

New Sport - Old Sport ... The decade of Client Focused sport is Here

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As the new decade starts, it is time to face the realities of the sports experience around the world

The last decade, saw the most significant changes in society, in learning, in education, in technology and in social change that the world has experienced.

And, in general, sport has not kept pace with the extent or speed of the changes.

New Sport: Old Sport. The Decade of **Client Focused Sport** is **Here**.

Old Sport ... why it is failing

Several Olympic sports are failing world wide. Look at your own sport ... at the numbers of registered athletes ... and the numbers of sustainable, successful amateur Clubs ... **are numbers increasing or decreasing?**

In many of the mainstream "traditional" Olympic sports like swimming, gymnastics, rowing, track and field and cycling **numbers are in decline. Why?**

If the numbers of registered participants and Clubs in your sport are **decreasing**, chances are you are continuing to offer the same old sporting product and waiting for the market to change and buy what you are selling ... **a sales strategy only embraced by people who want to fail. Your product is wrong.**

The New Era: The Decade of Client Focused Sport

Welcome to the new era for sport: the decade of **Client Focused Sport**

What is **Client Focused Sport?**

It is listening to your clients – i.e. the children and parents who you want to be part of your sport and providing them with the sporting product they want.

This is a major challenge for all sport .. something all sporting organisations are struggling to get their heads around.

In the past, when a kid or a parent said *"I want to join your swimming club or rowing club or athletics club"* you offered them your product.

"Here is our sport. You need to come ten times a week and start dreaming about being an Olympic Champion - take it or leave it".

You immediately put them into your **athlete development pathway** with the **assumption** that every kid who walked through the front door wanted to get to the top.

And, in the past where sporting experience choices were limited and information about sporting experiences difficult to find, many "took it" and accepted whatever the sport was prepared to offer.

Now, kids and parents have multiple sporting experience choices available.

They have an unlimited amount of information on sporting experiences available on the Internet. And, most importantly, research continues to tell us that **not every child wants to be an Olympic Champion**. Some (many) just want to keep fit, learn some new things, have fun with friends and participate in an enjoyable sporting activity.

Increasingly, sports who offer inflexible, performance focused, one size fits all sporting products, kids and parents are "leaving it".

Who owns sport? NOT Sport!

There is a popularly held myth about sport around the world, that "sport", (as in sporting organisations, national federations and other sporting bodies), own sport. **Sport is not owned by sport.**

It is owned by the **clients** of the sport – the parents, kids, grandparents, the athletes – the people who make the decision about which sports experience to buy and what they want from that experience.

Again – this is heresy to the sporting federations but like it or not, **you do not own your sport any more: your clients do.**

Band-aids don't work on gaping wounds

In the sports where numbers of registered participants and Clubs are decreasing, **they are in panic mode.**

They are holding crisis meetings and brain storming meetings and innovations meetings and *"lets think outside the box"* meetings trying to come up with ways of turning things around.

And for the most part the solutions these meetings come up with are nothing but **band-aids** .. which are totally ineffective when you are dealing with "gaping wounds".

"Let's have face painting and inflatable jumping castles for the kids"

"Let's put on a disco after the competition to keep the kids entertained"

"Let's develop some kind of "kid's club" where kids get hats and stickers and coloring books with special sports characters on them".

"Let's offer little prizes like movie tickets and gift vouchers for kids who perform well in competition"

"Let's have a coffee place for parents to sit and relax while the kids are training and competing".

Band-aids Band-aids Band-aids

None of them work (or if they do it is for a very very short time) because none of the address the **real** problem.

Your product is wrong. The only reason you feel the need to think outside the box is that your box is broken and you need a new box.

McDonald's Thinking

Regardless of what you think about their food, their business practices, their ingredients etc. etc. **you have to admire McDonald's ability to understand their clients needs and respond to them.**

The survival of McDonald's depends on their ability to listen to their clients, respond to their needs and do it very well. Imagine where McDonald's would be today if they had not responded to their clients calls for "lighter and healthier" menu items, to "cafe" style experiences, to having "drive throughs" for busy customers **they would be Mc-Bankrupt and Mc-History!**

Now look at your own sport.

Do you listen - **really listen** to your clients?

Do you **respond** to their needs?

or

do you hold "think outside the box" meetings, come up with ideas that you "think" your clients need and then try to sell your ideas to them.

