



CLUB IS THE HUB

CASE STUDY

—
ENCOURAGING A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
SOUTH EAST ASIAN SOCIAL CRICKETERS
AND AUCKLAND CRICKET CLUBS

INTRODUCTION

An environmental scan conducted by Auckland Cricket in 2015, identified that while the city is increasingly becoming ethnically diverse, its own membership did not necessarily reflect this diversity. The association saw an opportunity to do more to engage a wider range of the region’s ethnic communities, a goal that was reflected in their 2016 Strategic Plan.

The strategic plan was aligned with New Zealand Crickets goal of ‘a game for all New Zealanders, a game for life’.

The challenges and complexities of interacting with all of Auckland’s ethnic communities was an overwhelming and resource intensive goal. An analysis of demographic and membership data led Auckland Cricket to focus on the players from the sub-continent South East Asian countries, in particular those of Indian descent, due to the large and growing numbers within Auckland.

Surveys and interviews with this target market helped establish insights into potential barriers and strategies for engagement. These insights led Auckland Cricket to develop and implement a collaborative and flexible club-based strategy, rather than an owned and actioned plan.

Four key success factors of this initiative have been:

- 01**

Understanding and connecting with your community
- 02**

Identifying the right people
- 03**

Flexibility in approach
- 04**

Getting started and learning as you go

The initiative has driven greater awareness within the club network about providing opportunities for different communities, which has led to further successful club initiatives via Auckland Cricket’s contestable funding.

Since the initiative began, more than 2,000 New Zealanders of South East Asian descent have been involved in various programmes designed to encourage greater engagement between social cricketers and Auckland Cricket-backed clubs.



GETTING STARTED

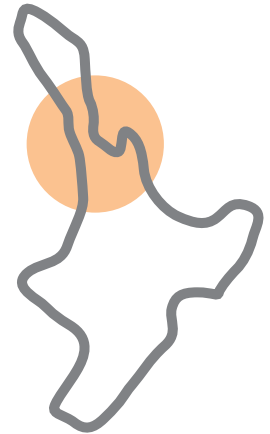
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We didn't have the resources to look at the population group in its entirety, but looking at a targeted segment was achievable and something we could do in this space.”

- IAIN LAXON
AUCKLAND CRICKET ASSOCIATION CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Indian population is set to become the largest ethnic sub-group in Auckland's Asian population.

147,000 Indian residents in Auckland



In 2013, almost 1 in 4 people in the Auckland region identified with one or more Asian ethnic groups.

43%

The increase in Auckland's Indian residents from 2006 to 2013.

Auckland Cricket has an adult male player base in excess of 7,000 excluding indoor cricket, of which 46% are European and 45% are Asian.

Additionally, large numbers from the target group play in social cricket teams, which operate outside of the traditional club environment. Where traditionally, clubs have struggled to integrate these teams and provide cultural diversity within their structure.

Auckland Cricket realised that its current product offering was not catering for these players, making it difficult to engage with them. Therefore, they needed to understand this community of players better.

Membership Survey

Wanting to 'know its own house before going any further', in 2016 Auckland Cricket surveyed its existing players, parents, coaches and club administrators from both affiliated club's senior and junior ranks.

Amongst other things, the survey gleaned information about participation, the value of the sport to those involved and ethnicity of players.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CRICKET'S ATTRACTION

To gain a greater understanding of social cricket and its popularity, Auckland Cricket commissioned Stephen Gee to undertake research on people with a direct interest in South East Asian cricket, both from within the Auckland cricket system and from unregistered social cricketers.

This research sought to better understand the barriers to registered cricket, the popularity of social cricket, the engagement these communities had with Auckland Cricket and how they could better engage to offer support and add value to existing social leagues.

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These interviews provided a window into the South Asians' perceptions of cricket in Auckland and also provided ideas of what could be done to increase participation.”

- IAIN LAXON
AUCKLAND CRICKET ASSOCIATION CHIEF EXECUTIVE

“

Clubs could do so much more for their local Indian communities if they just try to understand us better.”

