

So you want to start a club

Mr Peter Graham

Preamble

Not everyone wants to be in charge of their own club.

Becoming a black belt is not synonymous with becoming an Instructor just as attaining an Instructors Certificate does not mean one has to start a branch of their own.

There can be many reasons for this and all of the various contingencies should be taken into account before you decide to take the plunge.

Opening a club requires a certain amount of dedication and commitment and should not be approached lightly.

Why am I putting so much emphasis on this?

Because your decision will (hopefully) make a lot of people dependant on you. To this end, the following questions should be answered honestly before you go any further;

- a) Will you be available at least two nights a week?
- b) How will your normal occupation effect this? (Travel, overtime, transfers, promotion etc.)
- c) Do you have reliable transport?
- d) Do you have the necessary qualifications?
- e) Do you enjoy teaching?
- f) Do you have the financial wherewithal?

The guts of the above check list will be covered in more detail later but before that, let's take a look at just what makes a good Instructor.

There are of course certain authoritative prerequisites that have to be attained in the arm of certification under the rules of I.T.F.N.Z..

This is to ensure that the highest possible standards are maintained in the education of our student members.

To qualify as an I.T.F.N.Z. certified Instructor, you will need to;

- Be over eighteen years of age.
- Be at least 1 st degree black belt.

- Have attended (and passed) an I.T.F.N.Z. approved first aid course.
- Have attended (and passed) an I.T.F.N.Z. Instructors course.

Not so hard so far? Good!

In addition to the above, you will need;

- 1) To be of a standard that invites your students respect.
- 2) To be committed to making yourself available to your student's requirements.
- 3) To have confidence in your ability to pass on your knowledge.

Let's take the above one by one;

1) This doesn't mean you have to have a body like Arnold Schwarzenegger (or Elle McPherson) and the kicking ability of a ~Superfoot~ Wallace, though either of these attributes would provide a distinct advantage (especially if you were an Elle clone) but it does mean that you will be expected to be capable of demonstrating a good side kick (not necessarily high) and a technically sound punch or block.

It can be pretty safely assumed that you will not have achieved your black belt if this is not so but it is imperative that you are not presenting 'Rubbish' to your students under the guise of T.K.D.

This paper is not about teaching you your art, but more about attempting to point out that you do not have to be a physical '10' to be a good Instructor.

There have been many coaches in the athletics field who would not be capable of running 100 metres in under 10 seconds, or throw a javelin a world record distance, but they are brilliant at teaching someone else how to do it!

Often someone who would not be capable of this achievement without the help and input of the said Coach.

2) This doesn't mean that you have to be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week! It merely means that you should be accessible to your students when they are having some trouble accepting or grasping some aspect of their training.

If you are asked to provide an answer to a problem, and you are not TOTALLY sure, don't try to 'Bulls hit' your way through. If you are not prepared to take the time to find the correct answer, then you have no right to even contemplate taking on the job of Head Instructor. You should also at this point, consider who you can call on for a backup in the case of illness or injury, unforeseen work commitments etc. An assistant is the logical answer if possible.

3) The aforementioned 'Attitude' is of course the major contributing factor towards your confidence in being able to put the message across successfully.

Nine times out of ten this will come with practice and it is important that the potential Head Instructor take every opportunity to present his or herself for teaching assignments if for no other reason than to shake out the jitters inherent in most of us when performing before an audience.

This of course is why this aspect of our training is so important when we talk about T.K.D. Improving self confidence and why we should encourage even junior belts to demonstrate to their peers from time to time.

But, to get to the 'nitty gritty' of this assignment, let's try and approach it through its logical sequence of events. Having first assured yourself in your own mind that you are prepared to go ahead with this, the first thing you will need to establish is Where?

Protocol

First, discuss your intentions with your Instructor. Apart from the courtesy aspect (which is very important) he or she may have thought of something you have overlooked. In any case, they will probably be pleased to give you the benefit of their knowledge and experience.

The next move should be to make your application (in writing) to your Regional Council. This should contain all the relevant detail and a standard example of this can be found in the appendices.

Assuming that this application receives the blessing of the Regional Council, this will then be passed on to the National Executive for their endorsement. This amounts to a virtual rubber stamping as the National Executive will move on the recommendations if the Regional Council and they will only reject the application if they feel the location does not conform to the best interests of the region, e.g. too close to another club, or in their opinion, the applicant does not meet the criteria they have set.

The culmination of all this should be that you receive a letter of sanction from the Foundation. Having been granted this, the next thing is to firm up the venue.

By this time you will have firmly fixed the time frame based on your recently conducted feasibility study. A letter of confirmation should then be sent to the school/church/whatever and a standard format for this can be found in the appendices.

Location

Ideally, this should be in, or close to where you reside. There are few things less soul destroying than travelling miles (kilo metres) on a miserable winters night, to a miserable cold hall, to teach a miserable 5 or 10 miserable white belts, the finer points of saju makgi!

This becomes even more important when you have to travel by public transport, a bike or worse, a clapped out Corolla to get to the dojang and back.

Of course it is not always possible to locate within two or three blocks of your abode, but it should be something you take into consideration.

It is also important to survey the desired area for potential students. To help assess this, the following points should be considered;

Is the area residential, commercial or rural?

How many schools are in the area?

Are they primary, intermediate or secondary?

How big are their combined rolls?

What venues (halls) are available in the area?

What rents are they asking?

What nights and times are they available?

What other martial arts are in the area?

When do they train?

What other organisations? (Cricket, football, scouts etc.)

When do they function?

How far away is the closest I.T.F.N.Z. branch?

