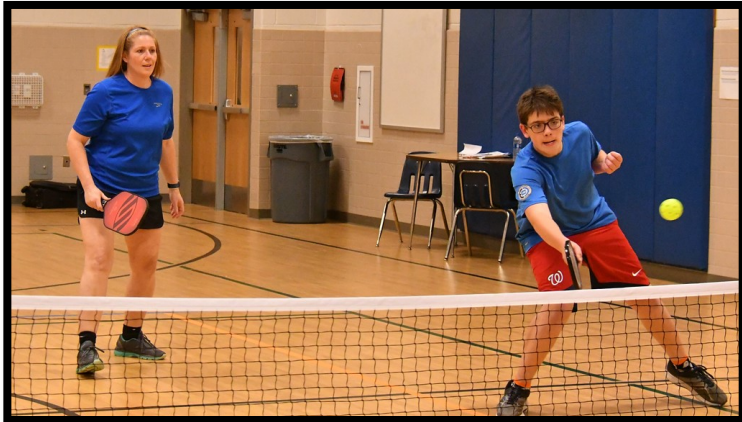


Developing Marketing Materials for Legends Sports Leagues



Abstract

We worked with Legends Sports Leagues, a not-for-profit recreational sports league, to help them with the next steps in marketing for a national rollout via the franchising model. We researched successful marketing and franchising practices, evaluated other leagues with established franchises, interviewed league officials, and surveyed people affiliated with the organization. Drawing on this research, we created a set of recommendations to improve the organization and created a set of marketing materials: a logo and promotional video for the newly established pickleball league, and a training manual and marketing brochure to assist potential franchisees in setting up their own leagues.



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Recreational sports leagues are growing throughout the United States as interest in physical activity trends towards team oriented sports. In 2017, the Physical Activity Council found that 22.9% of the 216 million active Americans ages six and over participated in team sports (Physical Activity Council, 2018). Recreational sports leagues provide benefits to participants by fostering a sense of community and promoting physical activity.

Legends Sports Leagues (LSL) is a not-for-profit organization that has created, and managed recreational sports leagues for adults and youths in Northern Virginia since 2006 (Legends Sports Leagues, 2016). In its thirteenth year of constant annual growth, Legends has developed leagues for four sports (baseball, basketball, golf, and pickleball) that serve more than 2,500 participants (Figure 1).

Building on the growth of recreational sports leagues in general and Legends' special success in Virginia, Legends sees an opportunity to expand across the United States through franchising. Franchising is the process by which an established business allows a franchisee to use its expertise, name, ideas, and processes to start their own business in a different location. Other recreational sports leagues, including NZone Sports, i9 Sports, and Hi-Five Sports, have deployed this business model.

As part of its franchising plan, we worked with Legends to develop training materials detailing how a Legends franchise should operate. Developing these and other franchising materials will allow future franchisees to contribute to Legends' growth and provide more recreational sports leagues to adults and youths across the country.

In addition to expansion via franchising, LSL also wants to maintain and increase membership across all of its own Northern Virginia leagues. The two longest tenured sports leagues (baseball and basketball) have experienced an average yearly membership growth of about 15%. These two leagues have brought in upwards of 500 and 1,000 players respectively in each of the past few years. The pickleball league showed high potential for growth with over 70 players in its first season in the spring of 2018, but the golf league, which began in 2016, has struggled to expand. We worked with LSL to examine their membership marketing and make recommendations.

In summary, the purpose of this project was to help Legends Sports Leagues through the development of marketing materials and recommendations for expansion. To accomplish this goal, we addressed four objectives (Figure 2):



Figure 2. Project objectives.

Over a period of 14 weeks, our team addressed these objectives through an extensive literature review, interviews, a participant survey, and user tests to develop key deliverables including: a franchisee-training manual; a pickleball promotional video; and, other marketing materials and recommendations. In the following section, we provide background information we gathered from Objectives #1 and #2.

