

Characteristics of successful sport club Presidents

Typically, when we ask new Presidents what their primary responsibility or objective is the answer is often:

“To leave the club in a better position than when we took on the role of President”

While this is a noble sentiment it is also simplistic in its nature because it implies that the only thing to be done is improve, when the reality is that a President’s responsibilities are more complex. Key activities of a successful sports club President are ensuring the club:

- Complies with all legislation, especially Association Incorporation legislation, club rules policies and procedures
- Defines and documents its club culture and behaviours and continually communicates them to members, players, coaches, supporters and volunteers
- Ensures the club has clearly defined goals and objectives and documented strategies and implementation plans on how they will be achieved
- Implement strong financial controls to protect the cash and assets of the clubs as well as the volunteers handling the cash
- Strong risk management awareness and strategies
- Run meetings and communicating to stakeholders

While successful club Presidents have a variety of styles and ways they choose to tackle the job, there are common behaviours and characteristics that all successful Presidents seem to have.

Understand the club’s governance, its rules/constitution policies, procedures and legislative obligations

Successful presidents have a good working knowledge of the constitution, club rules and by-laws, policies and procedures as well as the duties of all positions within the club. It is amazing how many clubs we work with in conflict that was caused because they simply didn’t know or follow their own rules and procedures.

Successful presidents have strong knowledge of this information and will use it to create the culture they are seeking as well as providing a framework which to administer the club by.

Always talking to and listening to your club members

A good club president listens. More importantly successful club Presidents are always enquiring about how people are going. Whether it is people in allocated tasks and roles or simply those participating in the various activities of the club.

Successful club Presidents are always talking and listening to people inside and outside their club.

Looking for issues before they arise or ways to help people undertake their role is a key characteristic of successful Presidents.

Conversely, when someone (a member, committee member, volunteer, parent, potential member) comes to talk to you about an issue, take them seriously. If you don’t have time to address it right then, let them know.

Tell them you'd rather talk about it later when you have more time because you really value what they have to say. The positive interaction of all your club members will create a successful club and will make you a successful President.

Clear vision

Successful Presidents all have a clear vision for the club. Ideally this is converted into a formal strategic plan for the club so everybody can see and articulate the club's vision and more importantly see how they can contribute to achieving the club goals.

Be a confident leader

Successful club Presidents become comfortable standing and speaking in front of club members. It's natural to be nervous when you first become the club's president, but you need to be continually communicating with your members, so take advantage of times when your members get together in groups to stand in front of them and reinforce the club's vision and how you wish them to contribute.

Become a strong delegator

Successful Presidents don't do all the work, they ensure the work gets done, so you need to be able to ask for help and support while at the same time clearly articulating what you need done and by when.

Successful Presidents, once they delegate a task, will continually follow up to ensure the task will be completed and they also have the confidence to hold club members accountable to their commitments, club rules and deadlines like fee payments.

Make decisions

While many decisions need to be made by committees many decisions are required to be made in the normal course of running the club. Successful Presidents have a strong decision-making framework, based on a strong knowledge of the club rules, policies, vision and understanding of club operations, that allows them to confidently make decisions that are in the best interest of the club and its members.

Lead by example

Successful Presidents engage with the members and leads by example. They live and breathe the club's culture and demonstrate it in every situation.

Is a coach

Successful Presidents ensure everyone has the knowledge, skills and resources to undertake their role.

Boosting confidence in others

A lot of times members leave the club because they don't feel appreciated, become de-motivated or aren't given the opportunity to participate in projects in the way they had hoped.

Successful Presidents continually recognise the efforts of others and continually attempt to boost confidence in others by celebrating club accomplishments through those who contributed to the activity. Acknowledging the work and efforts of others and celebrating it together with the club is a simple and easy way to boost member confidence.

Ask for help

Successful Presidents know they don't know everything and realise they don't need to! Even the best of the best need to ask for help and assistance every now and then.

Asking for help shows you respect that individual's expertise and judgement. It makes the person on the other end feel more important and part of a team. It brings forth a sense of unity and as such you show your club members that their ideas, suggestions and ability to share their feedback on whatever the topic at hand may be, matters and will be heard.

Owning mistakes

As the president of the club, you are not expected to be superhuman or perfect.

As a person in a position of influence, when things don't go to plan, you may find mistakes may lead back to you in some shape or form.

If the matter is small, rather than playing the blame game and pointing fingers, accept the mistake on behalf of the club and acknowledge the lesson learned. Share how this can be a lesson moving forward and how repeating such mistakes can be avoided.

Your members will respect you for not putting other club members down for small mistakes and will be proud to be part of a club where they are shown that even when errors are made, the club sticks together as a family, just as you do in times of celebrations.

From Sports Community (www.sportscommunity.com.au)