

Building a Framework for Recruiting

By Donald C. Collins



Recruiting used to be a very insular process. An association simply recruited through current members' personal contacts. Associations could do that without any outside help — whether the association was big or small. Insularity was fostered. Innovative techniques were not needed.

Associations can no longer succeed by using an insular approach to recruiting, however. In too many places all over the country, officiating numbers are dwindling. The result is there are often not enough officials to service all of the games. The shortage is so bad that some leagues have had to reschedule games. Associations need to change their approach to fill their new recruitment needs.

Frameworks for modern recruiting.

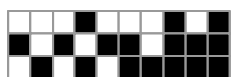
Successful modern recruiting requires associations to pool resources and work with associations in multiple sports throughout their geographic region. There are probably hundreds of recruiting tools and techniques a collective of associations could use to recruit. However, the prerequisite to using those tools and techniques is to have a non-insular association or a non-insular collective of associations.

That does not mean the elimination of local associations; indeed, the local association is still the lynchpin of officiating. But it means local associations must create frameworks that can be used to augment the

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The Role of Your Association's Rules Interpreter

By Jay Miner



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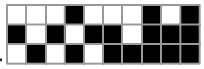
The person who serves as your association's rules interpreter should be carefully chosen. Preferably, your interpreter has some teaching skills and can explain interpretations properly. Sometimes that means explaining what is meant, rather than what is written. You'll want a confident interpreter who can maintain order in your meetings and when necessary, professionally rebuff the association "wise guy" who tries to show up or stump your interpreter.

Your best prospective interpreter might not be the official who constantly

achieves 100 percent scores on association exams. Sometimes, those individuals are too legalistic about rules. It's usually preferable to have an interpreter who is knowledgeable, but realistic, and not literalistic about rules.

A few years ago I was astounded when I discovered the interpreter's position, in a large state association, automatically went to the elected first vice president. Obviously, an individual could be an outstanding officer without

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traditional recruiting technique of relying solely on personal contacts. Clearly, a major element of many of these frameworks will be an approach that lets associations work as teams with other associations in their geographic region.

That need for teamwork is the embodiment of the old saying that my individual fingers aren't much, but when you put them together they form a strong fist. That is the essence of

teamwork in officiating; it also is the essence of teamwork for officials associations.

Many associations have already begun using modern frameworks, which helps them recruit. Others are beginning to implement them. Here are a small sampling of some of the frameworks which are being used or developed.

1. The statewide collective of associations. Under this framework, every officials association in a state pays membership dues to a collective of associations. The collective then assumes the responsibility of a number of administrative tasks, including recruiting. The collective can elect or hire officers whose sole job is to implement the collective's policy and make sure that the work gets done. Regional representatives should also be appointed to ensure that no association or sport gets lost in the shuffle.

This framework lets officials have management that is not charged with the task of assigning or running a local association. Assigning and association management are time-consuming activities which often preclude the type of planning which can lead to effective recruiting. This framework provides economies of scale as statewide dues payments provide sufficient funds for sophisticated recruiting techniques.

2. Regional alliances of associations. A formal or informal alliance of the associations within a region can be an extremely effective framework for improved recruiting. The alliances can be intrasport alliances or multi-sport alliances.

Intrasport alliances can ensure that prospective officials find associations that best fit their geographic needs. Intrasport alliances also allow associations to pool resources and share training techniques. Multi-sport alliances also provide these advantages, and a multi-sport alliance has the added advantage of providing for cross-referrals of prospective officials and

veteran officials who may be inclined to try a second sport.

3. The multi-sport 'super' association. Under this framework, an association assigns every sport from water polo and field hockey to basketball. In fact, a super association will often assign multiple levels of most of those sports (for example, high school and Pop Warner football or middle school, high school and junior college basketball). Running a super association is rather time consuming, and will generally be the full-time job of someone in the association.

The benefits of such a framework are clear. The super association can make recruiting efficient because it knows everybody who assigns games in every sport in a region, has full-time professional management and has some leverage to persuade officials in one sport to try another one. Super associations can be particularly helpful in getting coverage for obscure and less popular sports. They can even help to steer an official to a sport where she can advance the fastest.

The Fermar Officials Corporation in San Jose, Calif., is an excellent example of a super association. In sports with too few officials, Fermar has been able to encourage high-level players to officiate low-level games. Fermar also has been able to take advantage of its size by providing officials from one sport easy access to officiating a second sport. In fact, it has approximately 25 officials officiating both basketball and football. It also has some crossover officials in other sports.

4. Alliances with state governing bodies. Associations can work with their state governing body to facilitate more effective recruiting. State governing bodies have information on all associations, and in some cases, all officials in a state. State governing bodies also have economic resources and influence with schools, athletic directors, media outlets and even community groups. Officials

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associations can benefit from a close alliance with their state governing body.

The Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) is an excellent example of what a governing body can do to help officials recruit. The MHSAA provides officials services on its website. It also provides a list of associations, instructions on how to become an official anywhere in the state and a list of equipment providers. The MHSAA even publishes an officials quarterly, an excellent tool to help bring officials and associations together.

5. Alliances with city and regional bodies. Associations can work with municipal or regional interscholastic leagues and with recreational entities. This framework lets associations gain

many of the same recruiting benefits they gain when working with state governing bodies. Indeed, associations acquire an extra benefit because the city or regional groups are closer to the community that forms an association's recruiting base.

City or regional groups can assist with clinics. They can network with youth programs and recreational leagues to help develop young officials. Also, a well-organized city or recreational program can cultivate ties with professional leagues and professional sports officials, resulting in clinics, speakers, advanced training and tools to implement better training programs.

Milwaukee is an excellent example of a city that works well with officials and associations. Russ Thomas, the

Assistant Commissioner of Milwaukee's School and Community Services, works hand in hand with associations on recruiting. He also uses recreational leagues as a base for training future interscholastic officials.

Teamwork: The new framework.

Insular recruiting has gone the way of the dinosaur. Successful recruiting requires associations to move to more professional models of recruiting. Professional models range from strategic partnerships between local associations to large state and regional collectives of officials and associations. Professional models require officials to work as a team and construct professional frameworks for recruiting. (Donald C. Collins is the commissioner of the San Francisco Section of the California Interscholastic Federation. He is a lawyer and longtime official from San Francisco.) ■