Understanding opportunities for recreational sports league expansion

Recreational sports leagues are increasing in popularity across the United States as players seek others to join them. Studies indicate that organized sports offer participants many benefits beyond physical activity, including



Figure 1. Basic information about LSL.

mental health, social, and intellectual benefits. In this section, we discuss Legends Sports Leagues' contributions to the growth of recreational sports, and review marketing and training material best practices that may influence the way Legends approaches its goal of expansion.

Participation in recreational sports is growing

The Physical Activity Council's Annual Participation Report (2018) states that 72% of the U.S. population ages six and over participated in sports and fitness activities last year. The total number of physically active Americans is approximately 216 million people. Since 2012, interest in activities has shifted towards outdoor recreation, fitness sports and team sports, while individual sports participation is on the decline (Figure 3). Even inactive people who aspire to participate in sports have indicated that they are more likely to be physically active if they can participate with others (Physical Activity Council, 2018).

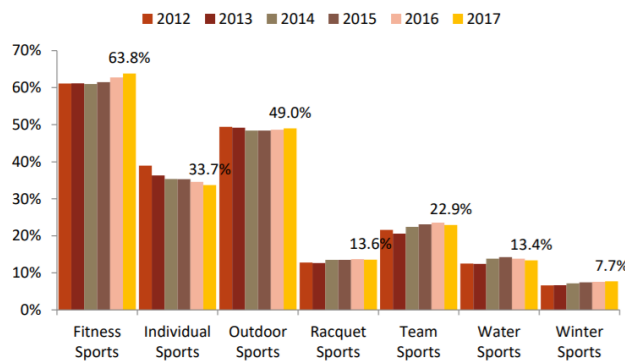


Figure 3. Total participation rate by activity from 2012 to 2017 (Physical Activity Council, 2018).

cil, 2018). Recreational sports leagues promote team sports over individual sports, capturing what is now a growing market.

Out of the 216 million active Americans in 2017, 23% played team sports, including baseball and basketball (Figure 3). Figure 4 shows that younger people (Millennials and

by fostering a sense of community and promoting physical activity.

Recreational sports offer many benefits

Erin Remaley (2017) suggests that the physical benefits that recreational sports leagues provide are their biggest draw. She states that the combination of enjoyment and being held accountable to a team makes recreational sports leagues the perfect gym alternative. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity every week to elicit health benefits (2018). Recreational sports can help adults progress towards fulfilling these weekly activity goals.

The Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) suggests that regularly engaging in physical activity may reduce the risk of developing several diseases like diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease; moreover they report on a number of studies that have shown that physical activity helps with depression (2012) and a variety of other mental health issues (Figure 5).

The Medical University of Vienna (2017) claims that recreational sports provide mental health benefits such as stress relief and may even prevent dementia by improving cognitive abilities. Further, being active in sports also helps adolescents stay out of trouble, have a sense of purpose and boosts their self-

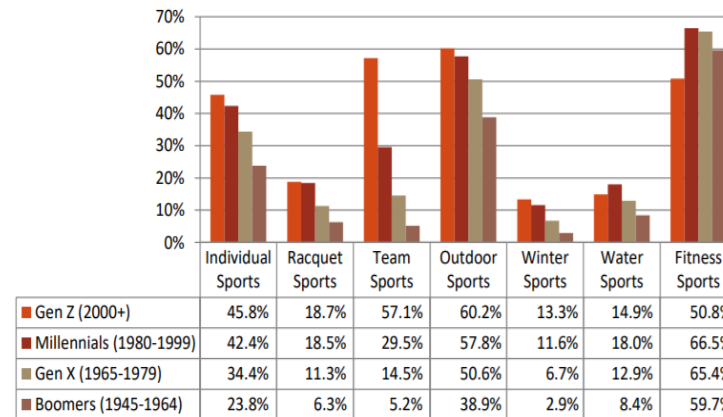


Figure 4. Types of participation by generation (Physical Activity Council, 2018).

