

Starting and Running your own Club!

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Easy! Yeah right!

I always wanted to have my own club to instruct at, I would say to myself it can not be that hard, turning up to club had always been easy “turn up, train hard and then go home” could not see it would be any different, could it?

Following are my own thoughts on opening and running your own Martial Arts club, I am involved with Taekwon - Do, however I believe the things I write about mostly covers really any type of club be it Martial Arts or other interests one might have that involve a group of people with a common interest be it physical or relaxed.

The answer to the opening statement is yes, it is very different.

My club is coming up four years old and I have made some mistakes and had some good ideas that really worked well for the club and it's members. Would I like to turn the clock back and start again to change anything? The answer is no! To me having ideas and putting them into practise and finding that they do not always work are the same, we all grow much better if we have the odd mistake which should make you as an individual be humbled by them and become a better person.

Before I go into any great detail of setting up and running your own club I believe you should know I am married to “Wendy” and have two children “Xian and Brook”. These three wonderful people made a big difference how the club evolved to what it is now.

Starting your own club, you will need to have the following;

- 1 - A willingness to be operating long term.
- 2 - Training area.
- 3 - Banking account facilities, Society club.
- 4 - Basic administrative skills.
- 5 - Students.
- 6 - Funding and Sponsors.
- 7 - Computer.
- 8 - Good people skills.

1 - A willingness to be operating long term: This I believe is very important and should be one of the first questions you ask yourself before you go any further “Courtesy and Integrity” fit here very well. From the moment your first student joins you make a commitment to them to be for them long term.

2 - Training area: Selecting a good training location should be top of mind as this will determine right from the start as to how things progress from here, I also recommend you look at schools first as this will give you a ready available student base. Once you have selected a location and hall to train in put together a good plan as to how you will present yourself and Taekwon - Do to the person or person's who own or manage the hall. This will help present you to them in good light and possibly gain a reasonable rent on the hall. With my situation I had to present to the school board, principal and hall manager, Pre - planning does pay off. Things to note when looking at a hall, will it suit your training, what is the floor like, what is the roof like when it rains wet floors are dangerous the deafening sound of rain on a iron roof can be a menace. Storage room for equipment and is it secure from other users of the hall. With my hall "Dojang" we came to an arrangement with the school board for me to organise a carpenter to add more doors to the stage of the hall made some roll - in roll - out trolleys for the chairs to go on under the stage and we gained the storage area for our training gear, a lot easier than carting things from home and back again. Also please ensure you advise other instructors in the boundary areas of your intentions "Courtesy".

3 - Banking account facilities, Society club: You may wish to use your own household banking facilities for fees and other incoming monies. I recommend you open a separate club account and there are many choices to choose from we opened a "Society account" which is none interest bearing. This form of bank account and being none profit plus good administrative skills makes it easier to fund through the charity organisations out there for equipment. While on this matter my club is also what I term as an "Open book club". What I mean by this is at anytime a student or parent of students would like to go through the clubs finances they can. Also with the society account it is possible for students to have there fees automatically transferred of which we do have some students do this.

4 - Basic administrative skills: It is very important that you put in place at least basic administrative practises to ensure some sort of tracking for student fees and any other incoming monies are kept in order. This certainly pays off when organising funding through the charity organisations. With my club we use an exercise book to record active students and fees paid, also this book has a record of other monies paid in via funding or sponsorship plus monies paid out for hall rent, grading or hosting costs and other...

This is then all entered into the computer at home with a monthly running total. Copies can be run off for audit or up date for club committee meetings. Also for the students we have a training card which acts as a record of their monthly fees plus a record of how often they have trained leading up to a grading round; they have to bring the card to each training session for the branch or assistant instructors to sign each training session. As another track of student fees we also receipt all fee payments.

5 - Students: Not everybody is cut out to train children due to the short attention span children have. Hey! It is part of being a kid we were all that age once, "Perseverance" applies here. Why did I mention this? Well when I started the Hurupaki club my student membership was four (My family), also it is not so easy to start a club with adults. You could but the extra expence of mailers and going around all the local streets, it is much easier to ask around the schools. So as part of my planning I had already presented to the school a flyer I would like to go home with each child aged 8 years and older, this worked a treat as the membership grew quickly and

before long the club was twenty students strong. The pay off was some of the parents joined up this then gave me a good mix of students. I believe this is a good way to start your student role.

I also recommend you approach other schools in your area. Currently the active student role for Hurupaki TKD Club is fifty five covering all grades and degrees up to Second Dan, not bad for four years. Student's ages range from six to fifty two. We also train over four days which includes a separate children's class set up nearly eighteen months ago, also we train one of these days at another school for safety reasons due to the large numbers training in one session, on this night we practise sparring techniques which includes step sparring, free sparring and tournament sparring the hall is about a third bigger which is great. These are things you will have to think about when opening your club it starts off easy with most likely only one or two grades to teach, then before long you have all grades standing in front of you that you have to teach with still the same time frame to work in otherwise you have to open on other days to fit things in. Planning around students is a long term goal.

