

Overview

The following constitutes a framework within which District 4 can assist its constituent Clubs in improving the bridge experience for players throughout the District. It represents a multi-thrust plan which the D4 Executive Board may elect to pursue, in whole or in part, to achieve this goal.

The major components of this plan are intended to facilitate the following actions:

- perform a concentrated effort to provide resources to attract new players and to identify and assign teachers to those areas in need of same
- initiate a program to assure that all Clubs will have easy access to directors that are fully qualified to conduct games with current technology and the most recent Laws
- offer a formal method of addressing Zero Tolerance enforcement, relieving Club owners and game directors from having to play “bad cop” and reducing negative impact on business
- organize a coalition of Clubs capable of sharing common needs and resources to reduce manpower and cost of doing business

For the District to provide these services to the Clubs, it will be necessary in some cases to provide one or more of the following:

- volunteer manpower
- organizational change
- initial funding

and in all cases, leadership and purpose.

Detailed recommendations follow...

CAUSATIVE STATEMENT: Club attendance is shrinking with the continued aging of the ACBL membership; loss of membership in District 4 due to death or relocation is not compensated by the recruitment of new members.

OBJECTIVE: Increase ACBL membership within the District

STRATEGY: Attract social bridge players to duplicate play

TACTIC: Identify and target social bridge players for participation and ACBL membership.

TACTIC: Develop programs and marketing to introduce players to duplicate play.

Method(s): Construct campaign to develop and distribute flyers to general community; organize "Introduction to Duplicate Bridge" seminars at local Clubs; encourage Clubs to offer new players to kibitz existing games

Organizational changes recommended

None

Timeline for the implementation

Within 6 months

Estimate of any required volunteer manpower

Flyer development: minimal

Flyer distribution: 2 man-days (from Clubs)

Estimated budget for implementation

District: Flyers - Reproduction costs

Measure(s) of success and expected milestones for each

Goal: 60 new members in D4 per quarter, starting in 3Q18 (all sources)

Measure: Summary of new members from ACBL

STRATEGY: Provide an easy path to attract non-players to the game

TACTIC: Develop educational plans and marketing strategies to spark interest in non-players.

TACTIC: Develop partnership marketing programs with YMCA-US and Community Colleges in our District.

Method(s)

Visit YMCA-US headquarters or their local designate; develop plans for Y to include Beginning Bridge as a course, utilizing facilities of sanctioned Clubs and ACBL teachers; contact Community Colleges of each state (DE, NJ, NY, PA) to identify ways to work together, utilizing facilities of sanctioned Clubs and ACBL teachers.

Organizational changes recommended

District Education co-ordinator, empowered to forge partnerships

Timeline for the implementation

Partnerships formed: within 6 months

Estimate of any required volunteer manpower

None, other than identified position

Estimated budget for implementation

Travel expenses to forge partnerships

Measure(s) of success and expected milestones for each

Goal: 60 new members in D4 per quarter, starting in 3Q18 (all sources)

Measure: Summary of new members from ACBL

STRATEGY: Recruit, train, and support development of Beginning Bridge teachers

TACTIC: Develop data base of teachers of Beginning Bridge, availability

TACTIC: Subsidize skill upgrade of teachers

TACTIC: Subsidize marketing of Beginning Bridge lessons

Method(s)

Collect and organize information regarding existing teachers; make information available to Clubs and business partners.

Develop a program to subsidize the recruitment and training of teachers of Beginning Bridge; certify Beginner teachers.

Organizational changes recommended

District Information Officer; also appears in other D4 recommendations

District Education co-ordinator, develops certification guidelines

Timeline for the implementation

Teacher recruitment / certification: within 12 months

Estimate of any required volunteer manpower

Estimate of 3 months (collaborative) to develop certification guidelines

Estimated budget for implementation

Initial funding of Beginning Bridge teacher upgrade and certification

Printing / reproduction costs of materials

Measure(s) of success and expected milestones for each

Goal: 60 new members in D4 per quarter, starting in 3Q18 (all sources)

Measure: Summary of new members from ACBL

CAUSATIVE STATEMENT: Running a successful Club is a balancing act of providing the best experience for the players and being fiscally responsible with necessary expenses; many clubs are one death away from a problem. If a Club needs a Director, the only source of help depends upon who they know

OBJECTIVE: Assist the Clubs by assisting with providing resources necessary to enhance the playing experience and reducing expenses.

STRATEGY: Develop and share “Common Practices” documentation

TACTIC: Solicit a baseline of Club information and Director information.

TACTIC: Develop “Most Common Practices” (MCP) document to optimize sharing of resources, cross-training directors, and any volume purchase leverage available.

Method(s)

Develop survey to be sent to each constituent Club to obtain information about the Club’s needs, how games are conducted, and what are the requirements expected of its directors.

