

**SPECIAL  
REPORT**

# HOW ORDINARY PEOPLE CREATE EXTRAORDINARY CLUBS

FIVE STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY CLUB

Terry Dillon BBus (Acc) CPA MBA

Edited by Mark Campbell

*“From setting the highest standards at grass roots community clubs all the way to AFL Premiership winning clubs, Terry can transform a club of any size or predicament to a successful one, if they use his method.”*

*Vince Crivelli, CEO, Melbourne United Basketball*

***TD Solutions***  
*Sports Administration*

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this book to my late mother and father, Mary and Eddie Dillon. They sowed the seeds of my life-long love affair with sport, including a career working with some of Australia's biggest sporting clubs and, now, returning to my roots to serve local communities like the one that shaped my upbringing and my life.

Mary and Eddie served our community of Cora Lynn, a farming hamlet in West Gippsland, Victoria, for their entire lives. My passion for sport was nurtured by their shared belief that playing for the local club would keep me and my six siblings 'off the streets and out of trouble'.

There was no doubting Mary and Eddie's fierce desire for the next generation to build on the foundations that they, and many others, had built for the Cora Lynn 'Coras', now the Cobras, since the 1930s. Thanks to them, I developed a deep appreciation of grassroots clubs and their importance to the health and vitality of the communities they serve.



My twin Clare and I, Cora Lynn's most passionate four year old barrackers.



The best day ever! 21 year old Terry, Mary, Eddie and brother Michael with the 1986 premiership cup. Cora Lynn's first ever!

## THANKS

I want to thank one of my business partners and close friend Mark Campbell for editing this book and giving it the real polish it needed. Being a 'bean counter' by trade, I'm not the greatest wordsmith, but Mark's knowledge, expertise and professionalism have ensured that the flow of the story will take readers on a smooth learning journey through 'How ordinary people create extraordinary clubs'.

My daughter Hayley also played a significant role in the book's early phase, the 'brain dump' that was the writing frenzy I undertook between Christmas and New Year. Thank you, Hayley D. You're a star!

Thanks also to my long-time friend and business partner Chris Connolly, who has been there right from the beginning, for his ongoing support in providing huge amounts of his infectious brand of positive energy, along with valuable advice on structure and how to best showcase the true nature of the challenges volunteers are experiencing around the country.

Special thanks to my very wonderful wife, Kim, and all my amazing kids, who support me in everything I do - charging all over the countryside working with clubs, talking with volunteers into the wee hours, even spending the year-end break writing this book. They back me in all of it. I am truly blessed.

And finally, gratitude must also go to my talented and supportive business partners – Chris and Mark, of course, along with Martin Sperring and Wayne Oswald. The five of us have been on an amazing ride together over the past few years, and the best is yet to come!



The TDS team: Wayne Oswald, Martin Sperring, Terry Dillon, Chris Connolly, Mark Campbell

# CHAPTER 1

## THE IDEA BEHIND THIS BOOK

I will admit up front that until recently I had not written a book, nor had I ever had any intention of writing one. So, you may ask, why write a book now?

The answer is simple - a flash of inspiration came while I was reflecting on the state of grassroots clubs across Australia. To be blunt, that state is not good. As you read on, I'm very sure you'll come to understand why I'm qualified to make such a bold statement, and why I've decided to sit down and write this book.

My earliest memories are of being in the clubrooms of my local football and netball club in Victoria's West Gippsland; I'm currently Vice President of Cora Lynn FNC and I've been continuously involved with the club since the days of those earliest memories. I can proudly lay claim to playing in or working in clubs for a lifetime, and I've been working with clubs – educating, directing and supporting them – for nearly as long.



***“I can proudly lay claim to playing in or working in clubs for a lifetime”***

During that time, I've come to understand that grassroots clubs across Australia are in trouble. The wonderful volunteers who run them are struggling.

The many rural and suburban communities who rely on clubs to provide social hubs and local focal points are slowly losing their souls as those clubs falter. The young people who have traditionally used clubs to build relationships and self-esteem, and to establish footholds in society, have begun to drift away, never to return.

Since forming TDS Sports Administration (TDS) and making community clubs my sole focus just over three years ago, I've dived deeply into the inner sanctums and inner workings of more than 500 grassroots clubs, across 12 sports, right around the country. I've also worked with leagues and associations, as well as state and national bodies.

Working closely with administrators at all levels has confirmed my instinctive fears about the paths our community clubs are taking.

This is the most fundamental of all issues for community clubs and my true concern, which I will expand on in far more detail later in the book.

The concept for the book had its beginnings in 2014. At that time, I had been working for 17 years in senior AFL executive roles, as CFO or COO at Hawthorn and Collingwood, and as Acting-CEO at Hawthorn and St Kilda. In my spare time, I was also assisting a variety of community clubs, across a number of sports, and had been progressively noting the consistent challenges they were all experiencing.

I began to wonder who was helping these clubs deal with their challenges. Ideally, the various governing bodies would provide the education, direction and support that clubs and their administrators need, but many of these umbrella organisations have limited resources of their own and lack relevant grassroots experience.

*“I see the pressures  
volunteers are under  
every, single day”*

For the most part, I found that clubs were left on their own to resolve issues themselves; their already-overworked volunteers falling back on life experience to work their way through the ever-present concerns we all know clubs face regularly. The clear need for club administrators to have access to education, direction and support led to the creation of TDS, and now, with three years’ formal experience working with clubs across the country, this book.

This report covers all levels of sport - clubs, leagues, associations and state bodies. From here on, I will use ‘club’ as the collective term for all these groups.

Working to support clubs, I see the pressures volunteers are under every, single day. They are balancing family and work along with their club commitments. It’s hard. It’s exhausting. It’s unsustainable. Something has to give.

Are the challenges real? Absolutely. There is no ‘silver bullet’. Should we be concerned? Yes. Good people are ‘burning out’ and clubs, and the communities they serve, are worse off.

Consistently, I find the major challenges for clubs fall into the same five categories:

- Identifying and retaining volunteers
- Identifying and retaining good leaders
- Using strong financial reporting processes

- Using an effective and relevant revenue model
- Planning for the future

Without expertise in these key areas, even with all the good intentions in the world, administrators will struggle to run their clubs successfully.

Because of their lack of education, direction and support, whenever I meet with club volunteers the pressure on them is palpable. In the very worst scenarios, volunteers can't find the time to meet and are so 'under the pump' they can't believe that a few minutes on the phone with me is a worthwhile use of their time because it is so valuable; they have so much to do just to keep their club viable for another season, another month or another week.

It is a shocking thing to write, but our research has led us to the sad conclusion that most community clubs are in debt. Some of it is mountainous, and a high proportion of it is personal; the president, treasurer or some other benefactor has put their hand in their own pocket to keep the club afloat.

It's an all-too-common story in community clubs.

Too much is left to too few. Instead of enjoying their clubs, those few volunteers are drowning in tasks. Instead of planning and executing, they are reacting and, far too often, failing.

Of course, if they knew better they would do things differently, but **they don't know what they don't know**, so like so many before them, they are doomed to burn out and quit the club, taking whatever intellectual property they have with them. And the cycle begins again.

Sound familiar?

It is my strong belief that clubs cannot continue down the same track they have been following for many years now, where good people come in, burn brightly, get frustrated, then burn out and quit.



***“Our research has led us to the sad conclusion that most community clubs are in debt”***

Without intervention, I think there is a club administration crash of some sort coming in the not-too-distant future. Think of it as a community club version of the global financial crisis and that, like the GFC, the flow-on effects will be significant.

***“TDS has touched hundreds of clubs and thousands of administrators in its first three years”***

Are we prepared for it? You probably agree with me already that we aren't.

To avoid catastrophe in clubland, there has to be a circuit breaker, something that provides not just hope and encouragement, but real, practical support and workable solutions for clubs and their volunteer administrators.

From my experience, a positive change to administration practices makes clubs better and more successful. It's a change that's ready and waiting to be put in place. All it takes is the desire and will to make the change. (This is a topic I cover later in the book.)

My lifetime of working in and supporting community clubs has enabled me to develop the first and only end-to-end solution to the administrative problems that beset all clubs. These problems are a hundred years old, at least, and they're not getting any better.

It's an approach that was originally developed through an amalgamation of my grassroots experience and the learnings I gathered during my time as an AFL executive working with such great sports administrators as Ian Dicker, Eddie McGuire and Jeff

Kennett. (One of those learnings is that all clubs are the same, regardless of size, it's just the number of zeroes that is different.)

***“A positive change to administration practices makes clubs better and more successful”***

It's an approach that has been refined by feedback from the hundreds of clubs and thousands of administrators TDS has touched in its first three years.

The result has been a methodology, which we at TDS call the REEDS Approach, that can be used by any club.

REEDS is an acronym for Recognition, Evaluation, Education, Directions, Support.

It is a proven formula for success for any grassroots community club. Throughout this book, I elaborate on the detail behind the 5-step REEDS Approach.

It's important to note that each of the five steps has limited positive effect when operating individually, however, used collectively, they provide the breakthrough innovation that clubs so desperately need.

For the future viability and sustainability of our clubs, a philosophical shift is required to new-age REEDS Approach thinking, starting with:

- A thriving volunteer program
- An effective committee structure
- An innovative financial reporting structure
- An effective revenue generation model
- Short, medium and long term plans

We at TDS are proud of the development of the REEDS Approach. It is being constantly validated by the positive results being achieved by our clubs, which are discussed in more detail later in this book.

The TDS REEDS Approach is the culmination of the experience and understanding I've gained over a lifetime at all levels of sport. It encompasses a deep understanding of the cultural and operational aspects of sporting clubs in Australia. I am delighted to be able to pass this information about it to others in the hope that they can embrace what it has to offer.

I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I've enjoyed writing it!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry Dillon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

## CHAPTER 2

### TD SOLUTIONS – SPORTS ADMINISTRATION

#### HOW IT CAME TO BE

Back in 2013, after a lifetime of community service, and enjoyment of clubs and club life, I was having one of my regular chats with close friend Chris Connolly, sharing much laughter and attempting to solve the world's problems, as we often did. Although it was similar to countless others, this particular conversation was a life-changing event for both of us and, ultimately, many others.

Chris and I had been at Hawthorn Football Club together, where we became great mates. We have a lot in common. We both grew up in country Victoria – he's from Shepparton, I'm from West Gippsland – so we're on the same page when it comes to upbringing and community. And we've both been fortunate to have combined our careers with our passion for sport.

*“We agreed that too many sports administrators were feeling overwhelmed”*



*“Some felt like they were ‘drowning’ in their roles”*

Chris is best known as an AFL person, having served for over thirty years as player, coach and administrator. What most don't know is that he is also a passionate supporter of community sport. His dad, the late Barry Connolly, a master administrator, is in the Goulburn Valley League Hall of Fame, and Chris got that community gene; he retains strong links to his beloved Shepparton United and supports them whenever he can.

On that auspicious day in 2013, Chris and I realised that we shared concerns for community sport. We both travel a lot and we knew of too many clubs, right across the country, that were struggling. We agreed that too many sports administrators were feeling overwhelmed. Some felt like they were 'drowning' in their roles, with little or no support.

This is no one's fault directly, rather it's an inevitable consequence of the limited resources available in all sports.

It dawned on both of us that, together, we had the knowledge, experience and energy necessary to help volunteer administrators run their community clubs more efficiently, confidently and successfully.

So, we asked ourselves...

