PLANNING

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Planning is the cornerstone of any well run league. If you fail to plan you plan to fail! Proper planning prevents poor performance! If you do not plan your program well, it will show. Planning is extremely important in coordinating any high level program. Planning can come in many forms and most all plans are open and customizable to how you want to operate. Below are some tips and guidelines on different plans you should have in place within your sports programs.

Scheduling

Schedule out your program dates at least a year in advance. If you run multiple sports leagues organize your dates in a program calendar to give you a picture of the entire year. If you are coordinating programs all year round, you also want to have a solid programming plan in place. Once your schedules are set for the year communicate it! Send this information to all past participants as well as any staff, volunteers, referee groups, etc. Create marketing materials, get them on the website, and send emails. With your stakeholder's busy schedules, they will appreciate getting this information well in advance. Include "All dates and times subject to change" on all your communication in case unforeseen events force you to make changes.

League Documents

No matter what types of documents you use in your league make sure you have your templates ready to go well before your next season. These include things like parent's packets, rules books, forms, flyers, administrative spreadsheets, etc. When the season prior finishes, turn everything over to the new season right away. This way you will have it all saved and ready to go when the new seasons starts and things start to get busy. Plan out all the documents you need and keep them accessible and organized in one area. When documents need to be updated make sure to get rid of older versions to avoid duplication or releasing an old version.

Marketing

Marketing plans can come in several forms but at the very least have a calendar or outline on when you want to start to market your programs and what marketing channels you want to use. Narrow your marketing efforts to each of your target markets for more effective marketing and communication. Market to past participants as well as the local community.

Budget

Your budget is the planning tool for your finances. Sound budgeting will ensure you only spend what you are able to spend based on your forecasted revenue and expenses. Once your budget is created, stick to it as close as possible and track every expense that comes in to make sure you stay on track.

Staffing

If you have the ability to staff your games with part time staff or scorekeepers have a plan to staff your programs. You may also have your own in house referees or work with an officiating association. Falling short on staff will have a direct effect on your game days and may leave some fields unsupervised or cancelled altogether. Make sure to know your optimal staffing levels and have a plan to ensure you never fall short.

Staff Training

Training and education is an ongoing process and should be taken seriously. Not just to make sure your staff are great with your sports, but also to make sure they know your expectations, policies, procedures as well as prepare them for emergency situations and in turn limit your liability. You don't have to do all your training in house as there are tons of resources out there to provide staff trainings. Regardless how you want to do it, have an annual training program in place to make sure you get the most out of your most valuable investment, your staff!

Volunteer Management

Volunteer coaches are the heart of your league and no youth sports league can happen without them. It is extremely important to have a plan to recruit, retain, educate and train your volunteer coaches or any other volunteers that may be a part of your program. The best programs generally have the best volunteer base.

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Parent Management
Plan on how you are going to manage your parents from the start of registration to the end of the season. This includes education, game day expectations, and your code of conduct.

Fundraising
Many youth sports leagues will rely on some type of fundraising to help subsidize your registration fees and provide enough revenue to keep the league running. Have a fundraising plan to keep your fundraising goals on track. Make sure to outline your timeline, goals and objectives for each type of fundraising source you are targeting. Be creative with your fundraising to stand out from the crowd and provide unique value for potential sponsors and donors!

Maintenance
If your organization also maintains your sports facilities, create a maintenance plan that focuses on your preventative maintenance for every aspect of your facilities. A sound preventative maintenance plan will keep your facility aesthetically pleasing, increase the lifespan of your assets, and help you identify how long things are supposed to last and when they need to be replaced. If you do not maintain the facility your league plays at, work closely with that organization to keep up with maintenance to ensure your needs are being met.

Risk Management
Regular inspections, having proper insurance, and creating emergency action plans are all part of your overall risk management plan. Limiting your liability will prevent a catastrophic incident from closing down your program for good.

Facility Improvements
Facility Improvement Plan and/or Capital Replacement Plans are longer term for your largest and most expensive assets. The plan should outline the lifespan of each asset and the cost of upgrading or replacing it. Once you know how far out it should last and how much it will cost, you need to set up a revenue stream to ensure you have the funding for these items when they come due. Always set aside funds on an annual basis for capital improvements.

All of the above can be put together to form your organizations Business Plan and Comprehensive Strategic Plans. Short term planning can take place a year in advance with long term plans going out 5-10 years. Regardless of how long you are planning out you should always review and adjust your plans on a regular basis. These are fluid documents and as the external and internal climate changes you plans should adjust. It is always recommended to have all of your stakeholders involved in the planning process. For example, if you are making a program plan ensure to involve your staff that will be conducting those programs in the process. Lack of planning will always show so remember if you put in the extra work up front in planning it will make your job easier, your operations smoother, and your overall programs better in the long run!