Organizational changes recommended

District Information Officer; also appears in other D4 recommendations

Timeline for the implementation

Officer in place: within 3 months

Information solicited and compiled: within 6 months

Estimate of any required volunteer manpower

Preparation of survey: <1 month

Compilation of results: 1 month

Estimated budget for implementation

None

Measure(s) of success and expected milestones for each

Goal: Completed Club data base

Measure: Ability to research Club needs as needed to support other activities

STRATEGY: Recruit, train, and support development of Certified Directors

TACTIC: Develop a Director educational program that includes (a) baseline skills for new club directors, and (b) a refresher course of current Laws, newer technology, and best practices for existing club directors.

TACTIC: Identify potential Directors and conditionally subsidize their training to become Club directors.

TACTIC: Identify currently active certified Directors and conditionally subsidize updating their skills consistent with MCP.

TACTIC: Identify currently inactive Directors and conditionally subsidize updating their skills consistent with MCP.

TACTIC: Identify potential candidates to work as Tournament Directors.

Method(s)

Unit 141 is embarking on this activity in the hopes that it will serve as a prototype for other Units and Districts.

Organizational changes recommended

District Information Officer; also appears in other D4 recommendations

Timeline for the implementation

First batch of trained directors commissioned: end of 1Q18

Estimate of any required volunteer manpower

Original efforts being supplied by Unit 141

Subsequent implementation will receive recommendations based on U141 experience

Estimated budget for implementation

Subsequent implementation will receive recommendations based on U141 experience

Measure(s) of success and expected milestones for each

Goal: At least 25 newly-trained directors in District 4

Measure: At least 12 new directors working Clubs in D4 by end of 2Q18

OBJECTIVE: Facilitate club and director assignments. This would include one-time fill-in needs as well as more on-going relationships.

STRATEGY: Provide a District-wide method of identifying certified Directors and an efficient manner of matching available Directors to Club needs.

TACTIC: Develop a database of director information

Method: identify a database of current ACBL-certified directors within the district. Can the ACBL supply this? If not, may need to work through the unit boards.

Method: determine which of these identified directors wish to be included. If yes, then have the individual supply the info needed for the database.

TACTIC: Identify the information that a director needs to direct at an unfamiliar club

Method: informal survey of a few directors

For example, are BridgeMates used and are they available at the club? Who unlocks, sets up coffee, etc. Are robots used to avoid sit-outs? Does director play to meet a partnership guarantee? Does the director duplicate the boards using a dealing machine? Does director need to supply PC and printer? In a shuffle and play situation, who brings the boards? Incorporate into the director database those fields related to familiarity with the various technologies identified in this "tactic."

TACTIC: Determine who has access to the director database

Does this program's director have restricted access to the database or do the individual club managers?

- If all club managers, then post link to the database on the district web-site

TACTIC: Determine where to keep such a database so accessible to multiple users.

Timeline: Can a district official initiate the ACBL contact to get a list of current certified directors?

Volunteer Manpower: program coordinator (ideally someone with database knowledge)

Startup: Probably a couple of week's effort spread over a couple of months.

Ongoing: updating database is probably a couple of hours per week

If using a single point-of-contact for accessing info, this could be a second individual. And there should be a backup. Or perhaps each unit has one user of the database.

Budget for implementation: ?

Database storage on some server... (Negligible)

Return on investment: Hours of phone calls saved

Measures: Program coordinator to track "matches" made: one-time and ongoing

OBJECTIVE: The District can utilize its size and purchasing power to help Clubs reduce expenses.

STRATEGY: Form club purchasing consortium in order to reach volume purchase agreements in order to achieve better cost and/or quality.

TACTIC: Recognizing that not all club needs are identical, gauge club interest across district

Method: email all club managers asking about interest by item categories (below) as well as an estimate of percentage of spending on each category
Compile replies into a spreadsheet

TACTIC: Identify common suppliers

Method: email club managers, as well as whoever purchases such items for the district events, as to currently used suppliers

TACTIC: Negotiate volume purchase agreements for items with sufficient interest and impact

Method: among district membership, identify members with current or previous purchasing experience. Similarly for legal experience.
The club manager emails may also solicit possible members with the appropriate experience
Note that "agreements" could include long-term rentals for high-dollar items. This may be especially beneficial to clubs

TACTIC: Knowledge transfer--for areas in which no agreement with suppliers can be reached, at least make available to clubs what companies other clubs are using for various items.

Timeline: emails to club managers can go as soon as email list developed.
Negotiations can begin when the above two district members and a program coordinator are identified.

Volunteer Manpower: program coordinator, purchasing pro, legal pro

Budget for implementation: ?

Measures: The following three:

Identify benchmark (non-consortium) prices. Have clubs or suppliers themselves track volume under each agreement.

