

Interview with Doug Cash - 2007

Q: In your experience what are some good ways to attract new tennis members?

A: Since 70% of new members know a current member, the best way to attract new members is to involve your current members in the marketing. One way to do this is called a "Free for all." "Free for all" is a program where you offer your current members a series of free lessons if they invite non-members to take the lesson with them. (Hence the name, "Free for All"). The conversion rate of turning those guests into new members, if the pro does their job properly, is about 50%.

Q: What do you believe is the most effective way of retaining members within tennis clubs?

A: The biggest reason that a member drops out is that they are not using the club enough (for many reasons) to justify the dues paid. Therefore, it is important to track the usage of your members. If their usage is low, then you must contact them and get them involved in your programs. Programming also helps them meet new friends and can help maintain their fitness routines.

Q: What can tennis facilities do to promote their coaching development?

A: One of the club's goals should be to develop their professionals both on and off the court. Each club should have a plan that helps the pro develop their teaching skills, to keep the lessons that they teach new and exciting, and their business skills, to ensure the most profit for the club. The club should pay for the pro's development. I suggest that the club pay two thirds of the cost of education for their professionals. The club should also try to provide a career path for their professionals.

Q: What are some of the major changes that you have seen occurring within the facility management industry (club design, events, number of members) over the last number of years?

A: The major change that I have seen is the amount of competition. There has been a tremendous increase in the number of clubs which has forced everyone to run a better, more efficient club. In the long run, competition is better for the club members.

Q: In your opinion, what are club members looking for in a Pro?

A: The ideal tennis professional understands the goals of their students and members, and helps them achieve them. The professional needs to have the ability to really listen and have an attitude to serve their students.

Q: What skills and attributes do you consider most important in being a successful Pro?

A: Enthusiasm is by far the most important attribute that a professional should have. When you love what you do, it is contagious. Having the knowledge to give a great lesson, always being as positive as possible, and being a good communicator are also important skills.

Q: How has the "business" of the Club Pro changed?

A: With technical advancements, the club and the pro must be in the information age - online reservations and program sign-up opportunities, correspondence through email, reminders of birthdays, anniversaries etc. The technological changes have really altered the way they do business.

Q: What advice can you give Pros who want to increase their business?

A: Word of mouth is the best way to increase their business. To achieve great word of mouth, you must exceed your lesson participant's expectations so that they will spread the word to their friends.

Q: What advice can you give pros who would eventually like to make the step to a director position?

A: The first step is to do a great job as a teaching professional so that you are the first one that upper management thinks of to promote. Get the knowledge on how to make decisions and how to manage people. You will be well on your way from there.

Q: How can coaches/professionals keep up to date or access resources on current trends being made in club management?

A: Read every club and tennis publication, and attend regional and national conventions on coaching and player development. A professional should be willing to spend at least 2% of their income on further education every year. Networking with other professionals is another great source of knowledge that can be used.

Q: If you could share one piece of information that you have gained over the years with the rest of the country what would that be?

A: My formula for success is to develop your team, produce the results needed, uphold the standards of the organization and most of all, be trustworthy. When you accomplish all of these you will be able to advance your career.