How could we:

- help volunteer club administrators in all sports across Australia?
- use innovative technology to achieve this objective?
- utilise the knowledge that I had gained working as an executive at the elite level of Australian sport and simplify the model for use in all levels, right down to the grassroots?

We decided to design an online program that would educate, direct and support club administrators, and deliver its high-quality content directly to its audience, wherever they were across the country.

With the support of Martin Sperring (Information Technology), Mark Campbell (Communications), and Wayne Oswald (Relationships), TDS was born in 2014.

What followed was 18 months of creation - a massive IT project to develop the innovative software capabilities that run TDS online; a huge film making and design exercise to create nearly 200 educational videos, clips, promos and flyers; a thorough document generation process that yielded more than 100 documents, templates and pro forma guides; a massive database exercise to ensure we knew the community club market inside out; and all the other myriad tasks and details that come with launching a start-up.

***“Results were almost immediate; clubs were turning around and administrators were reclaiming life balance”***

We went into this project with our eyes wide open, but until that time, no one had ventured on the path we were taking, so we didn't know what to expect.

What happened when TDS was launched officially in early 2016 was that it quickly struck a chord with the market. Suddenly, volunteer administrators had a support program they could access from their phones, tablets or desktops, and a helpdesk that was just a call away.

Results were almost immediate; clubs were turning around and administrators were reclaiming life balance.

One of my favourite early success stories is that of a club in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne. When their treasurer came to us she was beside herself.

They had a pretty successful club, on-field, with 15 or so teams from juniors to seniors, but they had a mountain of debt and were going backwards. The club was taking up her whole life, and nothing she did seemed to help.

In just a few weeks, we were able to identify the main problem areas, make a plan for the future and guide her on how to execute that plan. Within 12 months, the club was debt free, and the next year they had \$80,000 in the bank.

***“Within 12 months, the club was debt free, and the next year they had \$80,000 in the bank”***

For us, the best thing about this story is its human side. It demonstrates exactly why we started TDS in the first place - that wonderful volunteer treasurer was finally able to reclaim her life, get to her kids’

games and actually enjoy her club, instead of stressing over it 24/7.

You know, I’ve always been surprised that to coach a team, in nearly every sport around the country, you need to have gained a minimum education requirement. Yet if you want to run the whole club you need no qualification whatsoever – nothing, zip, zero.

‘Hey, congratulations! You’re now the president. Just go your hardest. We wish you all the best.’

Does this really make sense?

We wonder why so many of our clubs are struggling. Put simply, we’re not giving the people who run them the tools they need to manage what are often highly-demanding roles. We’re setting up people to fail. And they do. Way too often.

Most clubs can be compared to small businesses. Some are turning over \$500k or more. You wouldn’t throw an inexperienced beginner into a key management role in your business, no matter how much energy they had, so why do so many think it’s likely to work in a community club?

As Vice President and longstanding committee member of my local club in rural Victoria, I truly understand the challenges that club administrators face. However, working with 500+ clubs across 12 Sports in the past three years has made me reassess just how difficult running clubs can be, especially for those who find themselves in senior volunteer roles with no experience or understanding of how to deliver success.

At the core of the problem is that there is no sport in Australia with a centralised education program that supports its administrators. Every sport, at national level, is doing its own thing. Often, state bodies, leagues and associations within the various sports are also doing their own things. There is no coordinated approach to educating or accrediting administrators, in any sport, anywhere in Australian.

The sad fact is that all sports are resource-thin, and budget constraints can lead to compromise in the quantity, quality and experience of staff. Sports management graduates are a lot cheaper and easier to find than seasoned, sports administration professionals.

It's virtually impossible for a mid-twenties 'Bachelor of Something' development manager to guide and advise club administrators who may be twice their age and stuck in their ways. Firstly, because they don't have the coalface experience and wisdom to draw on, and secondly, because they haven't been on the Earth long enough to give and receive the respect that's necessary when they're tinkering with something as sacred as a community club.

Clearly, there is a need for an end-to-end education solution for our battling volunteer club administrators. They don't want hand-outs or bail-outs, they want education, direction and support so they can run their clubs successfully and enjoy the experience.

The fundamental challenges and opportunities are unquestionably the same for all sporting clubs, large or small, metro or remote, struggling or flying. The common thread is that all can get better. And TDS can help them do just that.



TDS has been built around two key philosophies:

- Don't give clubs fish - teach them how to fish
- Successful community clubs share the load

***“Don't give clubs fish...  
teach them how to fish”***

Simple philosophies, but both are having measurable impact with clubs.

We believe that the hard-won, invaluable knowledge that underpins TDS and the learnings we have made since going to market three years ago confirm us as the leading experts on community club administration in Australia.

# CHAPTER 3

## THE LAY OF THE LAND

### SOLVING A 100-YEAR-OLD PROBLEM

In mid-2016, I was presenting to a large forum of clubs from the Ballarat region. After speaking, I was approached by a bloke with a lot of community experience who commented that by educating, directing and supporting grassroots administrators TDS was addressing what he called 'a 100-year-old problem'.

It was a like a big, bright light had been turned on in my brain. His statement really hit home. The challenges that Chris and I had identified, that volunteer administrators were facing every day all over Australia, were nothing new!

We thought we had made a discovery, when all we had really done was recognise a situation that had existed for generations and had been accepted as part of the fabric of Australian grassroots sport - that clubs do it tough and have done for a century or more.

*“Clubs do it tough and have done for a century or more”*

For as long as anyone can remember, clubs and their administrators have been on their own, without any sort of formal support. For generations, well-intentioned people have been stepping up, taking on volunteer roles, and somehow muddling through. Except when they didn't, and clubs teetered or folded.

These days, it's happening more than ever. There are more pressures on clubs and more pressures on club administrators.

It may be a cliché, but modern life is busy and demanding. There are lots more interests competing with clubs for people's attention, yet expectations on clubs are higher than ever; we all want professional levels of everything, even at very junior levels.

It's been quite a while since footy, netball and cricket had it on their own as sporting options. Nowadays, these traditional sports are in pitched battle with other established codes and newer sports that are trying to establish themselves, and all are vying to serve their communities and grow their bases. They all need and deserve support so their clubs can be administered properly, allowing their players, members and supporters to get their fair share of participation, success and enjoyment.

And let's not forget those dreaded screens!

Sports of all flavours are competing with a huge variety of screen-based activities that can grab and hold attention, of kids especially, taking participation away from clubs and into lounge rooms, bedrooms and, let's face it, anywhere you can get reception on your phone.

We realised early on that the same technology that competes with clubs can offer them a way to get easy access to the support they need.

It's only been in the past few years that the general population has been able to enjoy the benefits of universal, affordable broadband Internet access. Most of us use it to check our social media accounts or stream the latest shows, but it can also deliver rich educational content to virtually anybody, anywhere in the country.

Running a club is difficult, complex and time-consuming. Having support in your pocket through your phone, or easily available on your tablet or desktop, is a game-changer for time-poor grassroots administrators. We found that out when we launched our online education package in 2016.

***“Those clubs and administrators who embraced TDS saw positive results”***

Those clubs and administrators who embraced TDS at the time saw positive results - in their finances, in their membership, in their volunteerism, in every part of their club's business. Best of all, they reclaimed the enjoyment that got them involved in the first place.

However, there were some clubs that didn't see the value in getting involved, or if they did sign up, didn't engage with TDS, so they didn't learn anything, and everything stayed just the same. Because they didn't change anything.

And right there is a really significant point - people don't like change. Most of us, anyway. Often, we're too comfortable with the way things are, even if they make us miserable, to make any sort of change.

This was another 'lightbulb' moment for us.

We had set up TDS based on the idea that clubs and administrators would flock to our online offering, use it as a resource to improve their situations, and everyone would live happily ever after.

Wrong!

Of course, many did use TDS just as we had intended, and got the results we always thought they would, but there were many more who were resistant for a range of reasons ('change' was always in the mix), but who we knew would also benefit if we could just find the right way to engage them.

Now, without any hesitation or doubt, I can tell you that there is a clear formula to running a successful club. It's a bit like a roadmap; if you follow it, you will reach your destination.

***“Some of our most remarkable success stories have come from clubs that were already in fantastic positions”***

Some of our most remarkable success stories have come from clubs that were already in fantastic positions, yet wanted to take themselves to an even higher level of performance.

And, at the other end of the scale, I can assure you that no matter how dire the situation may be in some clubs, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel.

But the first step is to engage, so in mid 2017 we went back to the drawing board to figure out what it was that was missing from the TDS offering. What was the barrier that was stopping so many clubs from engaging with us and our solution to the 100-year-old problem?

## CHAPTER 4

### CHANGE

(IT'S NORMAL TO RESIST)

Committee, revenue and financial modelling that's more than three decades old is entrenched in Australian community clubs. We see it all the time when we're working with clubs that want to improve and become more successful. They're trapped in the old ways and need to transition to the new.

They need to change.

It's where lots of clubs falter, because change can be very difficult.

Many committees we meet comprise a combination of 'old' and 'new'. It's not unusual to find that older, longer-serving committee members are more resistant to change than younger, newer members. Often, they're more comfortable with 'the way things have always been done' than they are with making change, despite clear evidence that their club has been struggling year-on-year to meet its obligations.

You may have heard the saying that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over but expecting different results. That's what lots of clubs do; they're stuck in a comfortable rut, except it isn't comfortable at all, and it's sabotaging their success.

It's a very normal human reaction to resist change. Essentially, change makes us uncomfortable. The longer we've been doing something, like running our club the old-fashioned way, the more likely we are to be uncomfortable about changing it. But if we can push through the discomfort we soon find that a better club, and more enjoyment, awaits.

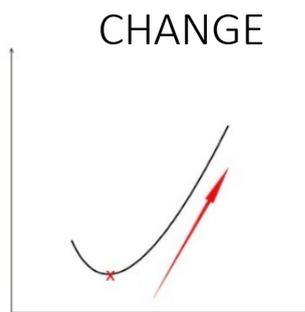
Frequently, we find that club administrators don't know what change looks like. In reality, it looks like a club with less stress, greater success, more participation and more enjoyment.

***“Houston...  
...we have a problem.”  
Jack Swigert (Kevin Bacon)  
Apollo 13 Command Module***

The first step to making change is to acknowledge that there is a problem and, therefore, a need to change.

I constantly see high levels of frustration at clubs where they don't have solutions to their administration problems. Most of the time, when I walk into a clubroom full of administrators and interested members for the first time, frustration is just hanging in the air. People are desperate for answers, but they don't know the questions to ask.

Time and again, they hang off every word - until I start outlining the changes they should make to overcome the problems we've identified. That's when the pushback starts. In essence, they want everything to be better, but they don't want to have to change anything.



There is no silver bullet. It takes change to remedy the things that aren't working at clubs, and change takes determination. Oh, and there's one other essential thing it takes to effect lasting, successful change at clubs, and that's work.

TDS can provide all the education, direction and support known to man, but it's useless unless committee members are prepared to do the required work. In reality, the work required isn't any more difficult than what clubs already do, it's just different and requires a level of change.

So, once clubs have been able to acknowledge that a problem exists and are open to change, then we have an opening to deliver a healthier club, but, and I'm going to say it again, only if the committee are prepared to work at making the changes necessary to set their club up for success.

Once the initial work is done, and the structures, systems and processes are in place, the workload decreases and a new era begins.

***“Once the initial work is done, the workload decreases and a new era begins”***

Listed below are the four major changes that, in my opinion, need to be made across all sports now. Each of these changes confronts and challenges the traditional models and traditional thinking that we've grown comfortable with over the past three decades.