Other things you need to consider is why people join, it could be for "Fitness, self defence, companionship, confidence and to learn Taekwon - Do" and you should also allow for the different learning levels of each student and how they take knowledge on, "Auditory, visually and kinaesthetically" all this needs to be taken on board when starting students.

Something else the instructor should head is "Integrity" toward each student.

These skills I have learned over the four years of instructing and I believe other people can do the same provided they do there homework, also do not be afraid to ask for help from the large ITFNZ family.

6 - Funding and Sponsors: This part of running a club really depends on how large your club is and whether your students are more children or adult and if they wish to compete in tournaments and be apart of seminars and camps. It all costs money.

Generally as a rule all your fees that come in should cover the running costs of your training centre, this could be "Rent, First - Aid bag, phone accounts and on line charges also petrol costs travelling to regional meetings" that's probably about it.

So why funding and sponsorship, well this comes down to what training aids you would like to have available for your students to work with and maybe having your sparring mat plus sparring gear for your students train in. Sure they could just buy their own sparring gear that's fine for adults but for children this becomes very expensive. I personally believe the club should have gear available.

Funding can come from one of many charity organisations in your area such as Lions Foundation or Pub Charity. These organisations will help out provided you or your committee do follow procedure in filling out the forms. If you need help with this you can check out the ITFNZ Website or get a hold of your regional marketing person. Do not expect every time you will get a favourable answer back, you will get declined sometimes if there is no funds available at the time you apply. Simply prepare it all over again "Perseverance" will win out. Our club rate is about 30% with favourable applications being paid out. Another avenue is sponsorship through local businesses that have a keen interest in what there community is up to, especially the children of the area. A lot of our equipment is through local business sponsorship "Specialty machine, board

breaker machine and upright kick and punch bags". The last way is for your students to organise raffles and sausage sizzles these are more labour intensive but create good comradeship with students by putting something back into their club. Sausage sizzles and raffles go very well along side other community events such as triathlons or community cultural events where by you apply to be part of the event with a Taekwon - Do demonstration and have along side your stand or area raffles and sausage sizzle this makes it more enjoyable too.

7 - Computer: In this day and age I recommend you acquire a computer for your club. It does not necessarily need to belong to the club it can be your own home computer. In the beginning this maybe an expense outside your income, simply ask one of your students who has a computer to take care of everyday items such as checking the ITFNZ Website "News and Calender" of events coming up and maybe type a monthly newsletter up for you and your students. You may wave some of the student fee to help offset them doing this for you. These days companies such as Noel Leeming's have very good plans available for you to purchase whereby you could charge your club the cost of the monthly payments plus you're on line charges, ink and paper. This would also depend on how big your club was and how much your student fee rate was. It is possible as this is what we do for Hurupaki TKD Club.

8 - Good people skills: Having good people skills is very essential these days. People are so diverse in how they function as the instructor needs to be able to mediate with them and between them. What I have noticed over the last four years and was not noticeable to me before opening the club how people change when they come up through the grades. Their opinion of how things should be in class can be quite different and what can be very difficult if not kept in check, and you must, also remembering each person believes outright they are right. What I have found works very well is to put different students together sometimes they are the same grade or I mix them up. I also make sure that students of 4th Gup up take part of the class and instruct there particular part of the blue booklet syllabus. This works two ways, firstly it puts them in my shoes and secondly it checks just where they are at regarding an up coming grading, it keeps them quite and less opinionated.

Well that covers the students off then there are the parents. Lucky I have a great bunch of parents what I especially like about them is nearly all of them stay and get involved with there children, be it just being down the back giving them encouragement fantastic. The only time I have had to discuss young Johnny or Jill is when they become disruptive in class and they affect other children wanting to learn. A quick word in the ear of mum or dad generally does the job, if not they are sent down the back of class to sit for awhile this calms them down especially just after they have been sent down the back we start some fun session and they want to get back up they are less likely to play up again.

Oh! Did I mention "Indomitable Spirit" in there somewhere, oh well the club goes on. If at the end of the day be they adult or child and there behaviour does not change and gets worse then it is time for them to part company for the betterment of the club harsh but sensible.

Summary: I have covered off a lot in a short space but believe it is enough to ensure that any student wishing to go down the path of being an instructor, not just an instructor but a very good instructor. Then, I believe you will not go wrong following some of what I have mentioned above.

In writing this it has opened my eyes as to how much my family has put into the club over the last four years, so saying that I would like to add something else and that is every so often take sometime out with your family. Go to the beach, visit family and friends, hhhmmmmm.....

Now where did I see a free weekend?