- INDIAN PLAYER

“

Many who arrive don't know how to play structured cricket, so play in semi-social groups and don't want to play in clubs.”

- INDIAN PLAYER

KEY INSIGHTS THIS RESEARCH UNCOVERED WERE:

For many the social aspect is more important than the cricket.

A lack of trust in clubs based on experiences 'back home', where it was perceived that only the 'good' players played for clubs.

Social cricket offered busy people more flexibility than the traditional structured, time-bound games.

Social games ranged from casual hit-arounds to full-fledged competitions with uniforms, sponsors, drafting systems and prize money and had on occasions, attracted up to 500 spectators. Competitions, some of which had been operating for ten years, live streamed finals matches and people flew in from overseas for the matches.

A lack of understanding of more structured forms of cricket played in New Zealand.

The cricket most of these players had played in South Asia was not like New Zealand's structured cricket - it is more social, with fewer rules, less gear and using different fundamental equipment, particularly the type of ball used.

Cost was often a barrier.



THE INITIATIVE



We wanted the clubs to run their own programmes. We knew they had the capability to deliver and manage it and more importantly, they know their communities.

By doing it this way we would also avoid four cookie cutter versions. From our perspective, we got to learn from four relatively different projects.”

- IAIN LAXON
AUCKLAND CRICKET ASSOCIATION CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Using these insights, Auckland Cricket designed a strategy to increase engagement with these players. They also gained Aktive - Auckland Sport and Recreation target population funding to support the implementation of the strategy.

A range of actions were identified, including to quantify the numbers playing social cricket and find better ways to engage with these players. There was also an emphasis on collaborating with its existing clubs by utilising the strong relationships they had through the 'Club is the Hub' programme.

The initiative initially operated via four clubs, Eden Roskill, Howick Pakuranga, Grafton and Papatoetoe - selected due to their population base which included a large number of South East Asian residents. The clubs were funded to employ a part-time Ethnicity Development Officer, and each appointed local people with good connections to their local communities and, in all but one instance, could speak one of the associated languages.

Auckland Cricket shared insights and direction but, recognising that each club's community was different, supported them to develop their own implementation plans.

Auckland Cricket's reporting mechanism allowed the clubs' to collaborate, share and hear each other's successes and challenges.



UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CRICKET'S ATTRACTION



In India only the very best players play for clubs, everyone else plays socially. A lot of my work was around engaging with and educating parents that here (in New Zealand) anyone with an interest in cricket can be involved.”

- TARUN NETHULA

Tarun Nethula was appointed by his then cricket club, Eden Roskill to work as its Ethnicity Development Officer, he later worked in the same role for Kumeu Cricket Club. As an Indian-born New Zealander and a well-known local, national and international cricketer, Tarun had connections with the social cricket scene in his area.

Communication

Tarun knew that many new-immigrant parents of young players were unaware that in New Zealand there is more opportunity for players of all abilities to play cricket. He communicated this difference to parents through initiatives like family days at the clubs, visiting schools and making cricket more visible at big community events, like the Kite Festival.

Building Relationships

Tarun also engaged with the social cricket competition's key organisers to both better understand what attracted players to this form of cricket and show the support clubs could offer, for example assistance with administration, health and safety and providing equipment.

Feedback was similar to that already understood by Auckland Cricket; that the games were too long, at the wrong times for people who worked weekends or the lengthy season's commitment was too onerous.

Taking this on board, Tarun offered 'one-day' cricket tournaments once every six weeks, ran a number of 90-minute long T-10 tournaments and also instigated a tape ball tournament that attracted 16 teams.

Conscious that social cricket organisers could view his club-funded work as trying to take over their tournaments, Tarun offered administrative assistance and support - a method that's been well-received.