### **Volunteerism**

A shift in modelling that caters for a new, time-poor generation that don't work the same way as the previous generation of club administrators.

## Structure

The traditional committee structure model is out of date. This is the first and most important change of the four proposed here.

## Finances

Innovative financial reporting that delivers the information and keeps it simple for all levels of sport.

## Revenue

A significant shift from the current, outdated model that brings AFL elite-level revenue thinking to all levels of sport.

Here's a really good tip to ease the adoption of change in your club:

Identify your club's TDS Champion!

TDS can provide the modelling, the education, the direction and support your club needs to become more successful, but the execution must be undertaken by the club itself.

Without a champion driving the TDS program, change resisters in the club could derail any effort to adopt new practices and, therefore, your club's chances of success could be compromised.

Ideally, the TDS Champion will be a member of your club's Executive Committee, one of the club's decision makers. They will be someone who shares the vision for the club's future, and has the energy and people skills to share it throughout the club.

If you have buy-in from your committee and have the right driver in place, in the form of a committed TDS Champion, the chances of your club's viability and sustainability improving will increase many times over.

Clubs that have overcome their change-phobia and adopted the TDS REEDS Approach are being transformed. In the next chapter, I show you just how that looks as we examine data derived from actual results of the TDS program.



*“Identify your club’s  
TDS Champion”*

## CHAPTER 5

### ACTUAL RESULTS OF THE TDS PROGRAM

The graph you see here is a collation of the de-identified health results of the more than 500 clubs, across 12 sports, that have participated in the TDS program over the past three years.

The results come from the online TDS survey that all participating clubs take when they join the TDS program. The survey comprises 50 questions covering ten key areas of club administration. It takes about ten minutes to complete.

This is a full sample that reveals the average health of Australian grassroots clubs across ten metrics.

The results include no influence from TDS. They are based solely on input from those who completed the survey, and are based on respondents' subjective assessments of the current health of their clubs.



The health check results are ranked on a scale from 1-100. For ease of recognition, they use a 'traffic light' system. Results are shown as green when they are 80% or above, amber between 60% and 80%, and red below 60%. You can see that the overall health figure is deep in the red zone, at 47%.

As you can also see, all 10 club health metrics in the graphic show as red. Again, this is a distillation of actual results from the initial self-assessments of more than 500 clubs over the past three years, with no input or interpretation from TDS.

This data sample provides a good overall indication of where clubs are positioned or, more correctly, how they think they are positioned. It is a sobering slide, illustrating the pressure that volunteers feel.

Across more than 500 clubs, volunteer administrators can't even give themselves a five out of ten. It clearly shows that, regardless of the sport, the same challenges are being faced and that there are consistent deficiencies in the way clubs are being run.

People who observe these consolidated results for the first time will be thinking that our community clubs, and their administrators, are under considerable pressure. And they would be right, because the results speak for themselves.



***“Community clubs and their administrators are under considerable pressure”***

For many administrators, completing the survey is the first time they have sat back and made a clear-eyed assessment of their club. As disappointing as that may be for many, it doesn't just identify gaps in their club's performance, it also shines a light on opportunities to improve. For some, the silver lining may be a little difficult to see, but that's where TDS steps in.

TDS's online education changes the deficiencies into opportunities. Time-poor sports administrators can learn how to improve their own performance and that of their club, online, in their own time, and at their own speed.

We know it works because we've measured it. The ability to collect and assess data has been crucial to the evolution and development of the TDS offering.

Typically, clubs don't share data, either within their sport or outside of it. I've always asked, 'why?'. When I was an AFL Executive, all the clubs shared annual revenue and expense data with one another. This information was provided on the basis that the data we were sharing wouldn't breach any confidentiality positions among our stakeholders.

Knowing how other clubs were travelling in the same environment, under the same rules, helped everyone. They say that the rising tide lifts all the boats, and that was certainly the case. As administrators, we all got better and our clubs got healthier.

Now to a very distressing fact. More senior clubs are in debt than not. It's very often the elephant in the room when we have discussions with clubs.

What I mean by debt is not a few hundred bucks or even a few thousand. And it's not 'good debt', which is controlled, strategic debt that's being managed in a planned way.

Lots of clubs owe tens of thousands and even more of bad, keep-the-club-alive, survival debt. And a scary percentage of this debt is owed to committee members and other benefactors who have put their hands in their own pockets to keep their clubs viable.

The overwhelming majority of indebted clubs keep the fact in-house, firstly because there is an element of embarrassment, but mainly because of the potentially negative flow-on impacts if the club's true financial position becomes public.

Sadly, clubs try to trade out of their financial mire using the same systems that put them in their vulnerable position in the first place, which can sometimes land them in an even deeper hole.



***“More senior clubs are in debt than not”***

As we know, that just isn't going to work. Administrators under pressure can get tunnel vision. All they can see is the problem, and there's no room in their thinking to even consider a solution. They can feel personally responsible for a situation they have inherited or has come about because they haven't had the education, direction and support necessary to guide their club through its issues.

From a TDS point of view, it is truly satisfying to see the difference we are making to volunteer administrators who need help.

***“The pilot was so successful that the league added nine more clubs”***

One of the brightest TDS success stories is that of a league that funded ten of its clubs to participate in the TDS program as a one year pilot program. The pilot was so successful that the league added nine more clubs from another division in the second year. A good sample size in anyone's language.

Over those two years, the league was vindicated in its decision to run the TDS program. The results speak for themselves. Club self-assessments via the TDS club health survey after two years showed marked improvement across all areas when compared with initial surveys:

- Volunteers levels improved by 60%
- Revenue levels improved by 43%
- Finance levels improved by 30%
- Governance levels improved by 23%
- Overall club health improved by 21%

Remember that the club health survey is a subjective self-assessment that polls respondents on how they think their club is going across a range of metrics. Obviously, the results show that respondents thought their clubs were going a lot better after being involved in the TDS program.

Validating the subjective assessments was an objective metric that made the league, and TDS, very happy. Across the two years of participation in the TDS program, money owed to the league by clubs steadily declined to its lowest level in 25 years. Club administrators were happier with the way things were going and so was the league.

It's worth mentioning that only 80% of clubs progressed during this pilot. Why did the other 20% not progress? Well, as they say, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. As mentioned earlier, one of the keys to success for our program is having a champion in place to drive the innovative TDS approach.

TDS provides the roadmap that steers club administrators down the path to success with all the required planning and resources. Execution is strictly up to the clubs, with phone support, as and when required. Those clubs that followed our REEDS Approach had outstanding results. The champion is pivotal.

***“Clubs that followed our REEDS Approach had outstanding results”***

The clubs that didn't improve didn't make the necessary changes, so they didn't get the results. While that was disappointing, and it brought down the league's averages, we were very happy that we had contributed to positive results for the majority of clubs and the league, overall.

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Unfortunately, there isn't a happy ending to this story. TDS participation was abruptly discontinued after the second year when new management took over the league. Just 12 months later, club debt to the league had skyrocketed by more than 540%.

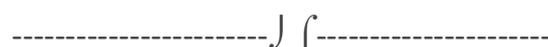
The level of league debt was published and made available to all its clubs in the league’s financial reports, which were tabled at the AGM.

Did opting out of the TDS program cause the meteoric rise in debt? On its own, the likely answer is no, but it is probable that it was a contributing factor.

Putting aside the reasons for the disappointing and abrupt change in the league’s performance, what the scenario shows is just how quickly things can change in the community club landscape, in terms of both improvement and deterioration.

**HEALTH OF CLUBS IN LEAGUE**

	Start of Pilot	End of Pilot	
	2016	2017	% increase
Club Health (overall)	48%	58%	21%↑
Volunteers	35%	59%	60%↑
Revenue generation	37%	52%	43%↑
Finance	50%	66%	30%↑
Governance	61%	75%	23%↑
<b>CLUB DEBT TO LEAGUE</b>	2017 (TDS)	<b>\$42k</b>	
	2018 (no TDS)	<b>\$230k</b>	<b>447%↑</b>



Are your current committee structure, finance and revenue models working?

To find out more about how your club is positioned across ten key areas of club activity take the free club health check on the TDS website.

Click [here](#) to complete the ten minute survey.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE REEDS APPROACH

The breakthrough TDS 'REEDS Approach' is a proven formula for success for grassroots community clubs. I call it a breakthrough because that's what it felt like when we discovered it.

We had been getting fantastic results with the majority of the clubs that had joined our program. They had responded really well to our online education, direction and support approach. But others weren't achieving any sort of results at all. They weren't even engaging with us. They'd sign up, full of energy and enthusiasm, then nothing.

The very first thing clubs do when they come into the TDS program is to respond to the TDS club health-check survey. It lays the foundation for everything that comes after. We need the information it generates to know how to help the club in the most meaningful way.

*“A proven formula for success for grassroots community clubs”*

Well, some clubs just wouldn't, or couldn't, get the club health-check done. No amount of emails or phone calls could get them to take this vital first step, and without it we couldn't get an understanding of the club and tailor a response to the issues they were facing. It was incredibly frustrating.

About this time, TDS was approached to undertake a comprehensive business review of a regional sporting competition. It was a top-to-bottom audit of the organisation's operations, including league administration and every club's individual activities. They wanted to identify issues and opportunities, and receive objective guidance on short, medium and long-term planning.

Part of the process was interviewing representatives from each of the clubs, which gave wonderful insights into their inner workings and how they interacted with each other and the league.

After the review was delivered (it was well received), most of the clubs came into the TDS program. Before we got underway with them, as a kind of group induction, we held a workshop. Even the clubs that hadn't signed up were invited. After the workshop, the unsigned clubs all had a change of heart and came on board too.

Breakthrough!

What we hadn't realised is that some people need human interaction to help them deal with the challenges that can come with adopting the TDS Program. Sometimes it's the idea of change that's scary. Sometimes it's resistance from others in the club and, sometimes, it's because administrators are so buried in their problems they can't find the time to do the one thing that's likely to help them the most.

We already had Educate, Direct and Support as key elements of the TDS approach, which we had been delivering online. Now we could see that by Recognising the often-complex issues that club administrators deal with and Evaluating them, and doing it together with the clubs in a supportive workshop environment, reluctant volunteers were more likely to 'get' the TDS approach and engage with the education. Once they were open to engaging with the education, we could direct and support them, as necessary.

The REEDS Approach named itself...

- Recognise
- Evaluate
- Educate
- Direct
- Support

## RECOGNITION

How healthy is your community club?

The first phase of the innovative REEDS Approach is RECOGNITION.

We recognise (audit) the health of the club using a short, user-friendly online survey that takes about ten minutes. A maximum of ten people can complete the survey. From this survey, we assess the results of the ten key areas of running the club:

Volunteers

Committee structure

Finance

Sponsorship

Capital Grants

Fundraising

Governance

Membership

Digital

Taking your club to the next level

When volunteer administrators answer the survey questions this is often the first time any of these issues have been raised with them, which can be both thought-provoking and challenging. For many, it prompts them to understand that there may be lots of things they haven't been able to address or solve because they simply haven't known they existed.

#### EVALUATION - Health results and a tailored action plan

The second phase of the innovative REEDS Approach is EVALUATION.

Once the simple online health survey is completed, we provide a detailed health assessment and tailored action plan specific to the club and its issues.

The health assessment reveals to the club's administrators those areas where there are the most concerning deficiencies and, importantly, the areas of most opportunity. The action plan steers them towards the most beneficial educational resources and committee responses to address those areas of concern.

