Financing and fund-raising for your club development

Summary:

This is a common concern for clubs. The answer is a moving target as the availability of funding changes over time. These notes provide a general guide to clubs. They also include contemporary links to funding sources. 1) There are various fund-raising routes that work in different situations. Absolutely the first thing you should do is to make sure that your subscription rates are right and that subscriptions are being properly collected. Make sure you have a proper club budget which includes depreciation if you have buildings and a sinking fund for your courts. Get your subscription rates right and make sure subscriptions are collected. And be realistic. Maintaining tennis courts and equipment is not cheap. For a standard permeable tarmac court, you should save each year around £1,000. That's what we call a sinking fund. (The LTA recommend £1,200 per court). That should cover your resurfacing costs every 10-15 years. So set your membership fees and your court fees at a level that covers your costs. Every time you use a court, it deteriorates a little bit. There is no such thing as tennis for free.

2) Move all members to monthly direct debits. Annual fees always cause an issue as the shock of finding £100 or more in one go always excites people. But £10 a month is only around 33p per day. An easier sell and also much easier to raise each year. A rise from £100 to £110 is noticed, but £10 to £11 is not and gains the Club more income. And don't forget to charge for court use and floodlight use. Charge non-members at least double what you charge members. Pay and play makes money for clubs and is increasingly popular in the current uncertain economic climate with people not wanting to commit to annual memberships. Don't be afraid of pay and play. Embrace it, make it work for you but differentiate it from your offer to members. Members commit and that commitment deserves reward.

3) Existing members are a good source of further funds. That is not to say that members should be milked, but just that they are most likely to want to help their club. They are already invested. So, ask them to consider what they could do to help. Different Clubs enjoy different levels of wealth among members. One Club asked 60 members to put in £1,000 each, on the basis that every quarter a draw would take place and one member would get their £1,000 back. That raised £60,000 for resurfacing. That wouldn't work in all clubs. But a club recently raised over £5,000 in just two weeks by asking members for £50 each. Consider your ask, make it relevant and people will step up. Equally members work for companies. If each of those companies could find £200 a year for an advertising banner at the club, that is valuable sponsorship. If you are lucky you might find a bigger company who will pay to be a name sponsor and put in a bigger sum. And then of course members are good for social fund-raising events, raffles, race nights, bring and buy sales, jumble sales, table top sales etc and social events like BBQs, etc. The more people you get involved the easier it becomes.

4) Local funds. A new club raised £11,000 in a year from tapping in to local charitable fund-raising sources. It just takes a little effort to root out what there is locally and then make applications. Scarecrow charities, the post code lottery, wind farm funds, section 106 funds, waste and recycling funds. Some or all of these might be available to you locally. You might find this link to the charities commission website helpful. It has a search tool to help identify local charities in your local area. (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission).

5) National funds. Sport England are currently keen on floodlit facilities, and also on facilities that can be used by more than one sport. Floodlit tennis courts can be used for things like circuit training for other sports, cycling proficiency for schools, and other non-tennis activities, but also disability tennis

(and other sports) as well. And just in case you think this is a marginal thing, one of our clubs Club started to look at mixed and disability sport about three years ago after contact with the Tennis Foundation. That led to contact with IMAS the international mixed ability sports people and all sorts of activities going on, on both the outdoor and indoor tennis courts as well as in the other facilities. It's all useful income.

6) The LTA are also very interested in floodlit facilities. They are offering interest free loans of up to £250,000 for facility development. If you have a clear vision, a plan to deliver that vision, as well as other funding support, a chat with the local LTA team would be wise if you haven't already. You will of course have to meet LTA eligibility criteria, and be registered with them.

7) Yorkshire Tennis from time to time and subject to funding bring available may provide clubs with opportunities to apply for grants and interest free loans.

8) This will not be an exhaustive list of what's possible out there. You will have a better idea of what will work in your area and for your club. We would strongly advocate getting more people involved in doing the work.

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