

Ageing clubmanagement: A threat for implementing change?

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Aim of paper

In this paper we will examine whether age does indeed make a difference. We will study whether clubs that are managed by 'older' volunteers differ from clubs that have a 'younger' management, in terms of their attitude towards renewal, professionalisation, and their view on the goals and reasons of existence of sportclubs.

Organisational/managerial context

Due to processes of individualisation and increasing time pressures, sportsclubs are faced with difficulties in recruiting volunteers. Though the interest among the (sporting) population to participate in voluntary work for sport clubs does not yet seem to be declining, sportclubs do experience difficulties in recruiting volunteers to participate in more demanding and time consuming tasks, like club management.

Organisational/managerial practice/issues

As a consequence, the average age of the typical sportclub chairman is on the rise. Clubs are increasingly run by older volunteers. Yet, society asks sportclubs to implement changes: to adapt a marketing perspective to the sportclub, to rethink and maybe change its goals and reasons for existence, and to renew some of its current practices and traditions (like its dependence upon volunteers). An ageing management might not be the best starting point to implement these changes. We will analyse the outcomes of the Sportclubsmonitor, a research instrument that the Mulier Institute and NOC*NSF have maintained for over a decade now. For the 2008 edition of the Sportclubsmonitor, over 600 sportclubs participated and filled out a lengthy questionnaire that covered all aspects of a sportclub's daily practice, policies and strategic decisions. As the outcomes show, having an older chairman does make a difference in many aspects of a sportclub's policy, its practices and strategic orientation.

Implications for sport and sport management

The management of sportclubs ought to be a representation of its members and of society at large. Dependence upon an increasingly older group of volunteers runs contrary to that goal (even in an ageing society), and does not seem to add to the process of renewal that sportclubs have to follow in order to survive.

References

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