Generation Z) dominate in team sports, and this probably reflects participation in school and college sports. Older generations do not have easy access to the same kinds of extracurricular activities available to youths through school and town programs, and therefore their main source of organized team sports is through recreational leagues. The proportion of older participants is higher in the types of sports that recreational sports leagues offer, such as racquet sports (pickleball and tennis) and individual sports (golf). Leagues have grown because they offer a range of activities in various skill levels that appeal to both youths and adults. Recreational sports leagues provide benefits to participants

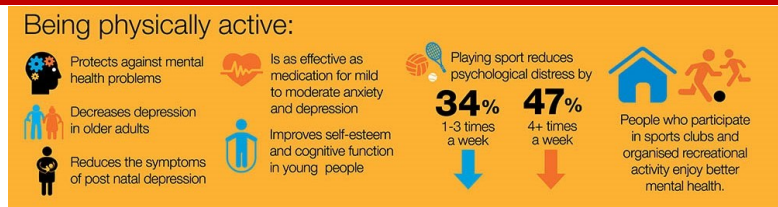


Figure 5. Mental health benefits of physical activity (Western Australia Department of Sport and Recreation, 2017).

confidence. Erin Remaley (2017) suggests that team sports are beneficial for mental and social health because they encourage strategy, spontaneity, creativity and other mental skills not necessary in individual sports.

Phipps, Cooper, Shores, Williams, & Mize (2015) conducted a study that measured college students' sense of community in intramural sports by measuring four contributing factors: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. The study concluded that the students experience a greater level of overall sense of community the longer they participate in intramural sports. Other studies have demonstrated intellectual benefits to recreational sports participation, such as academic improvement, time management and communication skills (Kim, Sparvero, & Olmeda, 2016). Caitlin Cahow, a former member of the U.S. Women's National Ice Hockey Team and a member of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition, credits sports for the physical, social and emotional benefits they provide, that can help individuals face other challenges in life (Walsh, 2018).

Given the benefits that recreational sports leagues provide, it is curious that more people do not participate in a sport. Herzog

(2018) notes that, while team-based sport approaches offer a social and motivational way to live a healthy life, they need facilities, organization, and a number of willing participants to function. A Washington, DC based study concluded that the number of available fields and active play facilities directly correlated to the physical activity levels

of the children in that area (Roberts, Knight, Ray, & Saelens, 2016). Even with data suggesting that recreational sports are beneficial, and that an increase in the number of play areas results in more involvement, the difficulties of obtaining facilities, fields, equipment, volunteers, and participants limit the number that exist.

Legends Sports Leagues is growing

Adult recreational sports leagues exist across the U.S. (University of Wisconsin, 2015). Some organizations, such as Sports Monster (n.d.), provide a searchable database of programs in several cities throughout the country. Leagues can be run by either a for-profit, or not-for-profit organization. Legends Sports Leagues is a not-for-profit organization that has created and managed recreational sports leagues in Northern Virginia since 2006 (Legends Sports Leagues, 2016). Founded by Ronald J. Cortese, Legends started with three adult baseball teams, consisting of players over the age of 19. In the years following, the baseball league grew and Legends introduced a second sports league. What started as a league of six adult basketball teams has since expanded to include over 40 teams, consisting of both adult divi-

sions and a youth basketball program (Kulick, Eroshenko, Jaskoviak, & King, 2016). In the past few years, Legends has continued its expansion by introducing a golf league and a pickleball league. The golf league began in 2016, with 12 teams of two players each. Pickleball completed a very successful inaugural season in the spring of 2018, with over 70 participants on 36 teams (Figure 4). Now in its thirteenth year of constant annual growth, Legends has over 2,500 participants in four leagues (Figure 6).

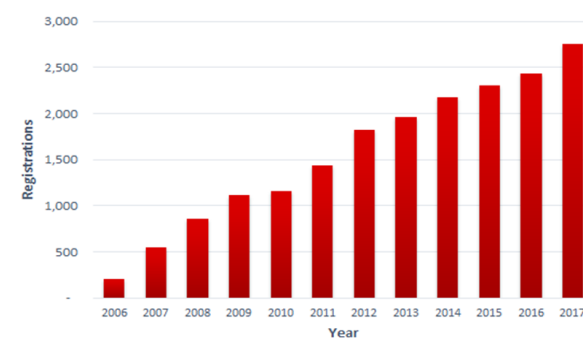


Figure 6. Total registrations per year across all Legends Sports Leagues.