***“We provide a detailed health assessment and tailored action plan specific to the club and its issues”***

Equally important as the initial evaluation is ongoing review of the club's health and adjustment of the action plan to suit changes in its performance and aspirations. TDS recommends clubs refresh their health check every six months as a regular part of the club's calendar. Continual performance review is a vital part of club health.

#### EDUCATION - Educating volunteers to manage your community club well

The third phase of the innovative REEDS Approach is EDUCATION.

A common problem at community level is the lack of education for our sports administrators.

TDS has found that many state bodies, leagues and associations have limited resources available to provide the education and support necessary to assist grassroots administrators in a meaningful way.

TDS has developed high-level educational content, more than 160 short videos (about two minutes each) on how to run your club, for all sports, and more than 100 pro forma documents and templates that covers the ten key areas of club administration.

We are continually updating and refining our educational resources, based on the incredible learnings we gain every day working with volunteer administrators.

‘Rather than giving clubs fish, let’s teach them how to fish’ is our philosophy.

**DIRECTION** - Face-to-face and Skype workshops  
The fourth phase of the innovative REEDS approach is DIRECTION.

We provide a 2.5-3 hour interactive workshop, either face-to-face or via Skype, focused specifically on your club, which yields a clear and succinct strategic plan.



The TDS workshops are powerful sessions that create energy, oxygen and clear direction for administrators to take their club forward.

***“Workshops are powerful sessions that create energy, oxygen and clear direction”***

**SUPPORT**- Completing the one-stop-shop  
The fifth and final phase of the innovative REEDS approach is SUPPORT.

We provide a centralised help desk, delivering phone support for the clubs that have purchased our main offering during their 12 months subscription.

Sometimes, administrators face unusual challenges or just need clarification on elements of an agreed approach. That’s where the help desk comes into play. Volunteers can jump on the phone and get objective clarification or guidance from someone who understands the landscape of grassroots clubs, and their pressures and requirements.

This piece of the puzzle completes the end-to-end solution for community clubs. All in the one location!

On their own, these five points can make small differences to the way volunteers administer their clubs. Even two or three of them grouped together, as TDS did early on, can have only limited influence, but collectively? That’s where the magic happens.

As we know, volunteers are often time poor and are ‘spinning plates’ to get the job done. Thus, introducing a new era of thinking to the community landscape is well overdue.

Many of our clubs don't know where to start in setting themselves on the right path. For many, it's like an overgrown forest, but they can't see the forest for the trees.

The REEDS Approach (the formula) creates a clear pathway for clubs to follow to be successful.

#### THE REEDS APPROACH

How a TDS workshop looks to clubs

**VOLUNTEERS** - Focus on how to grow the club's volunteers base, including potentially seeking funding to support volunteers at the club.

**AUDIT OF CLUB HEALTH** - Review of ten key areas

**COMMITTEE STRUCTURE** – Adoption of a new committee structure

**FINANCE** – Introducing a simple and effective way to account financially for the club's business. Club finance on no more than two or three pages. The same model works from the elite level to grass roots.

**REVENUE** - The passing on of many learnings. Clubs identify 4-6 initiatives from a list of 30 initiatives that have been proven as successful around the country. We work with club administrators to devise a plan put those initiatives in place.

**SHORT AND LONG TERM FOCUS** - The workshops close by focusing on the direction of the club, identifying 5-6 strategic pillars and key targets for both the short (12 months) and long term (3-5 years).

**STRATEGIC PLAN** - Within seven days of the workshop, TDS provides a two-page strategic plan to take the club forward.

Every field has its own expertise, and community club administration is no different, no matter the size of the club. I believe my experience working in sport and a lifetime of supporting my own community club, as well as others, have combined to bring us to a point where we are making a real difference to the health of grassroots clubs.



Build it and they will come!

The innovative TDS REEDS Approach of Recognition, Evaluation, Education, Direction and Support is a proven formula for a successful community club. I have no doubt that the REEDS Approach will change the landscape of community sport by improving its viability and sustainability around Australia.

## CHAPTER 7

### CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY CLUBS

Have you ever thought, ‘Nobody understands what I’m going through?’.

Each of us is alone with our own thoughts and feelings. It’s not until we express them somehow, by speaking about them or writing them down, that others can know what they are.

When we do share them we often discover that we’re not alone, that we’re not the only one dealing with whatever it is that’s worrying us.

Sharing makes it easier to deal with the things that complicate our lives, especially when others can offer guidance based on their own experience of dealing with similar issues. We feel more supported and more connected. We feel better.

The same could be said about the challenges that face community club administrators. Lying awake in the early hours of the morning, trying to figure out how to keep the club’s doors open can make you feel utterly alone. Yet there are plenty of good people who have been in this exact situation and lived to tell the tale. They turned their clubs around and got some sleep.

*“Trying to figure out how to keep the club’s doors open can make you feel utterly alone”*

As I’ve already mentioned, TDS has worked directly with more than 500+ clubs across Australia in the past three years. Many of them have come to us in positions of financial crisis or with other significant issues that were causing needless worry, even despair, for their administrators.

It’s worth mentioning that before we embark on any program of help and support for a club we make sure we know what shape it’s in and how its committee feels. I’ll be going into this process in more depth later.

Based on our understanding of the circumstances many of these in-need-of-support administrators faced, we have identified six areas where clubs are challenged that are consistent across all clubs and all sports.

## **Volunteers**

Too many clubs survive on the good grace and hard work of just a tiny group of volunteers who do everything while everyone else looks on. Setting up a club's structure is important, and having a thriving volunteer program is the key. Tapping into readily-available government funding to pay volunteers to work around the club is just one way of relieving the huge pressures that are often on a small group of key people.

*“Setting up a club’s structure is important, and having a thriving volunteer program is the key”*

## **Leadership**

Generally, clubs are managed by three or four people who undertake up to 90% of the work. Long term, this is not sustainable and usually results in administrators turning over way more quickly than they should. When they exit, it often happens spontaneously; the person quits in a heartbeat when the pressure gets too much and marches out the door, taking valuable club intellectual property with them. The committee model that allows this to happen, which is the one we see at most clubs, is decades old and no longer serves the needs of clubs.

## **Financials**

Many clubs that TDS works with do not have a budget. That means they have no idea how much they need to spend, make or save. They just guess and hope. We have developed a simple financial model that allows committees to proceed with full confidence that they have the level of financial planning they need. The same model can be used from elite levels right down to grassroots.

## **Revenue Generation**

Where does the money come from? The community sport revenue generation model is something else that hasn't changed for decades. It's outdated because while the world has changed, it has not. TDS has developed a new revenue model that uses contemporary tools and approaches. This model brings successful learnings from the AFL, and has been simplified for all levels of all sports, including grass roots.

## **Forward Planning**

TDS often works with clubs that are in survival mode. Their administrators can't think about the future because they're in fight-or-flight mode, just trying to keep their heads above water.

To make planning easier and simpler, TDS has a unique program, called the REEDS Approach, that takes clubs through a process that yields short and long term plans. There's much more detail on this later.

### **Education Technology**

Sports haven't really grasped the importance of education technology. Currently, club administrators are learning the hard way, on the job, and with limited success. The beauty of the TDS approach is that volunteers can be educated anywhere, anytime; if they've got a signal on their device, they can dive into the TDS resource and learn something new to take their club forward.

Until there is acceptance of the need for structured online educational for sports administrators, the challenges in this space will continue.

When I was working at Hawthorn Football Club, Jeff Kennett came on as president. A charismatic and energetic leader, Jeff was always looking for the next challenge.

One of Jeff's mantras was that everyone in the club should continually raise the bar. If we hit a target or met a challenge, the bar would always be immediately raised to set an even greater challenge.

Champion golfer Lee Trevino was once asked about the pressure of playing in a major tournament. He replied that real pressure is trying to make a five dollar putt when you only have two dollars in your pocket.

The same applies in grassroots level sport. As I mentioned earlier, all clubs across all sports are the same, no matter their size. The only thing that's different is the number of zeroes. No matter how many there are, if they're in red ink on the club's balance sheet, the volunteers are under pressure.

## CHAPTER 8

### ARE YOU A FRUSTRATED OR OVERWHELMED VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATOR?

When we speak to clubs across the country, we hear it's so tough being a volunteer community club committee member that, if you're not careful, it 'can suck the life right out of you'. The people who tell us that are stuck working in the old-fashioned, heritage committee model, where they come in 'green' and learn on the job how to manage their club. Long-term, we know that old-fashioned approach just doesn't work.

*“Running a business can be very different to running a club”*

Every industry and every role has its own expertise, and managing a community club is no different.

I have often seen successful business people try to manage their club, but they find that running a club is not quite the same as running a business. The reality, sometimes harsh, is that running a business can be very different to running a club.

In some ways it's a tribute to human nature that lots of successful, well-intentioned volunteers put their hands up to help their clubs even though they have no real understanding of what it might entail. They want to give something back, drive success and build growth, but they often don't know how. They simply don't know what they don't know.

How can you find answers when you don't even know the questions?

*“How can you find answers when you don't even know the questions?”*

Volunteers across the country, across all sports, are feeling frustrated and overwhelmed, like there's just no way they can get everything done. It's no fun being in survival mode! And when you're under stress is when mistakes are more likely to be made, which increases the pressure, and the cycle continues.

The burden of balancing the books, finding more people to help around the club, and just getting everything done becomes all-consuming. When I'm speaking to volunteers, it's quite common to hear them say that they feel like they're 'drowning' in their roles as club administrators.

Modern life has enough challenges, the last thing anybody needs is an unpaid responsibility that takes over their life and impacts negatively on their health and wellbeing.

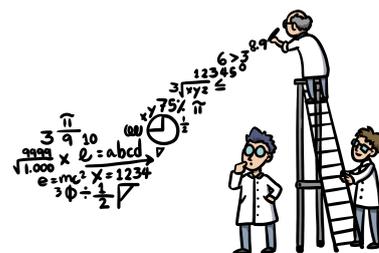
Striking a workable balance among family, work and club is difficult. Very rarely do I see anyone come into the TDS program who has it under control. One of the three generally suffers, and it's usually family. Like so many other aspects of successful club administration, they just don't know how to do it.

The point is this: It doesn't matter what level you are operating at, in a big or small club, there is a formula to running a successful club. And the fundamentals of running a club are the same for all sports.

The formula to helping administrators is a combination of many pieces of a complex puzzle. TDS has solved that puzzle and packaged the solution.

Community and technology are finally meeting in a new-age committee model, called the REEDS Approach, that extends the lifecycle of volunteers.

The REEDS Approach provides the first end-to-end solution for club administrators across Australian sport that addresses the frustration of an outmoded, heritage club management system.



***“There is a formula to running a successful club”***

## CHAPTER 9

### LIFECYCLE OF A COMMITTEE MEMBER

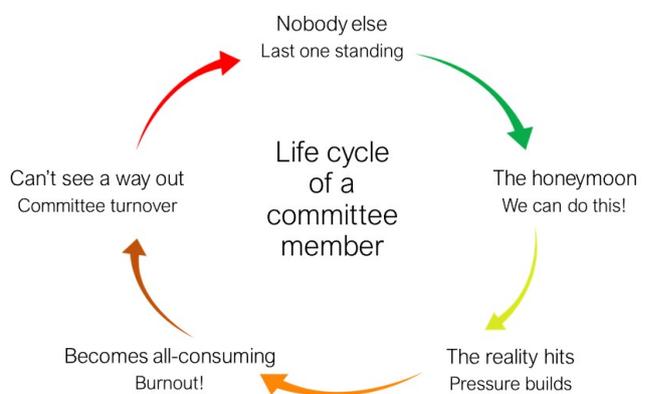
You're probably aware by now that I don't rate the current committee model used to run clubs. Let's call it the 'heritage' model. It's old, it's outdated, and it doesn't work the way it should, especially in the modern, fast-paced, connected world. Its failure has been the main driver for TDS to use innovative approaches and technology to develop a redesigned committee model.

