

**Planning Growth for your Squash Club**

A Guide

This document is confidential. It is strictly not for re-distribution without the express permission of IRISH SQUASH

**Table of Contents**

1 Introduction / Exec Summary 3

2 Preparing for Growth 4

2.1 Make sure your club is ready 4

2.2 What do you want to be? 4

2.3 Get to know your prospective members 4

2.4 Create your value proposition 4

3 Executing a Growth Plan 6

3.1 Build collateral 6

3.2 Update your club 6

3.3 Market yourself 6

4 Fostering Activity 8

4.1 Squash-related events 8

4.2 League squash 8

4.3 Club Noticeboard 8

4.4 Social events 8

4.5 Build relationships with other clubs 8

5 Appendix Material 10

# Introduction / Exec Summary

This sets out a template for growing a squash club. It includes first-hand experience drawn from Squash Clubs where membership increased significantly in a 12-month period by applying some of the lessons contained in this document.

The document is comprised of three sections:

1. Preparing for Growth
2. Executing a Growth Plan
3. Fostering activity and keeping your members

# Preparing for Growth

## Make sure your club is ready

A strong committee with a treasurer, secretary, president and club captain will allow you to get things organised so your club is ready for growth. This means you can more easily manage important details – like cleaning, court maintenance, light operation, opening hours, events and so on. A willingness to take on the work and execute a vision for growth is the first step.

## What do you want to be?

Do you need to grow to break-even? What is the maximum membership? What is a healthy membership? What do you want the club to look like in 3 years time? Set some goals.

## Get to know your prospective members

Who are they? What age groups? Are they working in large firms nearby? Are there complementary sports clubs (GAA)? Are you trying to attract people who know nothing about the sport?

How do they find out about you? Where do they look? How have you found members in the past? What would appeal to them?

Are other squash clubs in competition for the same catchment area? What are they offering? What is the cost of membership? How can you compete?

Write it down!

Establish target groups based on past membership and an analysis of your environment of ex-patriates, groups of professionals from large nearby firms, existing squash players looking for cheaper playing options, ex-rugby/GAA players, and untapped women and junior sections.

## Create your value proposition

What can your club offer? Make sure you know what resonates most with prospective members. Think about it from their perspective. What do you need to look like to present an attractive proposition?

E.g. free parking, hours of opening, good rates, coaching, open days, introductions to squash, in-house tournaments, box leagues, a ladder, an online booking system, convenient location, the health benefits of squash, socialising, bar access, gym access, corporate rates, civil service rates, junior squash…

Write it down! Order your offer components in terms of importance to the prospective member.

# Executing a Growth Plan

An understanding of your members from the previous step is what you need to help to shape your collateral and go-to-market activities. Your messages should be in a language that your customers understand, delivered in a manner that is appealing to them.

Everything that the club does, in terms of events, visits from other clubs, open days, Christmas parties, and so on, is an opportunity to build the profile of the club. Use news, pictures and promotional materials to get the message out there. Use digital channels such as twitter, facebook and flickr to amplify the message. Everything you do here will help someone to find your club, or to reinforce their view that it’s a great place to play squash!

## Build collateral

* Forms
* Flyers

## Update your club

* paint
* facilities
* web/Facebook/twitter
* online listings
* new signs

## Market yourself

Built around an ‘offer’ (e.g. an open day) and underpinned by your value proposition

* put flyers up
* local business/libraries/community halls/coffee shops
* facebook, etc
* Take pictures at every event. Use flickr for pictures
* spread the word
* advertise the club with a sign outside your entrance/nearby on a busy road

Don’t be disheartened if interest is a slow-burn to start. Some open days sometimes attracted just three or four people, some of whom never returned. But it got many more people thinking and raised our profile. A slow trickle of enquiries started to build. The fact that people could see you actually cared enough to run an open day was as important as running it.

# Fostering Activity

Give people something to do and a way to connect with other members. Make it easy to play.

## Squash-related events

Shared online booking system, ladders, box leagues, coaching, open night, one-day tournaments, barbecues

## League squash

Work to ensure you field full teams. Set goals in terms of participation. Encourage beginners to aim for a lower team. Get one in place if you don’t have one. This might be e.g. a Saturday league team. Don’t overstretch playing resources.

## Club Noticeboard

Show some activity, e.g. the Olympic bid, print our some colourful posters, pin up box league activity, put a sign up saying you welcome new members, give people something to read and to feel like there is stuff happening. Repeat this online. Make the place look lived in. Any time a prospective member wants to check you out in person or through google, there’ll be lots of stuff to show your club is a bustling and active fun place to play squash!

## Social events

This comes later. Start to foster a family atmosphere, get more people involved. Be inclusive.

## Build relationships with other clubs

Send teams to other clubs, lots of Irish and European clubs are looking for relationships to support trips and social inter-club competition. It gives your club a lot to talk about and gives your members something to feel good about. It builds profile.

# Appendix Material