Legends fosters camaraderie and sportsmanship in its leagues, prioritizing enjoyment over competitiveness (Legends Sports Leagues, 2016). The goal is to provide a recreational sports league for youths and adults who may not be the most athletic, but have a passion for sports. Legends Sports Leagues is inclusive and modifies rules to allow all members a chance to participate. Modification includes adjusting playing times to ensure every player has a chance to play and all players play for an equal amount of time. With four different sports (baseball, basketball, golf, and pickleball), Leg-

ends has several leagues operating every season, giving eager players a chance to play the game during what would typically be the off-season for the sport (Legends Sports Leagues, n.d.-a). While competition is not Legends main priority, it still exists in playoffs and championships, and team standings and statistics are updated frequently on their website (Legends Sports Leagues, 2018b). The care and hard work that LSL puts into organizing its leagues ensures members feel like part of a community.

Marketing strategies to increase membership

In order for LSL to continue to grow, marketing will be a key factor. To market a product successfully, organizations must first understand the value of their product from the customer’s point of view (Drummond & Ensor, 2005). The customers determine value by weighing the perceived benefits, such as the quality of the product and relationship with the organization, against the perceived sacrifices, such as price and time involved. A marketing plan should identify the benefits and sacrifices customers will make so that customers can determine the product’s value for themselves. A marketing plan should also address the four C’s of marketing, as they put the focus on the consumer instead of the product (Newman, Peck, & Wilhide, 2013):

1. Consumer wants and needs;
2. Cost of satisfying the wants and needs;
3. Convenience of buying; and,
4. Communication.

A consumer focus creates a positive relationship between the business and the consumer, and relationships are important for a recreational sports league in order for members to stay season after season. Businesses should determine first what consumers want and need, and develop products to meet consumer demands. For a recreational sports league, the product is membership in the league and its sports. According to a survey done by Kulick et al. in 2016, Legends players enjoy a league that is composed of “other adults with professional careers who have to work in the morning,” and not teenagers and streetball players. Legends also provides a competitive outlet — 48% of 2016 survey respondents chose competition as a reason for joining Legends — while still endorsing fun and camaraderie. Legends believes it has found a balance between competitiveness and fun. The marketing materials should show that the players’ wants and needs are being addressed. The second C, cost, does not just include the price of the product, but other associated costs, like family time players give up in order to go to games. The price to play in Legends leagues is higher than other local leagues (Table 1), but that discourages younger, more competitive players from joining and taking away from the relaxed approach Legends provides (Legends Sports Leagues, n.d.-a; Federal

Baseball League, 2018; FXA Sports, 2018; McLean Youth Basketball, 2017; Ponce de Leon, 2016).

Time is an important and often determining factor for players when joining a recreational sports league (personal communication, October 22, 2018). Legends seasons are short (around 10 games per season) and therefore are not a major time commitment, which is appealing for players who also have full time jobs. The marketing materials should address all of the costs so that the consumer can determine the value of the product.

Convenience is a key factor because it is directly included in the consumers’ assessment of a product’s value. For a recreational sports league, convenience is related to a variety of factors, such as the provision of equipment, distance of games, and even the simplicity of the rules. These factors vary according to the sports league in question, but should be communicated clearly to consumers in the marketing materials. For example, Legends players must buy their uniforms for baseball and basketball, either from Legends directly or on their own, as long as the entire team has the same uniform. Legends provides baseballs, basketballs, and pickleballs for each game, as well as catcher’s gear and helmets for each baseball game. Communication is also important for

recreational sports leagues because the line of communication does not end when the consumer pays the registration fee and joins the league. There is

Table 1. Registration fee comparisons of Northern Virginia recreational sports leagues.