A major part of our redesign relates to how clubs use their people. It's the foundation, really. You would remember me mentioning one of our philosophies, that 'successful community clubs share the load'. Well, this is the basis for the new model - more people doing more things, so all the work and all the load isn't being carried by just a small group of volunteers.

It might sound simplistic, but I often refer to clubs being only one president and one head coach away from calamity. The health and wellbeing of clubs can hinge on the quality of their key appointments. When you've got the wrong people in key positions, things can change for the worse very quickly.

What TDS has discovered is that, on average, people spend not even three years on a community club committee.

The main reason for such a significant turnover rate is the high level of demand placed on committee members and the often overwhelming challenge of balancing family, work and club life.



The lifecycle of a committee member starts in green and finishes in red.

- At the start is the 'honeymoon' period, when the committee person enters the role with great intention.
- After approximately a year, the reality of the role has become apparent as the pressure and relentlessness of the workload has built.

- The next phase sees the volunteer consumed by the role, and their life balance disappears under its burden.
- The final phase of the cycle is when it all becomes too much, and the person walks away.

A heritage committee structure, where three or four people do all the work, is simply unsustainable deep into the 21st Century. The TDS new-age committee structure, developed as part of the REEDS Approach, is built around extending the volunteer lifecycle.

There is a misconception that you have to be on the committee to help. It's flat out wrong. There are lots of people who would love to help out in some capacity at their clubs, but they have no desire to get involved at committee level.

This is a really important point!

Just because someone doesn't want to stand for committee doesn't mean they don't want to help.

***“Just because someone doesn't want to stand for committee doesn't mean they don't want to help”***

If you play to people's strengths and get them enthused about helping with something they know or do, you can tap into an amazing reservoir of volunteer assistance that you wouldn't have access to if you stuck to the 'only-if-you-join-the-committee' approach.

The TDS model committee structure is simple. It fits on one page, so it's easy to understand, which makes it easy to execute. The model varies for small, medium and large clubs. In the TDS education video library we have key content covering topics aimed specifically at extending the lifecycle of the committee person.

One of my favourite committee member success stories comes from my own club, the Cora Lynn Cobras. We've had the same president for 18 years now. A notable aspect of his tenure has been the adoption of a committee structure that shares responsibility across a much broader than usual range of suitable volunteers. Perhaps his greatest leadership strength is being really effective at scouting good people for specific roles, then allowing those people to fulfil their roles according to solid delegation without significant interference.

What this means is that we have a club that truly does 'share the load' and, consequently, has a much lower than usual committee turnover.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE NEXT GENERATION

The volunteer journey starts with the pure optimism of making a difference (or, in a lot of cases, simply being the last person standing at the AGM).

After a while, the reality hits: 'This is harder than I thought...'. Then the role becomes all-consuming, and finally, the burnout factor kicks in.

At this point, the volunteer can't really see a way out of their challenging position, the pressure becomes too much, and many simply walk away.

When this happens, all the intellectual property gained over the volunteer's time in the club walks out the door with them. Then, just as before, the person taking on the role starts from scratch, most often with little or no handover. Thus, the cycle of challenge continues.

***“We have to make it easier for younger people to make the decision to volunteer”***

So, who is the average committee person?

Age-wise, the committee people I meet around the country are typically 45 or more. Of course, there are exceptions, but that's the general rule. Some sports have committees where the average age is 60 or more. Sometimes, a lot more.

These numbers are from 2014, but they do give an indication volunteer participation\*:

18 - 24yrs: 26%	45 - 54yrs: 31.7%
25 - 34yrs: 27.5%	55 - 64yrs: 29.3%
35 - 44yrs: 39.3%	65 - 74yrs: 34.6%

\*Overall, 36.2% of the population volunteer

When you look at the numbers, all volunteerism is quite strong and consistent across most age groups in the community, but I'm not sure that this is reflected in community club volunteerism, especially at committee level. My perception is that as the current generation of committee members gets older there are fewer younger people coming in to replace them. That's not to say that young people have abandoned clubs; some of the most passionate club people I know are part of what I call the next generation.

That next generation is busy raising families, putting food on tables and paying mortgages, all of which make it difficult to get involved at committee level with community clubs. It's just not on their radar as they weave their way through this important and busy part of their lives.

We have to make it easier for younger people to make the decision to volunteer.

As for gender, in my experience men probably outnumber women two to one a lot of the time. Of course, this varies from sport to sport, but I think this is an area of real opportunity for clubs. Many of the women I've worked with, at both community and elite levels, are excellent administrators and outstanding leaders.

Perhaps I've just been lucky to work with exceptional people, but I've generally found female administrators to be meticulous with detail and open to giving things a go, which is a winning combination.

While current sport and recreation trends suggest that many people do still volunteer for their community clubs, it also suggests they're reducing their time commitment when they do. In 1995, the average was 74 hours per year. By 2010, that was down to 56 hours per year.



*“Successful community clubs share the load”*

This compounds the problems volunteers face if they're stuck using the same old, traditional volunteer approach that's been in place 'forever'.

This volunteerism assessment at committee level is a here-and-now issue, one that we address with our purpose-designed, modern committee structure for small, medium and large clubs.

As mentioned earlier in this book, I fear we have a club administration crash coming our way as volunteerism falters. The TDS REEDS Approach is designed to serve as an early intervention that will change the way we do things, especially at grassroots level, and make it easier for volunteers to say yes when they are asked to help at their grassroots club.

It sounds simple, yet recent research suggests that the primary reason people don't help at community clubs is because no one has asked them. Often, people ask once or twice, and when they get a negative response they give up and decide to do it themselves. This ends up compounding the problem of too few doing too much.

***“People don't help at community clubs because no one has asked them”***

There is a real skill in asking, and not everyone has that skill.

Who's your asker? If you haven't got one, find one. They are there in your club, you just haven't found them yet.

TDS's education is based on sharing responsibilities and learning how to ask. It's been built around a key philosophy that 'successful community clubs share the load'.

In the TDS video education library you'll find some key titles (each about 2 minutes) that have been aimed specifically at shifting the volunteerism ethic and culture to a more sustainable model.

The 20 volunteer educational videos address these volunteer issues:

- The value of volunteers
- The make-up of volunteers
- Prospecting for volunteers
- Recruiting volunteers
- Retaining volunteers
- Rewarding volunteers

***“Everyone's job is important, but no one is indispensable”***

***Chuck Noll  
Legendary NFL Coach***

For the viability and sustainability of our community clubs around the country, we have to be brave and start the change now as a form of early intervention so we can support a successful transition to the next generation of volunteers.

# CHAPTER 11

## PRESIDENT'S PACKAGE

### THE FIRST 90 DAYS

When I speak to club administrators around the country, I often refer to the critical importance of getting the appointment of the president and the senior coach right. These two positions are the two most influential roles at any club.

You've probably already heard the expression 'the fish rots from the head', which emphasises the importance of key leadership roles and the negative impact clubs can experience if the wrong appointments are made. One poor appointment decision, whether that be through lack of research into the candidate or for any other reason, can be the start of a difficult year for all involved.

This philosophy of getting key appointments right applies at all levels of sport.

As I said earlier, I truly believe clubs are only one president and one senior coach away from a good club becoming a not-so-good club.

***“Many new presidents end up being overwhelmed”***

Sport is all about momentum. When things are tracking in a negative direction, momentum can be a runaway train. Things can go south very quickly when a poor appointment is made.

Time and time again, I've seen presidents coming into the role with no idea what it entails; they don't know what to do or where to start. Many new presidents end up being overwhelmed because instead of taking a leadership role and delegating their authority, they try to do everything themselves. The demands of balancing family, work and club life often become too much and it ends in disaster – for the president and the club.

So, how can we help this well-intentioned volunteer in the early phases of their presidency?

Firstly, the table below identifies what I believe should be the focus points for a president at the start of the year. There are 20 things 'to do' on the list. They apply to both new and returning presidents.

## THE PRESIDENT'S START-OF-A-NEW-YEAR 'TO DO' LIST

### Immediately

#### REVIEW OF THE CLUB'S CURRENT BUSINESS

- 1 Review the health of ten areas of your club (free TDS online check)

### Urgently

#### PEOPLE, STRUCTURES AND MODELLING

- 2 Identify the TDS champion
- 3 Introduce new-age committee structure
- 4 Introduce simple financial modelling
- 5 Introduce new-age revenue modelling

### As soon as possible

#### PLANNING DAY

- 6 Identify volunteer coordinator
- 7 Identify gaps in new-age committee structure model
- 8 Appoint a person to be the Executive in charge of Revenue Streams
- 9 Identify a revenue target (no person in charge of more than 2 income streams)
- 10 Choose 3-5 of 30 revenue initiatives to generate the new revenue target
- 11 Audit the club's sponsorship assets – use a team two or more
- 12 Understand the importance of investing in club's core business – coaching etc.
- 13 Develop membership packages (3-4) Set targets

### As soon as possible

#### AFTER THE PLANNING DAY

- 14 Volunteer coordinator – fill all roles identified in the committee structure
- 15 Treasurer – prepare budget and adopt a forecasting model (so no surprises)
- 16 Sponsorship Coordinator – prepare a club profile document
- 17 Sponsorship Coordinator – prepare a sponsorship proposal
- 18 Fundraising team – Plan the club's social calendar
- 19 Educate the committee (old & new) how to fulfil their roles (TDS online ed)
- 20 Hold a workshop to build strategic plans for 1 year and 3-5 years

Running a community club is like running a small to medium business; the responsibilities of administrators can have a level of liability associated with them.

As in any business, you should undertake a quick audit or health check survey to help identify the gaps and the opportunities for your club. Having the right structures and activity models in place is a pivotal component of managing a successful club.

The table above identifies the focus points and what should be undertaken post the TDS workshop. It includes a planning day as a high priority.

To use a seafaring analogy – in any club, the president is both captain and navigator. They plot the course and steer the ship, using the steps listed in the table to provide strong guidance on to how to move forward in their first 90 days.

To some, the table may look overwhelming, but it all comes back to having the right structures and modelling in place. Tick these off and the president's clarity, of purpose and action, improves significantly.

Recently, I presented to a group of representatives from 34 clubs at a season launch for a league that I have been assisting. Of the 34 presidents in the room, 21 were new to the role. That's a 61% turnover.

Wow!

This is a concerning statistic and emphasises the drain the role can have on people who hold such a senior position. It also emphasises the requirement of 'prepping the president', that is, setting them up to have a good tenure, not a nightmare where they want to bail out at the first opportunity.

Giving the president the tools, resources and, most importantly, the knowledge to fulfil their role to a high level is a real must for stabilising clubs. Remember 'the fish rots from the head'? If the person at the top is struggling, the rest of the organisation will struggle along with them.

One of the greatest thinkers of all time, Stephen Hawking, said, 'The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance, it is the illusion of knowledge'.



