



# CASE STUDY:

INNOVATIVE WAYS OF INCREASING  
PARTICIPATION AND MEMBERSHIP

**SQUASH CITY INVERCARGILL**



**SQUASH**  
NEW ZEALAND

## OVERVIEW

Membership remains one of the most critical indicators of squash club health in New Zealand with most clubs in a position of being able to accept new members. Research shows that more than 80% of people will trust and act upon the recommendation of friends and family, while more than 60% will do so for those they don't know. With this in mind, Squash City Invercargill put a new membership recruitment strategy in place which has worked well so far. Knowing that the best sales people in any organisation are the existing loyal members, Squash City Invercargill decided to offer an incentive to all current members to introduce their family, friends and workmates to their club.

### CHALLENGES

#### Perception of Squash Clubs

Many people who have never tried squash before perceive it to be a game that is hard to learn and that Squash Clubs can be seen as exclusive communities.

#### Loyal Members

Getting existing members better at communicating the benefits of the game and involved with advocating for the club.

#### Competition

There are a number of other sporting and recreational pursuits available – virtual options, new sports, fitness apps... How to show that squash has a point of difference?

### SOLUTIONS

#### Member get Member

A Member get Member initiative was employed which is based on membership research which indicates that the majority of new members join through a family member or friend.

#### Promoters

Research proves that current members who are loyal to the club are more likely to talk about it in a positive way and are therefore more likely to gain trust from others.

#### Incentives

All new members received a \$40 discount; whilst existing members received \$50 off their membership fee for the following season.

### RESULTS

43

New members joined through the initiative over the past three years.

16

Existing members stayed through the initiative so far.

37

Different members introducing new people.

## CONCLUSION

Nothing sells like word of mouth and the Member get Member approach has proved to be a successful recruitment method in getting new people into the club. Squash City Invercargill have incentivised new members with a special reduced rate for their first years' membership, whilst giving their existing members a discount for each new member they introduce for the following years' subscription.

Club Secretary Karyn Flett said "the initiative has been running for a few years now and is definitely worthwhile. We are expecting quite a lot of this years' new members to re-join next year and many of our members don't even want their discount, they just enjoy introducing others to the sport they love."

Using the power of relationships has brought more members in the door and it is now up to the club to fully engage these new members so they enjoy squash, make friendships and remain. This is something the club have progressed towards over the past 12 months, with an increase in members between 2015 and 2016.