

SETTING UP AN OUTRIGGER CANOE CLUB

If you are reading this I would imagine that you have already formed a group of individuals in your particular area who are interested in pursuing outrigger paddling. This seed of interest is usually established in one of two ways. An avid paddler moves to a new area and wants to develop a club or someone from an area that is close to water gives outrigger a try at another club and envisions the potential for his/her own area.

The early stages of organizing a club will be some of the most exciting for its founding members. The work and preparation you do at these early stages will dictate how successful, fun and cooperative the club will be in the future as it grows and matures.

The actual mechanics of establishing your club are well documented and it would be redundant for me to go into the details in this manual. For this type of information you can go to the following sources for guidance;

www.asksport.com

Asksport provides generic information on their web page that answers most of the questions anyone starting a club would ask. Detailed advice on things such as, Running and developing a club, Role of Executive members, Sponsorship, Fundraising, and how to put together a Club Constitution are all available at this web site.

www.aocra.com

This is the website for the Australian Outrigger Canoe Racing Association. AOCRA has some valuable information on the history of outrigger racing, racing events, and a section of general information on how to establish and Outrigger Canoe Club.

www.vernon.com/vrcc

This is the home page for Vernon Racing Canoe Club that I have belonged to since 1994. By clicking around our web page you will get a sense of what happens in a canoe club along with examples of Club Manual, Practice Schedules, Team Protocol, and other useful stuff.

www.fin.gov.bc.ca/registries/default.htm

If you live in BC this is the site where you will find information on setting yourself up as Society. There are step-by-step instructions here that will walk you through the complete process. It is important that this is completed and maintained. Not only does it offer some protection for your club executive in case of legal action, there are also many sources of funding that will not consider your club unless you have current Society Status.

www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca

This is the site where you will find the Income Tax Guide to the Non-Profit Organization for the Federal Government.

There you have it! All the info you ever needed to get off the ground.

NOW THE MOST IMPORTANT STUFF!!!

Here my listing of the "Top Seven" things you need to do to insure that your club gets off the ground and perpetuates itself.

1. Establish why you want the club and how it will perpetuate itself. Often in the rush to create a racing club members lose sight of the fact that it will need to have some sort of planned feeder system to keep it going in the future. Write this philosophy down and put it in your constitution once you establish one.
 - When clubs are established as recreational in the first place they usually do not face this problem, as the reason for being is to draw new members out to enjoy the social aspect of the sport.
 - When clubs are established as "Race Focus Only" they tend to be successful for a period of time while the originators are involved however tend to flounder or fold if ever these core people leave the group.
 - Even in a total race focus club you need to plan for how to replace and train new members. The original six or twelve you start with will not always be with the club. If you do not plan for developing or training replacements in advance you will face issues when it happens.
 - If your club is both social and race then establish which has priority up front to help reduce confusion and or conflict at a later date.
 - In cases were there is a large enough population base to support a number of clubs it is easier to establish a single identity such as "Race Only", "Recreational" or both. Race clubs can use the other clubs as their feeder system and competitive paddlers can move to the more recreational clubs should their needs and commitment change.
 - Be prepared to change. Needs and goals can change for a club and group. If there is no flexibility in your organization you run the risk of becoming extinct.

2. Of course you need a canoe. Although this seems like an overwhelming task when you first get started it usually is accomplished quite quickly when a group of motivated paddlers put their mind to it.
 - Borrowing an older canoe until you gather enough club fees to buy one is a common occurrence. I believe the world famous Burrard has made its way around the Province acting as the starting boat for many clubs such as Kamloops, Vernon, Penticton and Salt Spring Island.
 - Pooling funds within your group to pay for a used canoe is also popular. Usually a group of six to twelve original club members will loan the club enough funds to purchase the first boat. They then are paid back as the club grows either directly or by having their membership forgiven for a number of years.
 - Find a benefactor. This does not have to be someone who will actually give you the money. It could be someone who can afford to lend you the money to buy a new or used boat to get started. With Outrigger becoming more established in Canada it is getting easier to demonstrate financial viability of a club to support loans both commercial and personal.

3. Obtain a site to base your club out of.

- A restaurant or bar that has water front property is ideal. Not only does this give your club much needed exposure it is a natural fit for the after paddle beer that is so important to club and team harmony.
 - Check with your local Parks and Recreation group. As a supplier of outdoor activity you will generally meet all of their criteria for support and use of any public property they have.
 - Last resort is someone's house that is close to the water. Unless they are Bill Gates and have so much property they won't notice you this is not a sustainable option and should be considered as short term.
4. Recruitment of members.
- Friends and acquaintances are usually the primary source in the early stages of a club.
 - Tapping into other clubs whose members could benefit from paddling, as cross training is also a potential source. Cross-country skiing, swimming, running are all natural fits. Members of these groups are aerobically fit and will enjoy the endurance aspect of Outrigger. The best way to get these people on board is to convince the coach of these clubs to come out and give paddling a try. He will then promote paddling in his own organization as cross training for his members and athletes.
 - Paddling clinics are also very successful. They require a fair amount of time commitment however can sometimes be a revenue source if you team up with your local Parks and Recreation Group. They will market the program and collect the fees, which they will share with you for offering coaching and equipment.
 - Although posters at Gym's seem to be at the top of everyone's list we have found that they are not very productive on their own. By convincing a gym to install a paddling machine or running race videos at the aerobic stations you will be able to stir up a bit more interest. Remember the outdoor athlete who is aerobically fit is more likely to enjoy Outrigger than the guy bench-pressing 500 pounds.
5. Teach everyone to steer. A common occurrence at most clubs is that only a few people become steersmen. The consequences of this are.
- These steersmen/women don't get to feel like they get a work out in if conditions for the day result in them poking the majority of the practice.
 - If they are away you end up with either no one to steer or a rookie that is going to have you zig zagging all over the place.
 - The clubs members do not develop an appreciation for the effort required in six seat.
6. Teach everyone to rig the boats. Again this is one of those items that end up becoming the domain of a few club members who enjoy finding out how to do it. Here are some of the consequences that your club will face if all of your members do not learn how to rig.
- Team members will not have an understanding of what makes the boat handle properly.
 - A few individuals are always stuck with getting the boats ready for a race or at the beginning of the season.

- Situations could arise where you do not have anyone available to rig the boat for a practice or a race possible resulting in not going on the water or going out with an ill prepared boat.
7. Make sure everyone joining the club understands the commitment they are making.
- In a race club the obvious item would be how much and how hard they train.
 - In all clubs the most important commitment would be to return to new members what was given to you. It is any new club member's obligation to train and develop new people once they become experienced.
 - In all clubs a commitment to be friendly and treat everyone with respect becomes the foundation for resolution should problems arise.

Have Fun, Race Hard and enjoy the company of your fellow club members. The pleasure is in the participation.

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