Also, calculate % of clubs participating in each agreement

Ad-hoc comments from participants as to whether agreement is helpful to players' experience

Item Categories:

1. Non-bridge Consumables: Food and beverages, paper products (napkins, plates, cups, etc.), pencils
2. Bridge Consumables: Convention cards, playing cards
3. Services: Liability insurance, janitorial
4. Bridge Services:
 - a. BridgeMates: due to expense, may be amenable to a long-term rental agreement; or, perhaps, the district purchases at some negotiated volume price and then rents out to the clubs
 - b. Dealing Machines: is there a cheaper centralized way to provide this service, as again, a 4400 dollar machine is a major expense for small clubs
5. Marketing: Promotional Items (mugs, pencils, drinking glasses, shirts), communications
6. Infrequent Purchases: Tables, chairs, food prep equipment, pencil sharpeners
7. Bridge Infrequent Purchases: Bidding boxes and inserts, boards and cases, snack caddies
8. Technology: PCs, printers, tablets

Generic Question: Is it possible to deal directly with vendors versus Baron Barclay?
If yes, would it then require a centralized inventory? Are there other vendors?

CAUSATIVE STATEMENT: The concept of “Zero Tolerance” (ZT) was introduced to remove many of the factors that keep new or potential players from playing competitive duplicate bridge; the promise of this concept has not been realized at the Club level because Club owners and Club directors often have a fully-developed relationship with violators, and are reluctant to enforce the policy.

OBJECTIVE: Make “ZT” viable, enforceable, and palpable; provide guidance to the Clubs to relieve owners and directors of having to be the “heavy”.

STRATEGY: Develop a District baseline for “Zero Tolerance”

TACTIC: Convene a meeting of Club owners and Directors to discuss ZT issues, resolution, and consequences

TACTIC: Identify and formally codify the various types of ZT violations

TACTIC: Compose and publish a District position on ZT (with consequences)

TACTIC: Identify a District official to co-ordinate Unit-wide ZT infractions

TACTIC: Publish District position for all D4 Tournament play

Method(s)

Involve Club Owners and Directors in developing applicable documents

Develop document identifying differing classes of ZT violations

Behavior, fragrance / smoking, cell phone usage, other?

Develop document identifying recommended consequences of violations of each class and which violations are “reportable”

Develop document identifying methods for communicating consequences of “reportable” violations to authorized Club Owners and Directors within the District

Develop and distribute educational material regarding to fragrance-related health issues; suggest posting at constituent Clubs

Suggest that each unit send educational material to the players citing the problems as well as the penalties.

Develop consistent policy regarding interruptions by electronics

Roll out full program for all D4-based tournaments

Roll out full program to participating Clubs (Club participation optional)

Organizational changes recommended

Authorize the District Recorder to accept and document ZT violations reported by authorized Club Owners and Directors within the District

Timeline for the implementation

Documents completed within 3 months

Full implementation of policy within 4 months (to participating Clubs)

Estimate of any required volunteer manpower

About 2 weeks of approximately 4 individuals to develop documents

Estimated budget for implementation

Printing and reproduction costs of documents, posters, etc

Measure(s) of success and expected milestones for each

Goal: 100% participation by constituent Clubs

Measure: Report from each Club

CAUSATIVE STATEMENT: The health of the Clubs in the District will be greatly enhanced by the continuing assistance of the District; programs initiated will prosper only if they are properly attended.

OBJECTIVE: Make any initiatives from the District self-sustaining.

STRATEGY: Put organizational structure and reporting methods in place to insure the continuation of District-Club collaboration

TACTIC: Create a District-level permanent position for a Club Liaison to continue co-ordination of District and Club activities after dissolution of Committee

TACTIC: Encourage each Unit to establish a Club Liaison position to work with the District and the Clubs

TACTIC: Formally request each Unit Liaison to report to the D4 Club Liaison quarterly regarding Club needs and achievements

Method(s)

- Identify individual with interest in serving at District level co-ordination
- Encourage each Unit to identify an individual to serve at unit level
- Develop methods of communicating needs and opportunities efficiently

Organizational changes recommended

- Creation of permanent District-level co-ordinator

Timeline for the implementation: within 3 months

Estimate of any required volunteer manpower: District and Unit co-ordinators

- Approximately 1 week per quarter

Estimated budget for implementation

- None

Potential return on investment of each recommended expenditure

- Not applicable

Measure(s) of success and expected milestones for each

- Goal: District-wide co-ordination achieved

- Measure: Club Liaison co-ordinators identified and in place in each Unit

The Club Liaison Committee wishes to thank each of its members for their interest, creativity, and resolve in volunteering to participate in this unique opportunity:

Cheryl Abrams
Doug Chaney
Dave LeGrow
Barbara Patterson
Barbara Rhoades
John Schwartz