***“If the person at the top is struggling, the rest of the organisation will struggle along with them”***

We see it quite a lot with community club presidents, many of whom are sure they know the name of the unknown soldier. It is such an issue that we have a video on it – ‘Often the president is the biggest problem’.

Adopting a framework of reviewing all club operations annually, having the right structures and modelling in place, being well-planned, and then executing the plan with purpose is a formula for a successful presidency.

I encourage all presidents to consider the adoption of this framework, which is part of the TDS REEDS Approach and a key element of success for a president’s first 90 days in the role, which builds the foundation for club success.

*“The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance,  
it is the illusion of knowledge”*

*Stephen Hawking*

## CHAPTER 12

### THE KEY COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL CLUB

After working with selected clubs over the course of decades and getting to know a lot more administrators in the past few years through TDS, I've built a thorough understanding of what does and doesn't work in community club management.

Now, there are no hard and fast rules on committee structure. It can be 'horses for courses', and it can vary from metropolitan to regional clubs, big to small, and sport to sport. However, it is fair to say that the traditional committee model is clearly outdated and has some real weaknesses to it. When all the work is done by very few, as is so often the case in clubs still running a 'heritage' committee structure, too much is not done at all.

Often, people around a club see how hard certain executives are working and think, 'I don't want to work that hard – I might steer clear of a role like that'.

Hence, the problem is compounded, and people tend to keep their heads down and not offer their assistance. Subsequently, the members of the small band of committed workers sometimes become tired and disillusioned, and question why they do what they do.

The outcome is that we are losing good community people from these roles as they try to balance the demands of family, work and club life.

Most clubs have two or three major incidents a year that really unsettle everyone. It's these incidents that suck the life out of club administrators. The volunteers start to think their role is like having a part-time, or even full-time, job. But they're not getting paid to do it! Why do they put themselves through it? Many walk away because it's all just too hard.

We see it time and again. Really good people are lost to their clubs because the clubs don't spend enough time getting their committee structures right.



***“The traditional committee model is clearly outdated”***

The old-fashioned traditional committee model isn't up to it anymore. There are some key gaps that lead clubs to trouble.

TDS's new model is based on extending the lifespan of volunteers through an effective and efficient structure. One where clubs share the load instead of lumping the majority of the work onto a handful of volunteers. It's unique, proven, and completely sound.

The recent experience of one of our clubs illustrates perfectly how following the basic principles of the TDS committee structure can have positive results.

Clubs usually have a pretty fair idea of their expenses. That is, they know how much they're likely to spend in a week, month or year. Where a lot of them struggle is revenue.

This particular club used the TDS committee structure model to help them identify executive and non-executive committee roles, which enabled them to spread club responsibilities across a much wider group of volunteers and reap the rewards in increased revenue.

The club had undertaken the TDS workshop, which devotes significant time to revenue, so they chose five of the 30 tried-and-true revenue initiatives we presented in the workshop and applied their new committee structure to the task of executing them.

***“In the first year, they raised \$100k plus of extra income”***

As per the structure, they identified five people who were not on the committee to oversee these new initiatives.

In the first year, they raised \$100k plus of extra income, which represented a 21% increase on the previous year's turnover.

These new initiatives were an outcome of their adoption of the new committee structure model. They eliminated their debt and now have a cash surplus, which has release the financial pressure on the club and its volunteers.

The two-page strategic plan that was generated from the TDS workshop provided the roadmap for the club's actions. The club's volunteer administrators got the desired outcome by simply following it.

Together, these two models - committee structure and revenue - are highly successful. One of the advantage of these initiatives is that the results they yield are repeatable year-on-year.

Here's a tip on committee structure that's so obvious you'll wonder why you didn't think of it yourself. It's the basis for the success of the club in the story above.

Tip: You don't have to be on the committee to help!

As mentioned earlier, there's a video on this topic in the TDS educational resource.

## CHAPTER 13

### YOUR CLUB NEEDS MORE VOLUNTEERS

The number one issue for many of the club administrators who come to us at TDS is volunteers. Their clubs just don't have enough of them, so they end up doing all the work themselves.

They feel like they're holding back the tide, doing club work during business hours, spending their whole weekends dealing with club issues, and having little or no time for anything else, including their families.

Sometimes, it's one person, or a small group, who comes into the club with some business experience – they might have run their own business successfully or managed

***“Running a club is not quite the same as running a business”***

part of a much bigger organisation – and they want to help their club enjoy the same success.

But they find that running a club is not quite the same as running a business. In fact, it's quite different. These well-intentioned volunteers want to drive success and build growth at their club, but they don't know how because they don't know what they don't know.

You need to make sure that your club is structured in such a way that you can take the greatest advantage of the resources you have. If you've inherited a broken system, then you're going to keep having the same problems your predecessors had, you're going to flounder around not knowing what is broken. You don't know what to fix, let alone how to fix it.

Did you know that the Federal Government will help your club with its volunteers? Under the scheme, a government allowance pays up to \$14,200 for each volunteer who works in your club.

***“A government allowance pays up to \$14,200 for each volunteer who works in your club”***

Of course, there are conditions – the volunteer must be 55 or over and they must perform 30 hours of work for the club every fortnight. It is means-tested, but the requirements are very generous, and there is no cap on numbers.

The allowance allows your club to get help to employ all sorts of necessary people who would normally have to spend considerable time working on club business for no

reward: the treasurer or book keeper, the canteen person, the match day coordinator, anyone who has a role to play at your community club. It's up to you and your club.

Here's another tip. Find your club's 'asker'- I mentioned this person earlier; it is the person best-suited to being your volunteer activator. Every club has got at least one.



***“Remember, if you don’t ask, you don’t get!”***

They are often that person who knows everybody's name, is always having a laugh and is generally the life of the place.

The asker's role is to ask people to get involved in the club by helping out with some task or other – it could be a plumbing issue, getting some apparel sorted or applying for a grant. Whatever it is, if something needs doing, track down the person you think is most qualified to do it, and get the 'asker' to ask them to do it on behalf of the club.

You would be amazed at how often people say yes, especially when what they've been asked to do is something they're expert at and can do easily.

As we know from the last chapter, not everyone wants to be on a committee, but that doesn't necessarily mean they don't want to help.

Remember, if you don't ask, you don't get!

Find your club's 'asker'!

Click [here](#) to watch a short video on the role of the Volunteer Activator.

# CHAPTER 14

## FUNDRAISING

### HOW TO RAISE MORE MONEY FOR YOUR CLUB

Let's be blunt.

Most clubs are using an old revenue model that is well and truly out of date.

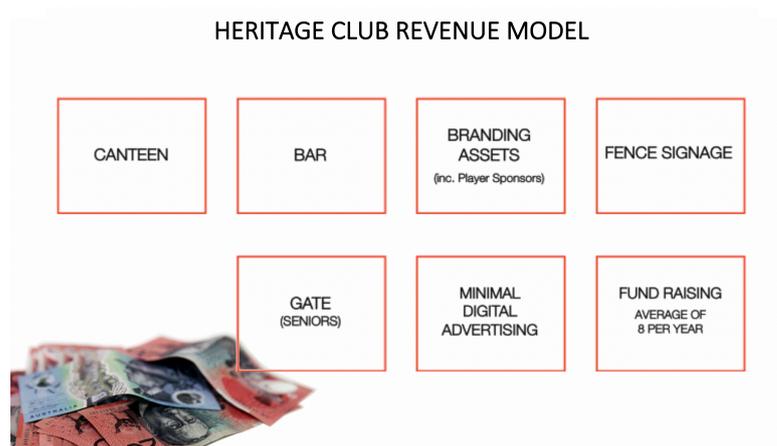
Now, let's be obvious!

All clubs' financial viability relies on the amount of money they can raise.

Typically, clubs know what their expenses are. Almost as typically, clubs have no real idea how they're going to raise the money they need to cover those expenses. It's this money, the money that's not being raised, that usually leads to debt, not the expenses. Sure, cost cutting is valuable, but if you don't know how to raise the money you need to cover your expenses, you can trim costs all you like and you're still going to end up in debt.

I'll say it again, failing to raise enough money is the primary reason more clubs end up in debt than not. There's no pressure like financial pressure, it leaves volunteers overwhelmed and with a burden that is all-consuming.

Check out this old-fashioned revenue model, which reflects more than 90% of the clubs who come to TDS looking for support. Look familiar? For years, clubs have been doing the same old things to raise a buck. It's worked for some clubs along the way, but it's been haphazard, unplanned and unreliable.



Time and time again we see one person, often the president or treasurer, trying to manage five or more income streams for the club. It's nigh on impossible to achieve five positive outcomes when that one person is 'spinning plates' trying to manage the workload that comes with raising the funds needed to keep a club afloat.

Is there a better way of raising money? Yes! But it takes a plan that suits the club and the right people to execute it.

There are so many missed revenue opportunities for clubs. They don't all work for all clubs, but when you've got enough different revenue prospects to choose from you're going to find something that is a perfect fit for your club.

TDS has developed a new-aged revenue model that makes a significant shift from the old thinking. It had to change, as the pressure on the clubs and its volunteers was too great. This model is working really well with our clubs.

We've taken learnings from my AFL days and simplified them into a formula that can be used at all levels of sport, including grass roots clubs. Finding the right people is the key, but remember, if you don't ask you don't get.

This is how it works... At their TDS Workshop, which can be either face-to-face or via Skype, each of our clubs chooses 4-6 fundraising initiatives from the 30 suggestions we provide, which we know are succeeding across multiple sports. The volunteers in the workshop attach realistic fundraising targets to each of the handful of ideas.

Then, using their chosen ideas and the guidance they get from the TDS REEDS Approach, the clubs can raise anywhere from \$50-100k or more of new money through the course of the year. And it's repeatable year-on-year.

Of course, this new age fundraising method doesn't work in isolation. I'll say it again - it doesn't work in isolation. As I've already mentioned, it's part of the REEDS Approach, which helps clubs optimise their structure and personnel, along with the education it provides, so they can get the best out of all their people, resources and initiatives.

Way too often, I speak with struggling club administrators who are like Tom Cruise in Jerry Maguire – 'Show me the money!'. It's all they can think of. But you can't raise revenue, decent revenue, unless you have the volunteers and structures in place that allow it to happen. The REEDS Approach gives clubs the framework they need to put themselves in a position to raise decent levels of revenue.



***“Clubs can raise anywhere from \$50k-\$100k or more of new money through the course of the year”***

# CHAPTER 15

## FINANCE MANAGEMENT

### IS IT GETTING HARDER TO PAY YOUR BILLS?

Many of the clubs we see at TDS have a clear lack of financial planning. Specifically, they don't have a budget.

As an accountant by training, I'm absolutely bewildered that anyone could run a club – basically a small or even medium-sized business – without any sort of budget or financial plan. It's not the volunteers' fault. They're trying to do their best by their clubs and communities, but they just don't know how to manage the finances.

What it means is that lots and lots of clubs are simply flying by the seat of their pants and hoping for the best as their year unfolds. This gives us some clue why so many of them are in debt.

Being in debt is often the unspoken truth for clubs. The volunteers who are responsible for hundreds of thousands of dollars of turnover aren't treating their clubs as businesses. Because they don't know how. So these really well-intentioned volunteers find themselves floundering, with mounting debt, and no clear direction out of the mess.

I am a big believer that no matter what you want, if you don't budget for it, it won't happen. There's an old saying, 'If you fail to plan, you plan to fail'. So true!