	Baseball		Adult Basketball		Youth Basketball	
	Individual	Team	Individual	Team	Individual	Team
Legends Sports Leagues	\$199 - 222	\$2,587 - 2,886	\$179	\$800 - 1,200	\$149	\$953
FXA Sports	N/A	N/A	\$85	\$750 - 825	N/A	N/A
Ponce de Leon	\$230	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Federal Baseball League	\$150	\$4,650	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
McLean Youth Basketball	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$110 - 340	N/A

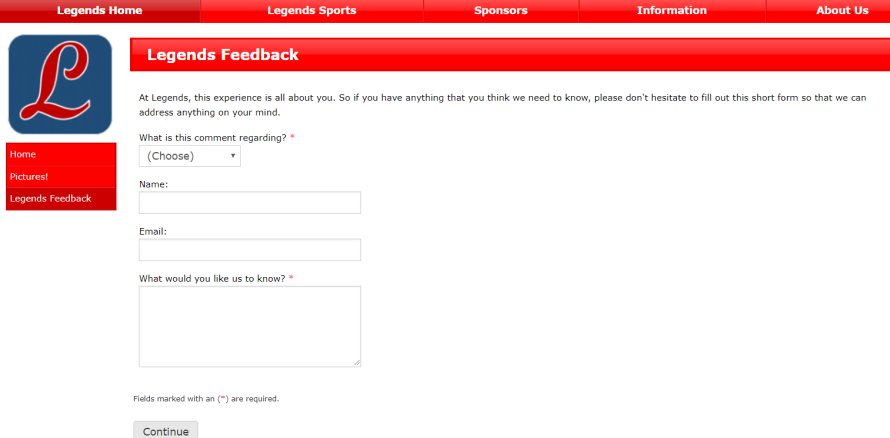
constant interaction throughout the entire season, and the quality of those interactions influences the consumer's decision to return for future seasons. Several ways to increase communication include having accessible managers or league commissioners, as well as places online to provide feedback and get information such as game times, standings, league rules and general league information. The Legends website provides all of that information, and game reminders are sent out via email to players an hour before their games. Word of mouth communication between Legends players and their friends benefits the league because word of mouth and electronic word of mouth are "more influential than conventional marketing tools (Leung, Bai, & Stahura, 2015)." The findings from Leung et al. (2015) are evident in the 2016 Legends survey results, where 61% of players responded that they first heard of Legends through word of mouth.

According to Phillips, Cordell, Church, & Moore (2013), there are three main motivations for using word of mouth to share opinions on products: functional, social, and emotional motivation. Functional motivation is the most common as it includes sharing useful information with others who want to know more about a product. Legends players share information about the league with their friends and family who do not know about the league, or who want to find out more about it. One goal of Legends' online content and marketing materials should be to convey important basic information so that members will be able to easily repeat that to their friends. Social motivation is different because people want to share their interests, hobbies, and even brands they like. As Phillips et al. (2013) explained, social signaling

is a term used to describe the human need to express our uniqueness through conversations and actions, and often times the way to do that is by sharing with others things we are passionate about. For a company or organization, the more unique its products are, the more likely its customers are to share that uniqueness with others. Legends marketing materials should express the unique features of the league to make it more appealing for players to share with others. Lastly, emotional motivation occurs when organizations or their products evoke strong customer emotions. The key to getting people to talk about a product is getting them to feel passionate about it (Phillips et al, 2013).

Reviews are one way customers can share their opinions online. According to Moriuchi (2016), positive product reviews can lead to an increase in page views online, and potentially an increase in product purchases. Just one positive review may cause the number of purchases to increase by as much as 10%, and with 50 reviews, purchases can increase by 30% (Moriuchi, 2016). Reviews are also beneficial because they allow the content on an organization's web page to remain more fresh and relevant. Freshness of page content is one of Google's algorithmic factors. Webpages with recent reviews will be more likely to appear on a Google search, and higher placement on Google searches can potentially increase the

number of page views for that site. LSL provides a place for reviews on their Facebook page, however it is used infrequently. Only six reviews have been posted since the page was created in 2014, with the last review posted in 2016 (Legends Sports Leagues, 2018a). The LSL website also includes a "Legends Feedback" tab (Figure 7) that allows participants to send emails directly to league officials through the site (Legends Sports Leagues, n.d.-b).



