

10 Ways to Benefit from the Growth of Tennis

According to the Physical Activity Council (SGMA, SIA, IRHSA, OF), between 2000 and 2010 tennis had a 46% increase in growth and is the fastest growing traditional sport! This is important information for decision makers contemplating amenities. As one CMAA Manager said, “I am clear on the *new* club where tennis is not merely an afterthought to golf. There needs to be emphasis in tennis, for it is a viable amenity that can benefit the entire country club.”

If you want to “get in the game” and benefit from the growth of tennis, here are 10 things every club should work to do.

Develop at least four tennis courts and keep them in very good condition. Generally speaking, two courts are inadequate for most leagues and tournaments. Clean and well-maintained tennis courts evoke good feelings and entice people to play. Soft (clay) courts are easier on bodies and equipment and preferred by most people over 40. At least two of your courts should have lights.

Hire a Tennis Professional at least three or four months of the year. Whether you have a summer season, winter season or year-round program, a first-rate Pro is invaluable. Also, make sure you have the right person. Your Tennis Pro should be able to teach, entertain and inform. Certifications and athletic ability are necessary, and people skills and character are more important. Organizational and administrative skills are essential.

Loan or rent tennis equipment, including shoes, racquets and balls, for beginner players. If you have clay courts you want to be prepared for the person who accidentally wears running shoes which are harmful to the courts and the player. Also, if someone has a wrong racquet, like a small child trying to use their parent’s frame, you want to provide the right equipment.

Plan, promote and deliver Quick Start Tennis. This is an outstanding program for young children and targets 8 and under and 10 and under age groups. The 8 and under group plays on a 36 foot court with oversize, low pressure balls. The 10 and under group plays on a 60 foot court with low pressure balls. Quick Start Tennis is an excellent feeder for older junior tennis programs. Also, you need a Pro who is good working with children.

Promote beginner clinics for teenagers and adults who do not play tennis. Non-players may be your biggest opportunity to grow participation, so plan and deliver novice group lessons. For beginners it is very important to nurture a safe environment which includes encouraging instruction and other players of similar ability.

Plan and promote adult tennis socials and invite people who do not play tennis to attend. A tennis social can be a mixed doubles round robin for all abilities or a doubles exhibition where local Pros play and members watch and have drinks. The key is connecting people, and tennis just happens to be a theme.

Organize competitive tennis events. Generally, these programs, like league play and club tournaments, will be more supported by intermediate levels and above. Some people want to compete, so you need some competitive options. Also, home tennis teams that travel to other clubs and visiting teams with nonmembers playing at your facility can be excellent promotion for your club.

Make tennis specific action plans to gain new members. There are specific programs that clubs can utilize to get prospective members on property. Your Membership Director, Tennis Pro and Membership Committee should plan proactively and deliver these type of programs which can be more effective than giving leads a tour of the facility.

Promote and communicate tennis as much as golf or food and beverage. Instead of just token spaces, have a tennis page on your web site, promote tennis on club e-mails and have a tennis calendar and column in your newsletter. Recognize members and their tennis accomplishments with their names and photos in the newsletter.

Care to be involved. If you are one of the Managers who does not play tennis that's okay, yet be visible around significant tennis programs. Your presence sends a clear message to the members and staff the tennis program is important. Whether part-time, seasonal or year-round, successful tennis programs have Club Managers who are actively involved.

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