# What do New Learners and Club Members need to Feel Welcome?

Mel Auld

Survey Insights – Why might they come?

Of these multi-choice benefits:

- Social connection is the most appealing benefit of Bridge (65%)

- Learning something new, having fun and intellectual stimulation also hold appeal (more than 48% of respondents selected these)

- 38% also selected 'making new friends'

- 17% said 'competing or winning'
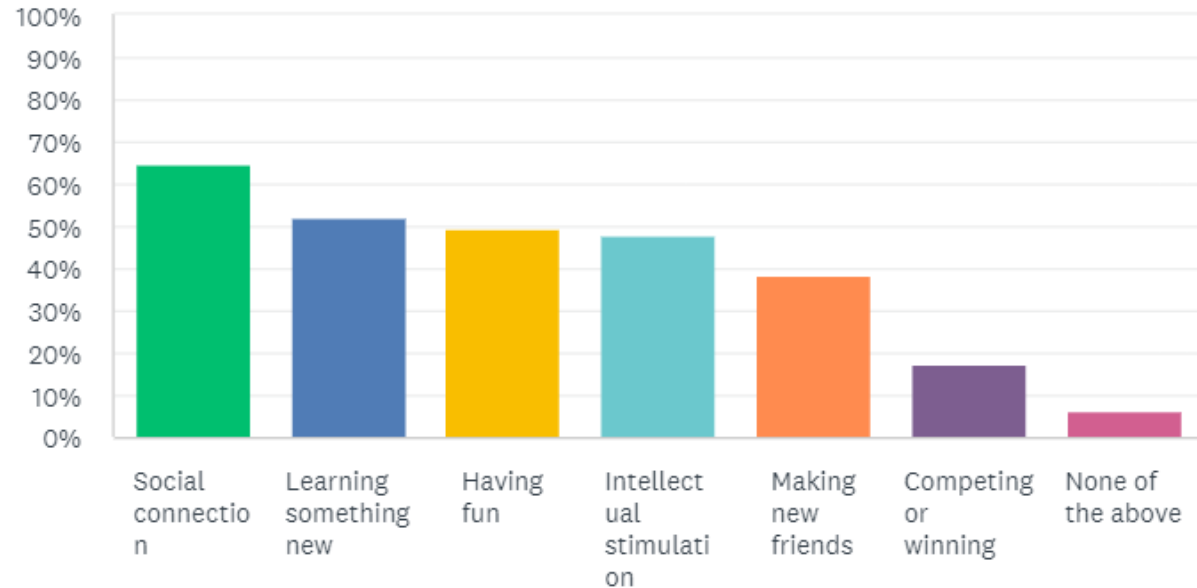
What are our new members looking for?

- A warm, safe, welcoming environment
- To have fun
- Friendly people who are approachable and kind
- A supported way to learn, in their style of learning
- Friendly people they can learn with and from
- Someone they can approach if struggling
- Encouragement and support
- Someone that will reach out to them to check in now and again
- A learning and club experience that meets or, ideally, exceeds their expectations
- The opportunity to connect with people over a glass of wine or beer or cup of tea
- (hopefully, eventually!) A way they can contribute to the Club

And existing members' needs?

They're the same.

PLUS: Tournament play, improver lessons, winning!

What does it take to be a successful Club?

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Great Venue – warm, safe, welcoming – well maintained, inviting, natural light, smells good, warm – good temperature control, safe for parking and arriving/leaving, easily accessible,well understood and tested exit procedures, comfortable seats, good lighting, cleanliness – and the small touches – flowers, nice soaps, biscuits. Talk to your members about what they'd like more or less of.

Social connection:
- friendly culture (Ensure that existing members warmly greet newcomers. A friendly welcome can go a long way in making someone feel comfortable. get the whole club behind the process of transitioning in new players, help them understand the impacts of this not working, bad behaviour is not tolerated, foster a culture of inclusivity and respect)
- food & drink (social breaks with existing members, social celebration for new players – with existing members, dress-up events),

Learning & Growth:
Well-run lessons for beginners and improvers, online lesson support, different learning styles, building a cohort "culture of community" – Orewa example/WhatsApp group, social events outside of Bridge play, explain table etiquette, reaching out to online learners to make club contact, consider timing to attract workers and non-workers, cards in hand quickly

Transition to Play/Nurturer Role – personal contact, clear etiquette requirements, cheat sheets, supervised play, home/social bridge, handicapped initial club play, online support, novice tournament after lessons, consider transition from online to F2F

Competition – ensuring access to greater competition for those who want it, online options, tournaments, masterpoints tracking

Succession – planning ahead, multiple people who can do certain jobs (like scoring), rotating roles, clear pathway to help/committee/key committee role

Innovation – willingness to listen, try new things, adapt to the needs of your members, look at shortening gametime/adjusting timings/meeting the needs of both social and more competitive players plus online/F2F players, a culture of feedback being welcomed – improvement suggestions, new member feedback, a culture of open communication

Clear direction:
'who' is clear, marketing plan, plan/goals are clear, competent committee

What's it going to take to get new members into lessons?

1. A rise in awareness of Bridge amongst our target group
2. A rise in attractiveness of Bridge (change the perception) amongst our target group

Sustained investment that is long-term, consistent and relevant

3. One well-timed invitation to join up

FB Club Marketing Campaign, road signs, comment to a friend etc.

4. Clubs mastering conversion into lessons and membership

What it can take to take to lose new (or existing) members

One bad experience that
is not swiftly resolved

What it can take to take to lose members

A dissatisfied customer will tell between 9-15 people about their experience.
78% of customers have backed out of a purchase due to a poor customer experience.
It can take years to recover from the negative perception created by negative experiences.

- **Unwelcoming Atmosphere -** If existing members are unfriendly, cliquish, or unwelcoming, it can create a negative environment for newcomers.
- **Lack of Inclusivity -** Failing to include or involve new members in club activities can make them feel isolated or unappreciated.
- **Poor Sportsmanship -** Instances of poor sportsmanship, such as gloating after a win, criticizing partners or opponents, or general rudeness, can create a negative atmosphere.
- **Insufficient Guidance for Beginners -** If there's a lack of support or guidance for beginners, they may feel overwhelmed or discouraged, leading to a negative experience.
- **Rule Violations or Disputes -** Disputes over rules, cheating allegations, or an inadequate resolution process can create tension and negativity within the club.
- **Ineffective Communication -** Poor communication about schedules, changes in rules, or club events can lead to confusion and frustration among members.
- **Inadequate Facilities or Equipment -** Insufficient or poorly maintained playing facilities, equipment, or supplies can contribute to a negative experience for members.
- **Lack of Respect for Different Skill Levels -** Disparaging remarks or impatience towards players of varying skill levels can create a divisive atmosphere.
- **Unaddressed Behavioral Issues -** Failure to address disruptive or inappropriate behavior from any member can contribute to a negative club culture.
- **Overemphasis on Competition -** If the club places too much emphasis on competition without considering the social aspect, it may alienate those who are there for the enjoyment of the game and social interaction.
- **Inflexible Structure -** A rigid and inflexible structure, such as unwavering adherence to strict playing styles or unwillingness to accommodate diverse preferences, can make members feel constrained.

The impact is significant – the unrecoverable costs of marketing, lessons, support material, support people and loss of income.

It's crucial for bridge clubs to actively work to prevent these issues by fostering a positive and inclusive environment, addressing conflicts promptly, and ensuring that everyone feels valued and respected within the community. Open communication and a commitment to creating a welcoming atmosphere can go a long way in mitigating potential negative experiences.

Thank you for listening

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Any pātai/questions/ comments?