***“If you fail to plan,  
you plan to fail”***

The burden of managing or avoiding debt is the key reason volunteer administrators turn over so often in grassroots community clubs. The juggling act of balancing their lives becomes constant, they realise the pressure has become too much, and they simply walk away.

Clubs should have a budget that's structured so that it reflects the club's planning. It doesn't have to be complex, but it does have to be framed in such a way that the responsibilities for delivering on that planning are shared.

There's no point having grand plans and nobody to carry them out. So catering for the execution of plans should be factored into a club budget.

Here's a couple of good, simple tips on financial management:

Firstly, keep your financial reporting simple.

All you need is a maximum of three, one-page financial reports to present to your committee on a monthly basis – a Sample Forecasting Model, an Exception Report and a Revenue Analysis. Your committee will love it because of its simplicity. It's exactly the same financial model I used when I was CFO/COO of AFL Clubs under the guidance of Ian Dicker, Eddie McGuire and Jeff Kennett, all outstanding club presidents. This financial reporting model is the same for all levels of sport.

Secondly, if you're accounting for your financials manually, I urge you to consider an accounting software package. They save a huge amount of time when compared to manual book keeping, the data can be stored safely in 'the cloud', and they're very cost-effective.

## FINANCIAL REPORTS



One page each

1. Sample forecasting model
2. Exception report
3. Revenue analysis

TDS has the online education and downloadable templates that volunteers can use for their clubs. The financial roadmap is there outlined for them. There is no need for anybody in any club to reinvent the financial wheel, because TDS has already done it!

# CHAPTER 16

## SPONSORSHIP

### HOW TO GENERATE MORE

Finding sponsorship for community clubs appears to be getting more difficult. This is a consistent message we hear from clubs.

At TDS workshops, we dive into what clubs are selling as value to their sponsors. It's a comprehensive audit of what's being sold to sponsors to raise funds for the club.

What we often find is that clubs generate sponsorship by tapping into existing relationships. That is, they get money from people already known to and supportive of the club - an ex-player whose company is going OK, a local community-minded business person, a well-off supporter or two who are happy to take a tax deduction to help the club every year.

The common element is that usually what a club sells to a sponsor in return for funds is a load of club-coloured fresh air. So much so that the 'sponsorship' would be more correctly described as a donation.

*“Usually what a club sells to a sponsor in return for funds is a load of club-coloured fresh air”*

Sound familiar?

What about these statements? They might sound familiar, too:

- We have a few branding assets you can have (e.g., singlet, polo and jersey).
- We have player sponsor packages.
- We can give you permanent fence signage to promote your business.
- We can promote your company on our website.

These statements represent most clubs before we work with them.

This old-fashioned sponsorship revenue model is hopelessly outdated. It leaves many volunteer club administrators feeling frustrated, overwhelmed and unsure how to solve their revenue problems. It fails sponsors, too.

Sponsorship can be a high-profit margin revenue stream, but it doesn't get the focus it requires. People lean on existing relationships instead of developing substantial two-way business partnerships. A new sponsorship angle is required and is well overdue.

The key to any long-term sponsorship success is creating a vehicle (we provide examples of a few that work in all our sports) that promotes the sponsoring company's brand and business in return for their support.

The contribution from the sponsor needs to be far more than just a donation. It has to be a payment for services. If a club can provide the opportunity for its sponsors to promote their business in a structured manner, and add extra value through other opportunities, such as special access to players, functions or 'inner sanctum' activities, then its chances of retaining them year-on-year increases. Isn't that the objective?

The other option is for the club to stay stuck in the past, where sponsorship is a low-yielding hassle, with clubs having to start from scratch year-on-year to find a new roster of sponsors by doing the same inefficient and ineffective things all over again.

TDS ran a workshop for a club a couple of years back in which the volunteers chose three of the seven proven sponsorship initiatives we proposed. To realise the opportunities that the initiatives offered, it was a matter of taking on the TDS sponsorship guidance, reallocating some of their internal resources, and following through with the initiatives as planned.

***“The club's sponsorship funds increased by \$54k”***

In year one, the club's sponsorship funds increased by \$54k, which was 120% up on the previous year. As is typical in clubland, the sponsorship revenue came at the start of the club year, which took a great deal of pressure off the club's volunteers. They followed the process and they got the result.

Here are some sponsorship tips:

The base formula (not the full offering) of a successful sponsorship structure is a combination of the following:

- Assets - understand what branding assets you are selling (audit required – you should have 10+ to consider)
- Club profile and sponsorship proposal – presenting your club in a professional manner
- Sponsorship vehicle – having multiple vehicles (e.g., a club business directory), where all club sponsors are promoted as a collective (hard and soft copies)
- Cash & in-kind – revenue can come in both forms (Don't underestimate the importance of in-kind contributions)

## CHAPTER 17

### AUSTRALIAN SPORTS FOUNDATION EVERY CLUB'S FUNDRAISING PARTNER

Until we tell them, not many of the clubs we work with have heard of the Australian Sports Foundation and the terrific fundraising opportunity it can provide for all clubs, large and small, across Australia.

So, what is it? The Australian Sports Foundation is a not-for-profit and registered charity that was set up by the Federal Government to raise money for sport. Any sports club that signs up has access to a range of fundraising initiatives - including club raffles, special money-back offers from suppliers and, this is the big one, tax deductible donations from anyone who wants to support them.



In simple terms, instead of giving money directly to the club, supporters give money to the Australian Sports Foundation, which allows them to claim a tax deduction.

The Sports Foundation then gives the money to the club after deducting a percentage to cover administration costs.

The club gets the money it needs, the supporter gets a tax deduction at their marginal tax rate, and the Australian Sports Foundation receives a small fee to continue its work.

We at TDS are big fans of the Australian Sports Foundation because it opens up a really good avenue for funds that clubs probably just wouldn't see otherwise.

The old fashioned revenue model that I keep harping about is so out of date it leaves volunteer club administrators frustrated and, at times, overwhelmed that they can't raise enough money to meet all the club's financial obligations.

***“It opens up a really good avenue for funds that clubs probably just wouldn't see otherwise”***

If they've inherited a revenue model that's broken, then they're going to keep having those same problems until they change how they do things.

Setting up a relationship with the Australian Sports Foundation is one of the things club administrators can do straight away to bring about positive change.

We advise all our clubs to learn more about the Australian Sports Foundation and how it can generate much-needed funds for their club. Structured correctly it can be a 'win, win' for the club and the donor.

Using the Australian Sports Foundation opportunity is one of the 30 fundraising initiatives TDS has identified and incorporated into the very successful workshops we're running as part of the REEDS Approach for community clubs.

***“We've had clubs raise anywhere from \$5k to \$100k+ through the Australian Sports Foundation tax deduction opportunity”***

Previously all donations to the Australian Sports Foundation had to be specifically capital project related. This is no longer the case which has opened the opportunity in so many ways to potential donors. We've had clubs raise anywhere from \$5k to \$100k+ through the Australian Sports Foundation tax deduction opportunity.

All clubs should research the Australian Sports Foundation and register. Click [here](http://asf.org.au) to go to asf.org.au and follow the prompts. It's a simple process.

The TDS education video library has four short videos in which Patrick Walker, the CEO of the Australian Sports Foundation, explains how simple the process is and how to maximise the opportunity.

Having one person at the club understanding and driving the initiative is a key component of getting a successful outcome for clubs.

# CHAPTER 18

## GRANTS

### A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR MANY CLUBS

This chapter refers to ‘rats and mice’ grants - those with a value between \$1k and \$20k. It doesn’t cover larger capital grants, which require a different strategy. We cover capital grants in detail in the TDS online education modules.

Although we call them ‘rats and mice’ grants because they are for smaller amounts, given that there are so many of them regularly available throughout the year they can add up to a really significant number. Unlike most capital grants, which can only be applied for by councils, these smaller grants can be applied for directly by clubs.

Governments and businesses offer grants because they want clubs to receive them. Winning them is not the begging exercise that clubs have to go through when organising fund raisers or chasing sponsors. These grants are there for the taking.

I find it amazing that many clubs don’t apply for grants at all. If they do, it’s generally not in any sort of structured way, it’s more of an ad hoc process, where there’s no plan, just a hope, a prayer and a spin of the wheel.

What we find at lots of clubs is that the person who applies for grants is already wearing other hats as well. They might be the President, Secretary or Treasurer – roles that already make considerable demands on the volunteers who take them on. So, because of the already-sizable workloads of these amateur administrators, pursuing grants is a low priority; they’re too busy with the day-to-day stuff to put energy into something with a six month lead time.



*“There are grants out there,  
and plenty of them”*

Grants don’t get anything like the attention they should and, consequently, the clubs don’t get anything like the grant money they need and deserve.

Clubs administrators often don't know what grants are available and, even if they do, they don't have the time or expertise to write the grant applications. Or they apply for grants that aren't suitable, which means wasted time and ends in disappointment.

It's no surprise that volunteer administrators get discouraged and frustrated knowing there's grant money available for their not-for-profit club, but they don't have the time or skill to get amongst it.

Believe me when I tell you, there are grants out there, and plenty of them. You just need to know where to look and how to apply for them properly.

For many clubs grant funding is a missed opportunity based on the fact they do not have the right structure in place to maximise this prospect. Typically, a good share of grant funding is available for items clubs spend money on as a matter of course, such as equipment, education, participation growth strategies or perhaps some lower-level capital items to improve the way your community club operates.

A strong example of the sort of grant clubs can apply for is available through Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV). The SRV Tier 2 Grant is valued at \$2,000. It's available to support sports clubs in the training of their officials and administrators. This grant opens twice a year and has been a valuable support to clubs that want to take advantage of the TDS education offering for our Victorian volunteer administrators.

All the other states and territories also have grants available to their clubs.

***“Positive grant results are making a notable difference for our TDS clubs across multiple sports”***

I've mentioned this before, but our general philosophy on helping clubs is so appropriate when it comes to grants, 'Instead of giving clubs fish, let's teach them how to fish'. TDS can teach clubs how to maximise their grant revenue.

Positive grant results are making a notable difference for our TDS clubs across multiple sports. For example, my own local club in regional Victoria:

- applied for 17 grants this year and was successful with eight of them, bringing in a strong five figure sum for the club.
- had two people, who were not on the committee, working solely in this area.
- used 'grant tracker' software to monitor each of our grants so they could be reported on monthly to the committee.

Here's a couple of tips on grants:

Some clubs get more grants than others because they quite simply have one or more people focused solely on grants.

For our Victorian clubs, TDS has a company (separate to us) that writes the grants for them - no success, no fee.

All these clubs need is a minimum of one person to dedicate 30 minutes per month with our grant writer so they can communicate whether the club is in or out for each grant that comes to our attention – it's as simple as that.

We've found that 30 minutes a month yields most clubs thousands of dollars over the course of a year, for some the number is into six figures. Compare this sort of return to most of the other fund raisers clubs usually spend their time on. Outsourcing this task for a fee is obviously better than not applying for any grants at all, and it frees up valuable time for volunteers to undertake other tasks.

Don't miss the opportunities that come from grants!

## CHAPTER 19

### SUCCESSION PLANNING LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Earlier in the book, I talked about the lifecycle of a committee member. TDS research has revealed the significant pressure volunteer administrators are under. On average, they're turning over every 3 years or so, across all sports and regions.

Clearly, succession planning must be an ongoing focus for all clubs.

This was brought home to me at a forum I was asked to address recently. The competition's governing body had organised the presidents of all their clubs to attend, and all 34 took part in the day. Of the 34 presidents in attendance, 21 of them were new to the role. More than 60% of the competition's presidents had turned over from the previous year. Wow!

