

New Club Building Single Focus and Non-Traditional Clubs

Q. *What is a Non-Traditional Club?*

A. In our context, it would mean any previously formed group or organization that supports or promotes programs or activities primarily related to youth.

Q. *Why do we want these groups to become Optimist Clubs?*

A. The truth is that we would prefer them to be a Traditional Club, however, selling that concept to a group that is already formed, running and has its own mission is hard to do. For existing Optimist Clubs, forming these Non-Traditional Clubs would give your Club, your community and these newly formed Clubs a higher profile in the community and access to new programs and opportunities for the kids that they currently serve. Additionally, by providing these newly formed Non-Traditional Clubs access to Optimist services and programs, including our insurance policy to cover general liability, we can encourage them to take a more active part raising their own funds all year long.

Q. *Why would a previously formed group or organization want to become an Optimist Club?*

A. Among other things, our insurance program! In the past several years, insurance premiums have increased, in some cases by as much as 100-200 percent. This puts a financial strain on these groups to the point that some are considering closing down. Those that want to continue are seeking additional funding support from service clubs like ours. Others are simply passing the costs onto the kids. By concerting these groups into Non-Traditional Clubs, we can provide them with lower cost insurance that permits them to function all year long.

Q. *What's in it for Optimist Clubs?*

A. Aside from the recognition that comes with building a new Club, there is the opportunity to expose members of your community to the many benefits that come with being an Optimist Member. For parents and minor sports coaches who devote countless hours to the kids, there is a real possibility that they will stay with the organization and move into a more traditional Club later on. And there's more... as an Optimist Club, they can continue to meet, hold fundraising activities on their own and enjoy being a part of a larger group of individuals who share the same inspiration.

Q. *Are there any other benefits?*

A. Certainly. With a larger number of Optimists in your community, all working towards "Bringing Out the Best in Kids," the job of providing programs and services to kids becomes easier. Many hands make the workload easier. We, as Members, already know the benefits of membership. Here is a way that we can spread Optimism and have a tremendous impact on other groups within our community that may be struggling due to a lack of direction and/or finances.

Q. *Will these new Clubs function like more traditional Optimist Clubs?*

A. Organizationally, most groups are very similar in structure. They typically consist of a leadership structure and a charter or set of bylaws that describes their function and/or purpose and sets out the rules that govern the activities of the group. They also follow either Robert's or Demeter's rules of order for the operation of meetings, elections and approvals. All of which is comparable to a Traditional Club. We would only ask that the existing group adopt our philosophy, creed, banner, and make reports, all of which are no cost items. The payment of dues, which covers insurance, administration and a magazine, will hopefully cost much less than they are currently paying for liability insurance.

Q. *Will this concept work for all groups that would be considered Non-Traditional?*

A. Probably not! The groups that would benefit the most would be those that are between 25 and 50 people involved as executives, coaches or volunteers. Once the numbers exceed 50, it is likely that the cost of insurance rated as a per person cost would start to fall below the \$66.00 CDN level. (International and District Dues). This is usually the minimum required per year for membership in an Optimist Club.

Q. Will this concept be approved by Optimist International?

A. Why not? Many Optimist Clubs exist to support minor sports, build playgrounds and sponsor youth activities of every type whether organized by an external group or not. Take a look at some of the organizations that are endorsed by Optimist International as an example. Bringing them under our umbrella as an Optimist Club helps them, helps us, and helps us help them in a very meaningful way.

Q. Will this concept have an impact at the District level?

A. Financially, the increased revenues will mean greater service to all Clubs and that makes the District stronger. There will also be more work for Lt. Governors and some of the awards programs may require some adjustment, however, none of these concerns are insurmountable.

Q. So how do we begin?

A. Make a list of youth-oriented groups and organizations in your community that would have coaches, directors, teachers, volunteers, etc., numbering 25 and 50 people. These could include youth centers, minor sports groups and any other youth and community-focused group that seeks funding from the community. Look at church groups, fraternities that work with kids, youth bands and choirs. You must look at any group that would benefit from being associated with a larger organization, such as Optimist International. Look for groups that do not belong to larger organizations and probably do not have liability insurance. And lastly, groups that require membership in the parent body where the insurance is mandatory.

Q. So how do we make the approach?

A. A letter of introduction to the group is the starting point. Identify yourselves and ask to meet with a representative of their group or organization to see if you can be of assistance to the operation of their activity that they provide for children in the community. Most likely, the group you have selected as a target is the one that normally is supported by your Optimist Club in the first place. This will make the approach easier. Once at a meeting (no more than 2 or 3 Optimists to an equal number of their group) take a cordial and soft approach. Explain how your Optimist Club works within the community in "Bringing Out the Best in Kids" and draw a comparison with their group and show how they are doing the same thing only with a narrower focus. Emphasize that you are NOT attempting to take over their group, that they are independent and autonomous and that with a few minor changes to their name and charter, they can have the insurance package that is provided to all Optimist Clubs all year long as well as the added value of a social network through Optimist International. You should also mention that our organization has a charitable foundation that helps fund many of our youth-oriented programs. Before you leave this meeting, offer to meet with their executives or whole group to explain it to all of them as well. Lastly, make arrangements to call them in a couple of days to answer any questions that they may have thought of after your meeting. You also should leave them with your phone numbers and give them the website of www.optimist.org.

One last thing... If they ask a question for which you do not know the answer, say so and tell them you will find out. Rely on those people in your District who have expertise in these areas. Your District New Club Building Chairperson could be a valuable asset to you. Go forth and spread optimism in your area to help "Bring Out the Best in Kids".