Other initiatives run by the Auckland Cricket-backed clubs have included:

- Community days
- In-school coaching/sessions
- Working with tertiary institutions to engage with international students
- Meeting with leaders from religious temples
- Shorter tournaments or ones held in the evenings
- Starting a new Indian-based 20/20 competition on Sundays

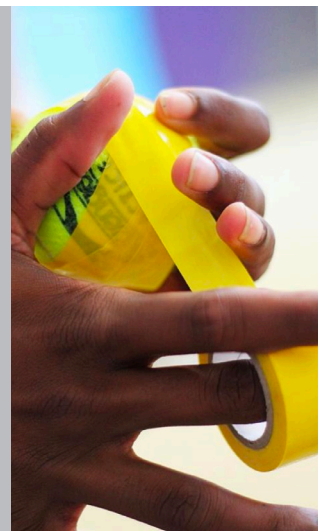
TAPE BALL

A tape ball is a tennis ball wrapped in electrical tape and is used in playing street cricket.

This modification of the tennis ball gives it greater weight, speed and distance while still being easier to play with than the conventional cricket ball.

The variation was pioneered in Karachi, Pakistan and is credited with Pakistan's famous production of fast bowlers as children are brought up playing the game using a tape ball in which various skills are developed.

The increasing popularity of the tape ball in informal, local cricket has transformed the way games are played in cricket-loving nations such as India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and most famously Pakistan.



KEY LEARNINGS

“

Sometimes you don't want to sound too professional in your approach, like asking for team lists, these networks want to keep things 'social'.”

- TARUN NETHULA

“

It meant we weren't going in cold, we had an understanding of how things were operating and potential barriers to greater engagement with players.”

- IAIN LAXON
AUCKLAND CRICKET ASSOCIATION CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Understanding the community you're engaging with

Firstly, having a person who knew the community and whom the community knew appointed as the Ethnicity Development Officer ensured initial approaches to the social cricket leagues were easier.

Secondly, gathering insights and research was crucial to Auckland Cricket being able to develop an effective and workable strategy to foster greater engagement with these communities.

The insights gained from the Ethnicity Development Officers also provided greater understanding of how social cricket networks were structured and what they wanted from the Auckland Cricket-backed clubs in terms of support.

Flexibility of approach

Letting the clubs drive the tactics themselves, rather than a one-size fits all package, meant that a number of different approaches were tried throughout Auckland.

Getting started and learn as you go

Rather than be daunted by a massive task, start with a small sub-set, as Auckland Cricket did by solely targeting South East Asian communities.

Auckland Cricket's reporting mechanism meant clubs worked as a support network, learning from each others' successful, and not so successful, tactics. The feedback and initiatives provided were also invaluable and started an ongoing dialogue between communities and clubs.



OUTCOMES



We recognised that despite the sheer scope of the project, we couldn't let it stop us. If you over-think things you can end up putting it in the too hard basket. You've got to start, and while you may fail on some initiatives, you'll still learn from these and at least you're taking action."

- IAIN LAXON
AUCKLAND CRICKET ASSOCIATION CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Since 2017, more than 2,000 people of South East Asian descent have been involved in the different initiatives run by Auckland Cricket clubs. They have since opened the initiative to other Auckland clubs, with eight clubs running targeted initiatives in the 2018/19 season.

For Auckland Cricket the major successes of the proposal are:

- Getting people involved and creating opportunities for engagement with Indian communities around Auckland
- Greater engagement with parents of junior players
- On-going dialogue with a range of 'social cricket' league organisers and key stakeholders
- Turning clubs onto ideas and promoting understanding of what good opportunities could look like
- Learning to fail fast – but always try something and learn from your successes and mistakes
- Giving clubs more knowledge and understanding and letting them more confidently develop and explore opportunities
- Creating stronger networking between the clubs to enable the sharing of ideas and learnings with each other
- Gaining a greater understanding of the amount and ways that cricket is being played in Auckland
- Identification of key people within communities interested in playing or being involved in cricket
- Being able to promote the roles of clubs as well as provide equipment and administrative assistance to social leagues

Auckland Cricket acknowledges it is only at the start of this journey but it is looking forward to continuing to drive initiatives in 2019 and gain greater engagement with keen South Asian cricketers and eventually other population groups.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sport NZ would like to express special thanks to the organisations that developed these initiatives, for their willingness to share their stories, and for supporting more communities to benefit from sport and active recreation in Aotearoa.

