

Discover Sailing Case Study:

Planning and Prioritising - Albury Wodonga Yacht Club

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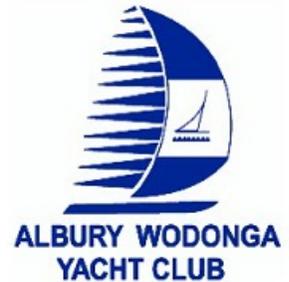
Introduction:

In the seven years to 2010, large parts of Australia suffered a major drought. Lake Hume, the sailing waters of Albury Wodonga Yacht Club was, in some of those years, reduced to less than 5% of capacity, making it a short drive rather than a walk, from the club building to the water. In two of those seasons, the club's boat ramps, which could provide access to the water at 10% capacity, were high and dry by mid December! This had a profound impact on club membership, participation and activity levels both on and off the water. Membership fell from around 150 to 75, however an enthusiastic group sailed on, some on the much reduced waters of the Lake, and some traveling for hours to alternate waterways and events throughout Vic.

And some of this enthusiastic group started to plan for a bright and vibrant future for sailing and the club.

Details:

Amongst that continuing group of sailors were committed committee members who knew that with the return of rain and water, their club could again prosper. Under the leadership of Commodore Phil Clements, the club set about a plan for its revival. And then in the winter of 2010, with rain and the snow-melt, the lake returned to its former levels. One of the priorities the club had already identified was the development of a 'learn to sail' program, to introduce and involve new participants and ultimately increase membership. At the same time the drought broke, Yachting Victoria was in the throes of introducing the now widely acclaimed Tackers program. An offer from YV to bring a week-long introductory program to AWYC was enthusiastically accepted. This program was wildly successful and resulted in a wave of renewed interest in both sailing and the AWYC that the club has continued to build on over the last two years. The success of this is well covered in another Yachting Australia Case Study. In 2013, with the success of the initial drought recovery plan, the Committee, with new Commodore Jeff Stirling, at the helm, decided it was time to plan for the long term success of the club. They recognised the value of having a plan that helped them focus on the priorities. Equally important to actually having that plan was the need to ensure it was developed and 'owned' by the members.



Several of the Committee members worked successfully in business environments and understood both the benefits, and process of successful planning. With big aspirations for their plan and club, they resolved that club funds would be well invested in having an external facilitator lead the planning process. After considering their options, they appointed Mike Boyle of the Banjar Group in March 2013 to help them with the creation of a Strategic Plan for the Club.

Mike undertook some background research about sailing, the club, and the city of Albury Wodonga, where he had previously undertaken some work for both local government and businesses. He also had a background as a successful volunteer sports administrator and coach. The first step was to convene a forum with a smaller group including the Club Committee, and a broad cross section of other members. Nearly 20 people participated, in this six hour session in April 2013. Afterwards of course there was a celebratory dinner.

The Forum provided the participants insights into how successful plans can deliver success to organisations, and plenty of opportunities to work interactively about what they wanted the club to be like in the future, and the things they needed to do to get there. A draft 'Vision' and list of priorities for the following three months was produced, to get the planning under way and to kick off the broader consultative process with other members who were keen to be involved.

One of Mike's great examples of success in working together is demonstrated by the scientific studies that have been conducted on the migration habits of millions of Canadian geese. Each year these birds fly half way around the world in formations, that are proven to be a 73% more efficient way of flying than if they were to migrate individually. It can be shown they have a common goal, great collaboration and teamwork and are constantly and effectively communicating.

To this end one of the first three months' priorities was to involve all club members in this vision for the future plan. In May the Committee convened a special meeting of members where the work from the Committee Forum was laid out. All club members were then invited to contribute and provide their views on the plan. Over 60 members attended and contributed. Again Mike facilitated the session and the result was an improved plan, and very importantly a shared enthusiasm and energy for getting involved in the clubs bright future.

Summary:

The outcome of this planning process is that the Club's members have a shared vision with the Committee, about what they want the club to be like in the future, and how they want to work together. They have a blueprint for the club's development, and priorities and a timetable for what they want to achieve. Members have confidence in the clubs future, and an appreciation of how they can help.

Albury Wodonga is a great Case Study of a club that has invested in its future by committing the time and resources to a proper planning process and a realistic plan to increase its membership and sustainability.

Contact

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