*“Of the 34 presidents in attendance,  
21 of them were new to the role”*

Think about the message that sort of revolving door situation sent to the people in the forum. My read was that the newbies were thinking to themselves that being a president must be a pretty tough gig!

It's obvious there's a problem with the way clubs are structured if we've got turnover rates this high.

I believe this rapid turnover of committee people is one of the many problems that come from the antiquated committee structure that so many community clubs still use to guide their operations. To bring their succession planning into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have to show administrators how to put modern-day committee structures and club processes in place.

One of the problems is that the overwhelming majority of clubs don't give succession planning even a passing thought. They're so stuck in the 'now' that they don't consider who's going to look after the club after they're gone, and into the future.

This issue shows itself when new people come onto a committee. Too often, they learn on the job, and that job is likely to be a very senior position. If the club had a system in place, a succession plan, these new volunteers would be prepared for their roles when they take them up, they would perform better, with less stress and last longer in them.

It's impossible to educate and support new committee members if existing volunteers don't have the time or capacity to help them (because they're too busy spinning plates in their own demanding roles).

To compound the problem, there is often minimal handover, if any, from the person on the way out to the person on the way in.

The committee person leaving is usually departing hastily - burnt-out, disgruntled, disenfranchised or just plain fed up with the club and its problems.

We have to get better with our succession planning or history will continue to repeat.

Flexibility is a valuable asset for clubs that want to retain good people or find others to replace them.

My own experience is a perfect case in point. My community club, Cora Lynn FNC, has shown amazing flexibility to allow me to fulfil my duties as Vice President.

- I live 75kms from the club so can't attend most training sessions and I missed around two thirds of the home and away games last season.
- I'm assistant coach of my daughter's footy team in the city. Her games conflict with my club's games.
- I held senior executive positions in the AFL for many years, which prevented me attending many of my club's games.

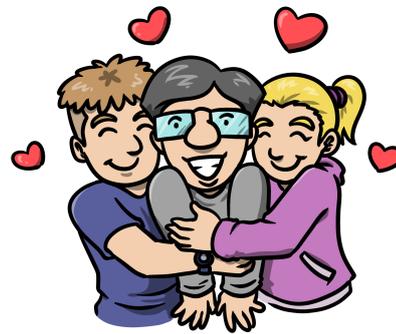
***“We have to get better with our succession planning or history will continue to repeat”***

In all cases, the club was understanding of my position and flexible enough to allow me to fulfil my role as VP while being able to do all the other things that were big parts of my life.

If I had been required to attend every training session and match day, I wouldn't have been able to fulfil the role of Vice President. However, the club's flexibility allowed me to continue in the role, which I love and I know I'm good at, and contribute to my community club in a substantial way.

How do we arrest the very high rates of committee turnover? Here are a few tips for clubs managing succession with the objective of extending the lifespan of their volunteer administrators:

- Develop a thriving volunteer program that prospects, recruits, engages, retains and rewards volunteers.
- Implement a new committee structure model that alters the workload pressure on the core band of volunteers holding a club together.
- Start educating club administrators early instead of throwing new people in and expecting them to learn on the job (and often learning the hard way by making mistakes that could have been avoided).
- Use our (160+ short videos and 100+ downloadable templates) as a recruiting tool to fill the respective vacancies you have around the club. People learn in their own time at their own speed.
- Clarify roles via a position description (we provide 20+ in our online filing cabinet) so prospective committee members and other volunteers know what they will be taking on.
- Ensure that no one person oversees more than two income streams
- Ensure that no person is assigned to be the primary person in charge of more than two jobs at any given time.
- Target prospects to fill the roles, and do it well before the AGM.
- Tutor prospective office holders in committee structure, operation and responsibility well before they take office.
- Clubs should show a high level of flexibility to ensure they don't miss out on or lose high quality people



***“Find and cherish your club’s volunteer co-ordinator”***

And the number one, gold-plated piece of advice to ensure successful succession planning:

- Find and cherish your club’s volunteer co-ordinator.

The volunteer co-ordinator is one of the most important jobs at the club. The person in this role is someone who has the skills and temperament to co-ordinate all the club's roles and the people who fill them so the club can operate as smoothly and, by sharing the load, as fairly as possible.

With these succession planning strategies in place, new administrators won't be coming in cold. They'll have a better chance of succeeding because they'll already have knowledge and understanding of the role they're taking on. And they'll have a much better chance of a longer and more successful term than their peers who've been thrown into the deep end of the old-school community club system.

## CHAPTER 20

### CONCLUSION

Sport is a huge part of the fabric of Australian culture. The positive flow-on effects of healthy grassroots clubs has to be acknowledged; both economically and socially, the health and wellbeing of sporting clubs transfers into the communities they serve.

Since before any of us can remember, Australian sport has been driven and supported by a culture of volunteering. For a long time, though, our volunteers and the system they operate under has been under pressure. Lots of it, and it's getting worse.

There's more competition for participation and support than there ever before, across all sports and all regions of the country.

I made a bold statement in the earlier part of the book, that there are fewer people in the next generation who are ready, willing and able to take on the demands of roles as grassroots community sports administrators. We must change that.

I've been fortunate to have worked at some of the biggest and most successful sporting clubs in the country, and I continue to play an active role in my community club. However, having being closely involved with more than 500 community clubs, my personal observations and those of the rest of the TDS crew are that the current community club model has run its race. It's old, it's old fashioned and it's outlived its usefulness.

***“The current community club model has run its race”***

Here are some dot points that sum it up from my perspective:

- No sport is providing a centralised education program for its clubs.
- Sports bodies have limited resources – typically, staff wear multiple hats and are more reactive than proactive, which is no fault of their own.
- Community and technology have been slow to meet.
- The Committee Structure, Revenue and Finance models for clubs have not changed for more than three decades.
- Financial reporting and accountability in 'clubland' is at a very low level.

- Committees are turning over quickly. This is due to burnout and volunteers trying to balance their lives around work, family and club commitments.
- Sports administrators are learning on the job. Learning the hard way.
- Some club health checks (audits of club health) are considered too arduous, which creates a barrier to being involved in a process that should benefit them.
- Some sectors of clubs may not be open to change.

Unfortunately, that is all undeniable fact. Yes, some clubs are going along ok, but they're in the minority. In the main, community clubs are struggling - amalgamating with clubs down the road (regionally, in particular), contracting in size, changing to

lower levels of competition, or simply closing their doors. And to make matters worse, their volunteer administrators come and go as if they're in a revolving door.



*“Volunteer administrators come and go as if they’re in a revolving door”*

It’s time for a change. Grassroots sports and their community clubs needs help. A level of intervention is required, a circuit breaker that allows a new direction.

We paint a not-so-positive picture of the wellbeing of our clubs because we know, better than anyone, just how dire their circumstances are becoming.

So, who’s challenging the status quo at clubs and allowing that new direction? You know what I’m going to say, but I’m going to say it anyway...

The innovative TDS REEDS Approach is the answer. We’ve seen it work time and time again when club administrators have embraced it and followed its process.

**TDS is the only ‘one stop shop’ for grassroots clubs and volunteers who want to make things better for themselves, their members and the communities they serve.**

Administrators can create a better managed, more successful and more enjoyable community club when they:

- Complete a free online club health check (10 minutes) to see how your club is positioned.
- Introduce the new-age committee structure model.
- **Create a thriving volunteer program** (Can't stress this one enough!)
- Introduce a simple financial reporting model that works from the elite level of Australian sport to grassroots.
- Introduce the new-age revenue model, which brings AFL-standard initiatives to all levels of Australian sport, simplified to serve grassroots.
- Follow the guidance in the President's Package – The first 90 days (a process or roadmap to early success for the club's president).
- Adopt the breakthrough REEDS Approach model, the first end-to-end club administration solution developed for community clubs and sports.

The TDS Workshops are vital to addressing the challenges and opportunities, unique to each and every club, that are revealed by the club health check. Of particular importance is the identification and implementation of new revenue initiatives.

***“We are providing innovative thinking that challenges the accepted way community clubs are being managed”***

From the workshop, club administrators receive a two-page, five-year strategic plan. It's a roadmap to take their club forward to a successful and enjoyable future.

Looking back, I know that Chris Connolly and I were onto something when we had that first chat about community sport all those years ago. Our combined passion for sport and community allied with my experience in business and elite sport has brought us and TDS to this marvellous situation where every, single day we're helping grassroots clubs, their volunteer administrators and the communities they serve.

It's even better than we could have dreamed!

To know that our innovative thinking is challenging the accepted way community clubs are being managed all around the country is truly inspiring.

It gives us a great sense of pride to know that we're changing lives in clubs and communities for the better by providing practical support for the unsung heroes who run our grassroots clubs.

In closing, I'd like to thank all those brave, wonderful, community-minded volunteers who have joined the TDS program, especially the 'early adopters' who proved to us and to the world that there is a better, more successful and more enjoyable way to run our community clubs. We know now that clubs really do get amazing results when grassroots volunteers 'share the load' and learn 'how to fish' the TDS way!

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **THE TDS OFFERING**

### **HELPING GOVERNING BODIES**

TDS caters for all levels of Australian sport with an extensive range of offerings. We are working with 12 sports, at club, league, association, state and national levels.

Many of the sports we are working with have limited resources, so they struggle to provide the support that is required to service their associations, leagues and clubs. TDS offers affordable, effective ways to deliver help and support to all levels of sports administration.

At grassroots level, TDS supports administrators to get a fundamental understanding of their roles and how to execute them in an effective way so that they enjoy being a volunteer and their club benefits from good administration.

At league and association level, TDS offers objective, big-picture audits and reviews that result in more business-focussed guidance with a clear focus on the future.

At state and national levels, TDS offer strategic review and guidance on all aspects of community operations.

TDS offerings:

- Strategic planning
- Business planning
- Online education
- Club health checks
- Tailored action plans
- Group education forums
- Third party reviews
- Workshops
- Train the trainer sessions
- Club / League intervention

## APPENDIX 2

### WHO IS TERRY DILLON?

Terry Dillon is one of the most sought-after sports administration authorities in Australia. Nobody knows more about community sports administration, its issues and how to solve them.

Terry is a Bachelor of Business with a major in accounting (BBus (Acc)). He is a Certified Practising Accountant (CPA). He has a Graduate Diploma in Management and is a Master of Business Administration (MBA).

As Chief Operating Officer of Hawthorn Football Club for eight years, under Ian Dicker (1998-1999) and later Jeff Kennett (2005-2011), Terry was a key element of the club's rebuild and premiership success.

He was headhunted to Collingwood Football Club by Eddie Maguire to be his Chief Financial Officer for six years during that club's successful rebuild (1999-2005).

Terry was Chief Operating Officer of the St Kilda Football Club for three years (2011-2014) and he served as acting CEO of Hawthorn in 2009 and St Kilda in 2013/14.

For many years, Terry has been Vice President of Cora Lynn Football and Netball Club in Gippsland, Victoria, where he played more than 300 games of senior footy over 28 seasons and has overseen the club's rebuild since 2006. The Cora Lynn Cobras don't have a town, just a postcode, but they are now one of the best performing clubs in Country Victoria.

*"I have not come across anyone in my time in sport who is so comfortably able to bridge the divide between the elite side of sport and its community level, and do it as seamlessly, with such expertise and passion."*

*Ian Robson*

*Rowing Australia CEO, former AFL CEO, former Melbourne Victory CEO*