club (LTC) is a medium-sized venue in Surrey with six courts and 380 members. Over the past 12 years it has successfully built a new clubhouse, resurfaced all courts, added extra floodlights, converted to a company limited by guarantee and improved the club’s offering and ways of working. It operates a long-term facilities plan, sets annual goals and monitors performance for continual improvement.

BACKGROUND

Over this period, much of the onus of running the club was on four individuals, Paul, Diane, Judi and Nigel whose primary roles were Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Secretary and Chairperson respectively. They also became the Directors when the club converted to a limited company. Additionally, over time, as other members stepped down or emerging needs were identified, each had accumulated further responsibilities including running the clubhouse, maintenance, welfare, tournament/league co-ordination, communications and more. Unfortunately, this ‘quick fix’ approach to fulfilling vacant or new roles was unsustainable – LTC had become over reliant on four hardworking individuals.





SUCCESSION PLANNING: THE STRATEGIC PHASE

In 2019, with almost 60 years' committee service between them, Paul, Diane, Judi and Nigel collectively felt that they needed to take a step back, consider their personal and family priorities and approach the sensitive issue of succession planning. They knew that finding replacements for all their roles in one go would be disruptive and difficult, so they devised the following strategy:

1. Distillation of big jobs into smaller roles, by splitting their responsibilities and recruiting more individuals. Judi's roles were eventually taken on by seven people!
2. A dual recruitment approach, incorporating an internal email and advertising campaign to publicise the vacancies, plus headhunting for key roles based on skillsets and personalities
3. Spreading succession over two years, to ensure that their collective experience could be passed on gradually and to allow settling-in time for new Committee and Board members performing key roles. Handing over the smaller roles could happen as and when volunteers were ready.

SUCCESSION PLANNING: THE RECRUITMENT PUSH

At the AGM in January 2020, the club announced that the four would be standing down over the next two years, paving the way for the eye-catching recruitment campaign launch 'Your Club Needs You'.

Following the launch, several members stepped forward, including some on the headhunting list. Members who hadn't were then approached and asked to consider volunteering. To help explain and fill the major roles, detailed job descriptions were developed, customised from templates on the LTA website.

The potential Membership Secretary nominated one of her playing buddies to be Club Secretary and both started in January 2021. As the Treasurer and Chairperson roles did not become vacant for 18 months, these candidates were asked to join the Committee as 'general members' so they could learn how the club worked. Both then moved into position in early 2022.

As more members came forward to volunteer, some formed self-managing teams. However, the role of Team Co-ordinator remained tricky to fill. The Committee therefore decided to split that role into three: separate co-ordinators for the men's and ladies' teams plus a co-ordinator to liaise with the local leagues. This made it easier to attract volunteers.

WRAP UP

As a result of the phased succession plan, LTC not only made the prospect of volunteering for a major role less daunting but also helped to pass on experience and knowledge to those who would be managing the club in the future.

The leadership team now consists of four new people in key roles, three experienced and longer-standing committee members, plus the head coach. Additionally, some great volunteers now fulfil the smaller roles across the club.

The whole process took well over two years, but the staggered approach enabled thorough handovers and support, benefiting those stepping down as well as those stepping up, and the club itself.



Introducing change and managing succession can seem a daunting prospect. But, as the saying goes, how do you eat an elephant? You do it bit by bit! We 'ate the elephant' by splitting big jobs into smaller roles, taking a dual approach to recruiting new talent, and spreading succession over a couple of years. We are happy to have handed on a flourishing club to our successors who will do a great job in taking it forward."

Nigel Turner, LTC Chairman 2012-2022

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