Having amassed and assessed the above info, and assuming that everything is still 'Go', the next step should be to apply for permission.

Marketing/Advertising

This should be ready to swing into action about four weeks prior to the proposed opening of the club. Prior to this, you should have decided what mediums you are going to use to promote your coming existence.

PRESS: This can be quite productive but also incurs some expense. Remember to keep your ad short and concise. Uncluttered information is what should be strived for. An example layout is in the appendices.

RADIO: Even more expensive than press advertising, but again you need to try to establish the point of diminishing returns, i.e. how many students will you attract and for how long, to make the exercise worth while. The radio station will help you produce your commercial (at a price).

POSTERS: These can work very well if done properly and it is certainly cost effective. A suggested tried and proved example is in the appendices. Just remember, for these to do their job, they must be placed in locations where they can be seen. Try for places like Local dairies,

fish shops/takeaway bars, libraries, shopping mall notice boards, bus shelters, school notice boards, doctors waiting rooms/clinics, sport shops, nurses homes... and give one to your local Community Constable.

Remember, the more you put up, the more people will see them.

Flyers/Mail Drops

An outline for these can be found in the appendices. The cost of producing these varies but an indication would be:

500 single sided (as per sample) for approx \$300-00. They can be used for mail drops in the area and hand outs at demos. You may also be able to talk some nice friendly shop keeper into allowing you to put a few on the counter. Remember, all printed matter costs money to produce and it will only work if you have it out where potential interested parties can see it. It's no good in your brief case or the boot of someone's car.

Demonstrations

Find out from your local newspaper or Community Centre what is coming up in the way of school fairs, Church fetes, shopping mall promotions and big sports games (League, Rugby, Soccer etc.). Contact the organisers and offer to put on a demonstration.

Approach local schools with lunch time demonstrations. Get those flyers out there!

Your Regional Council will help you arrange a demo team. Remember, a good demo should be no more than twenty minutes in length, be fast moving and entertaining (more breaks than patterns). If possible have a rehearsal to make sure everyone is capable of doing their respective tasks, be it patterns, sparring, destructions or just holding for breaks. Not much looks worse than a group of people wandering around looking lost or attempting some way out technique that exceeds that persons capabilities. Better to go for a side kick on one board and get it.. than try a jumping reverse turning kick over three low flying 747's to try to break 7 taped-together mahogany grand piano lids (suspended) and miss the whole bloody lot! !

Remember to show the basics as well as the amazing.

People will be just as likely be impressed by something they think they may be able to master (with a little training), as turned off by something they feel far exceeds their personal capabilities. Present a professional image.

Self Presentation

This is your image.

Stress your involvement with the National Foundation and its International bonding (I.T.F. & U.S.T.F.). Don't put out rough looking tenth generation photo-copied material.

Use the logo wherever you feel it can do you some good. Check with your Regional Director as to what promotional material is available through the Foundation.

Once you are established you may want to contemplate your own club letterhead, badge and business cards. Once again, professionalism should be the order of the day. If you can't afford to do it properly, better to leave it until you can.

Finance

All this is going to cost money. You may be required to post a bond for your hall (do-jang) or put up some rent in advance. You will have to pay for any printing you have done and any advertising you place.

All this before you have any income!

It has been my experience that the minimum bank roll you will need is at least \$500.00. Anything less than that and you risk doing things by half and ending up with, at worst an embarrassing failure, and at best, a club that is going to take a long time to get off the ground.

So, have you got the \$500.00?

No?!

Never mind, all may not be lost. If you can present a case to the Foundation that shows that you have done all your homework, there is a good chance that they will advance you the money you require on loan at a very minimal interest rate to get you on your feet. Should you need it, a sample letter of a funding application is in the appendices.

You will also need to open a separate cheque account in the name of your club.

Make it clear to the bank that it is to be a non profit organisation (N.P.O.). This will exempt you from certain bank fees such as cheque duties etc. You will probably have to produce a copy of the Foundations Constitution for the bank to accept that you belong to a bona-fide Incorporated Society. You can get a copy of this through your Regional Director.

Now is the time to decide if you want to register for G.S.T. exemption. This is not compulsory if the clubs income does not exceed \$24,000-00 p.a. There are arguments for and against this but I personally do not find the benefits warrant the additional bookkeeping involved.

Further information on this can be obtained through the I.R.D. and one of their explanatory pamphlets is in the appendices.

Book-keeping

Because of the increasing tight I.R.D. restrictions, it is imperative for your own protection to keep accurate records. Don't be frightened. This does not require a degree in accountancy (Yet!). Anyone can do this. It's called 'Double entry BOOKKEEPING'. If the idea terrifies you, delegate

the job to someone you can trust. You will need a receipt book and a double entry ledger (available at any good stationary store). The ledger should be headed up something like the sample in the appendices.

Reconcile (balance) your accounts at the end of the month so you always know where you are.

Remember, you can't pay yourself a fee directly out of club funds, but you can use the money to pay or supplement travel or accommodation that is directly related to the club (to A.G.M.s, tournaments, seminars, etc.). Keep the receipts.

Systems

You will also find it in your favour if you adopt some systems. Attendance records are important as are the payment of fees.

You may also like to draw up a teaching timetable to keep up with the syllabus but you will learn more of this in the Instructors course.

Last but not least, a summary of the I.T.F.N.Z. forms you will need to become familiar with.

Summary

I trust this has not put you off any plans you may have had as far as becoming a Head Instructor is concerned.

Believe me, it can be very rewarding to see your students pass up through the ranks and perform well in competitions.