The screenshot shows the 'Legends Feedback' form on the LSL website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Legends Home', 'Legends Sports', 'Sponsors', 'Information', and 'About Us'. Below the navigation bar is a red header with the 'Legends Feedback' title. The form content includes a logo on the left, a introductory paragraph, a dropdown menu for 'What is this comment regarding?', a 'Name:' field, an 'Email:' field, and a larger text area for 'What would you like us to know?'. A note at the bottom states 'Fields marked with an (*) are required.' and there is a 'Continue' button.

Figure 7. Feedback page on the LSL website (Legends Sports Leagues, n.d.-b).

Videos are another effective way for an organization to promote site traffic and purchases. According to the 2018 Video in Business Benchmark Report (Vidyard, 2018), 90% of customers believe videos help them in their buying decisions and 64% say watching a video makes them more likely to buy a particular product. Legends already has promotional videos for three of their sports (baseball, basketball, and youth basketball), but they want to create an additional video for pickleball. There are some general guidelines to follow when creat-

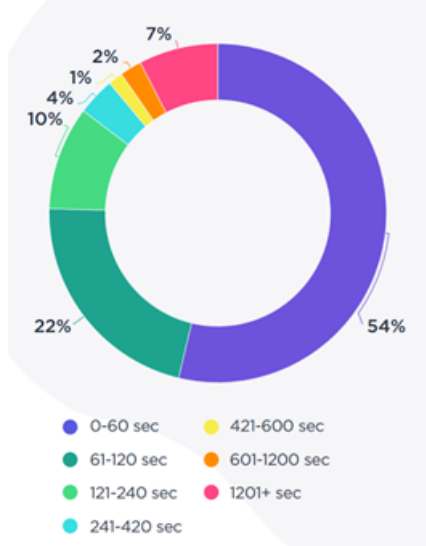


Figure 8. Typical promotional video length of business (Vidyard, 2018).

minutes long (Figure 8). Further, 59% of people will watch all of a 90 second video, whereas only 14% will watch all of a 30 minute video. The pickleball video is a platform for Legends to use the four C's to show potential players the value of Legends Sports Leagues.

Sponsorships for not-for-profit organizations

All not-for-profits depend on a variety of sources for their revenue, and capital may come from corporate, individual, or government sponsorships (Young, Wilsker & Grinsfelder, 2010). These donors provide funds, in the form of right fees (money given to the organization in return for advertising their brand) or equipment to the organization. In exchange, the sponsored organization can use the

image of the sponsoring organization to define, enhance, or even re-establish their brand through consumer perception (Farrelly, Quester & Burton, 2006). Sponsorships allow a not-for-profit organization to have a healthy mix of funding to support their operations. Nonetheless, for donors to offer support, they will want to see some return on investment in this arrangement. To ensure that this relationship is mutually beneficial, the nonprofit should aim to satisfy the sponsors.

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Figure 9. Franchise model layout (Wylie, 2018).

Legends Sports Leagues has had several different sponsors, but the Northern Virginia organization has concluded that the return is not worth the effort. Cultivating and retaining sponsors requires time and effort, and while it may be beneficial for some organizations, Legends currently only has one sponsor: Glory Days Bar & Grille (personal communication, October 22, 2018). That sponsoring organization is owned by a Legends player, which made the process less of a burden. So, while other not-for-profit organizations could benefit from sponsorships in other locations, Legends Sports Leagues is not actively pursuing sponsors.

Opportunity to grow through franchising

According to the International Franchising Association (IFA), franchising is a process to expand a business and distribute goods and services through a licensing relationship (Figure 9). More specifically, the franchisor (person or company that provides the license to a third party for conducting business using their trade-

mark and trade name) should not just indicate the products or services that will be offered by the franchisees (the person or company who is granted the license by the franchisor to do business), but it should also share its entire

operational system, marketing and training manuals and provide developmental support. This is the most common type of franchising, known as Business Format Franchising (IFA, n.d.).

