



Pushing Your Club's Potential to the 'Max'

Max Potential is an ideal program for those clubs looking to maximise their engagement with local communities through connections with young people. *Club Life* revisits how this program can benefit your club to benefit your local community.

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Every day, thousands of busy, professional people make time to mentor troubled teenagers, hoping to bridge the boundaries of generation and culture to rescue them from the bad influence of the street or to compensate for poor family support. Out of these core community programs, mentoring programs have sprouted everywhere across New South Wales.

I like to consider myself as a busy, professional person who has a desire to contribute, so I decided to become involved in a youth mentoring program in the local

area where I live. The first time I sat in on the mentoring project at a nearby youth club, I met an excited group of children aged between 13-17 years. It really opened my eyes to just how valuable sessions like this are – crucial to these kids' chances of finding and maintaining a sense of self-esteem and confidence (as well as hope). Some of them have no sense of direction, others have chaotic and fractured lives, and some are considered to be at risk. Supported by two excellent workers, they've all been referred to the group by local authority social services and have begun finding their way. There

is a long waiting list for the project, which has won awards, and yet the local authority won't pay a penny for it. As a result, this project, like the provision of youth services across the country, has reached a crossroads. In one direction lies a secure future; in the other lies uncertainty.

So, what exactly is youth mentoring and how can your club get involved? Fundamentally, it's just like life coaching. And just like effective coaching builds winning teams in sport, it also builds successful people. In sports, the role of the coach is to make maximum use of players' talents.

In life, a coach does much the same thing by helping individuals develop and use their skills most effectively. And just as a coach cannot go onto the field and actually play the game, a life coach doesn't execute a person's responsibilities for them either. The role of the coach is to create an atmosphere that allows individuals to achieve their best.

As readers will be aware, your clubs has a unique opportunity to make an incredible difference in the lives of our youth...and it's all to do with youth mentoring (or coaching). It's called *Max Potential*, and it's an ideal program for those clubs looking to maximise their engagement with local communities through connections with young people. The program leverages and builds relationships within the club community, provides a real opportunity for ordinary Australians to pass on their experience and values to younger people, and allows young people to complete dynamic projects that benefit the community whilst building their confidence to take charge of their own lives.

So, how does it work? *Max Potential* connects club and community leaders with emerging young leaders (aged between 17 years and 25 years) to accelerate their potential to achieve over 22 weeks, challenge them to lift their game through personalised coaching, build their 'can do' attitude through a community service project of their choice, and to explore their entrepreneurial spirit through developing their leadership. Ultimately, it's an innovative and cutting edge way of empowering young people to find purpose and direction in their lives and become involved in community renewal and regeneration, while at the same time changing unfounded perceptions of young people and building links and trust between them and their local community.

Now, there are some current realities that *Max Potential* can assist the club industry to address as well. In the latest Q2 research conducted by ClubsNSW, it identified that the club industry is often poorly understood by the New South Wales population in terms of the contribution the industry makes to the wider community. The fact that clubs are not-for-profit organisations that exist for the benefit of their members and the community

is not completely understood, and one of the challenges for the industry is to engage in meaningful ways with their communities so that clubs are seen as providing very tangible benefits. Traditional community support of funding through 'cheque handovers' has a tendency to create a perception of clubs being a benevolent funding source to the community, rather than an integral part of the local community. That is, leaders in the local community. Well, that's where *Max Potential* can help.

Max Potential is a unique youth program. In fact, there is nothing like it anywhere in New South Wales, and it's only offered through ClubsNSW. And, your club is needed to make this program reach its own 'potential.' That is, if your club is looking for a way to connect club and community leaders with emerging young leaders to accelerate their potential, then this is the program for you. Whether your club is looking to be a facilitator of *Max Potential* in your area and engage other local businesses and community leaders or to become actively involved with volunteer coaching, there are numerous ways your club can help spread the '*Max Potential*' message and help today's youth realise their potential for tomorrow's opportunities.

Max Potential also provides a number of tangible benefits including the investment of community funding into a community engagement activity that has a direct 'flow-on' impact on the club's long term strategic success; broadening of your club's network of community leaders it can access from participation in the program; because of the community project aspect of the program, and the club's advocacy of the projects, your club will develop a broader profile within their community; strong relationships that will enhance the likelihood of future members and customers for your club; and, development of an active youth leadership energy and capacity that can be utilised by your club to generate effective youth services and activities.

With a number of clubs already participating in the program with fantastic results, including Club Mudjee, Deniliquin RSL, Finley Returned Soldiers Club, Gosford

RSL, Mingara Recreation Club, and Penrith Panthers, a new group of clubs in Broken Hill have just signed up. In fact, Ann Rogers, General Manager at the Broken Hill Legion Club, even felt compelled to write about it in her recent submission to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Gambling. In her letter, she wrote:

"One of the most exciting community projects we've been able to support is the *Max Potential* youth leadership program. The Legion Club, Barrier Social Democratic Club, Broken Hill Sturt Club, and the Musicians Club (as well as possibly to join us is the Broken Hill Golf and Country Club) have joined forces to establish a program that offers mentoring, coaching, and training to the youth in Broken Hill via a program fully-funded by the clubs in this town.

"We've called for community people, club directors, staff, and club members to be trained as coaches for some 15 school children from Broken Hill High School, Willyama High School, Broken Hill TAFE, and Menindee Central Public School (that only has 30 children in the whole school from kindergarten to year 12). The clubs will fund the training of the coaches so they are equipped to mentor these children over many months to enhance their leadership and character through problem solving, communication, and presentation. In a time when the youth of Broken Hill tend to pack up and leave the community after finishing school, we see this as a vital project for connecting youth with their community in a way that has not been seen before. It is also a way for Broken Hill to showcase the youth of our region and the social impact of this is immeasurable and will far outweigh the \$31,000 that the clubs will collectively spend not to mention the coordination and volunteering that goes into the program and is not quantifiable. There is no way known we could offer a program such as this without the revenue earned through our gaming machines."

So, if your club is interested in joining the *Max Potential* program, or would like more information on how it works and how your club can become involved, contact Maria Pena today on **02 9268 3010** or email mpena@clubsnsw.com.au ■