It is time to **change** .. but **change in response to the needs of your clients**

Have a good look at these guys...these are **your** clients...these guys **and their families** will determine whether you, your Club and your sport will **survive** in the next 20 years.



Do you know **who** they are?
Do you know what **they** want from sport?

Have you bothered to ask them?
New Sport – Old Sport



It takes more courage to try than to win (RP)

NEW SPORT .. What is it? How to make it work in your sport? Why it will succeed?

In the last post I suggested

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What is New Sport?

New Sport is Client Focused Sport.

It is providing clients (kids, parents, grandparents etc) with the sporting product **they** want and need. It is listening to your clients and designing sporting products – i.e. training programs, sporting experiences, competitions etc. that they want to be part of.



It's not how fast .. It's how well
SPEED is not the only measure of success
SKILL acquisition promotes appreciation of elite performances
and, enhances self-esteem !!

RP

To go forward ... first look back

To go forward, to help your sport realise its full potential and secure a successful future, first look back at the histories and traditions that have led to this point in time. Many Olympic sports designed and developed their sporting culture back in 1896 and have changed very little since then.

Have a look at your own sport. **Why** do you do what you do? When was your sport's culture created and developed? More importantly ... **what was society like then?** What was the social context in which your sport and the way it operates was created?

Chances are your sport is working on the same model it was using when Baron de Coubertin was in short pants!

An example of Old Sport: **Swimming**

Have a look at swimming as an example of **Old Sport**

Swimming competitions around the world are pretty much the same .. they are conducted the same way they have been for the past 100 years.

- Long, boring, drawn out and dull competition schedules;
- Far too many events;
- Unimaginative event schedules;
- Long delays between events, i.e. swimmers may have to wait hours between their events;
- Parents having to attend competitions for full days / full weekends waiting to see their children compete.

Track and Field can be (is) a prime example of the drawn out .. too long .. often boring as competitors and spectators must over-endure events they are not related to. There are solutions, but **solutions involve change**. RP

(And swimming organisations wonder why

they have such a huge decrease in the numbers of registered swimmers from mid teenage years onwards).

Swimming, as a sport is on a fast track to failure if it does not wake up and smell the chlorine!

So what would New Sport Swimming look like?

1. **Shorter competitions** – no more than two hours in duration;
2. **Multiple competition opportunities**, i.e. all swimmers get to race 4-6 times over the two hour duration of the competition;
3. **Age specific competitions**, i.e. where swimmers of similar ages race and compete without having to wait and watch 108 heats of the 7 years and under 50 freestyle;
4. **Time appropriate competitions**, e.g. Friday evenings to give families their weekends free.

One thing is certain, the great sport of swimming is in real trouble unless they listen to their clients and respond to their cries.

But the above example could apply to many **Old Sports**...rowing, track and field, gymnastics, diving, cycling

Old Sport thinking is commonplace in Olympic sports all over the world.

How to turn your sport into a New Sport

1. Make your competitions **shorter**.
2. Make your competitions more enjoyable.
3. Provide something **relevant and meaningful for all participants** in your sport: not just for the could-be champions;
4. Be **inclusive of families** and their needs, their schedules, their time limitations.

Listen to your clients and respond to their needs.

So, why are Sports sticking to the Old Sport Model?

Change is hard. Change requires real effort. Change requires real commitment. Change requires pain and conflict
Money? Yep. Many competitions are designed the way they are to maximise revenue raising opportunities for sporting organisations: **that's a fact**. And tell me who ever voluntarily surrenders money or power???

But the main reason people are sticking to Old Sport thinking is because people and organisations do not change until it is too late or almost too late.

Unfortunately, most sports will not shift to the **New Sport – Client Focused Sport** thinking until their registrations drop alarmingly, their Club networks dissolve and their structures, systems and programs crumble into complete chaos.

A Challenge for the Future ... or, you will not have one

So, my challenge to everyone in sport is this: **make the move from Old Sport to New Sport.**

Sport is a marketplace.

Like any marketplace, the “sellers” (i.e. sporting clubs and sporting organisations) are striving to increase their market-share.

What are you and your sport doing to increase your market-share?

The way **not** to increase market-share is to continue to offer the same old product choices, packaged the same old way.

You and your sport are doomed: you have no chance of survival.

Listen to your clients and adapt your sporting product to their needs and you will not just survive...**you will thrive.**

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