Franchising has become popular in many industries like automotive and business services, food, health and fitness, retail products and services, and more. Franchising models are cost-saving for a franchisee wishing to enter into a business and comparatively easy to manage for an expanding company. They develop a working model that can be applied worldwide but also provide the required tools and support for the franchisees to have the ability to maintain the company's brand and quali-

ty standards, thus ensuring customer satisfaction (Collins, 2014). McDonald's, KFC, Subway, and Pizza Hut are all examples of successful restaurant franchises, as the menu items at each location are consistent in quality and price all over the world.

Franchising, in general, offers advantages as well as disadvantages to business owners who wish to expand their operations. Before making a decision, the franchisor must weigh the benefits and costs. The main advantages are easy expansion capital, access to talented people, and minimized growth risk (Shane, 2013). Since franchisees must make an initial investment to buy an outlet, franchisors can increase the number of locations without having to invest their own capital or requiring financing solutions from investors or banks. In addition, provided that the company's business model is good, the franchisor should have to invest significantly less capital in each location, and there is a good possibility of high returns with considerably less risk financial risk (Arthur, 2016). These returns, which usually come in the form of royalties, are significantly higher than what a business owner would earn by opening new locations alone. Royalties allow the company to cover the costs of the services provided to the franchisees. Finally, an important advantage of franchises is that they give business owners the opportunity to find talented people who are qualified and willing to work hard in order to build their franchise, since they will have the incentive to make their business profitable for them as well.

Nonetheless, the franchising business model also has some major disadvantages, including reduced control over managers and potential innovation challenges. In particular,

since franchisees are independent businesses, they might have goals that conflict with the franchisor's goals. Business owners get royalties based on the sales of each franchise whereas franchisees benefit solely from the profit that they make. These conflicting interests would need to be addressed. Moreover, introducing and applying innovations is considerably more difficult in the franchising business. Since they are independent entities, the franchisor must first negotiate and try to persuade the franchisees to accept the innovation. Overall, if the advantages outweigh the disadvantages then franchising might be a good solution for the business owner (Shane, 2013).

McGrow Consulting is helping Legends to develop the strategy and legal documentation to assist in their franchising effort. As part of

this effort, Legends has identified three other big recreational sports leagues that have adopted a franchising approach: i9 Sports, N Zone Sports, and Hi-Five Sports.

Since these leagues have successfully created franchises, we can learn from how they operate. We found that all three have had an average increase of five to eight franchises per year since they began to franchise. i9 Sports, which began franchising in 2003, has started to experience a relative decrease in their expansion effort over the past three years. In contrast, the other

two sports leagues appear to have had consistent growth since they began their franchising efforts. We also discovered that all three leagues have comparatively similar franchising fees that are in the range of \$20,000 to \$30,000. The initial investment to buy a franchise in one of the three leagues fluctuates from \$30,000 to \$600,000 in some cases. Likewise, the liquid cash requirement to own such a franchise, an important aspect to keep the company running in a case of an emergency, is between \$20,000 and \$50,000. Royalty fees, a vital source of income for franchisors, are between 7.5% and 9.0% for the recreational leagues we examined. In addition, all three of the franchises offer discount deals up to 50% for veterans, Only one franchise offers in-house financing solutions (Table 2).

Table 2. Financial data for similar sports franchises (personal communication, November 2, 2018).

	Legends Sports Leagues	i9 Sports	Nzone Sports	Hi-Five Sports
Founded	2006	2002	2010	1990
Location	Oakton, VA	Riverview, FL	Tampa, FL	San Francisco, CA
Age Groups	Youth and Adult Sports	Youth Sports	Youth Sports	Youth Sports
Franchising Since	N/A	2003	2011	2015
# of Franchises	N/A	128	37	13
Franchising Fee	\$15 - 25K	\$24.9K	\$20 - 29K	\$12.9 - 25K
Initial Investment	\$26.1 - 49.1K	\$60 - 70K	\$41 - 56K	\$29 - 567K
Liquid Cash Requirement	\$20K	\$50K	\$20 - 30K	N/A
Royalty Fee	8%	7.50%	8%	8.75%
Veteran Discount	50% Off FF	10% Off FF	10% Off FF	50% Off FF

We also visited the websites of N Zone Sports (2018) and i9 Sports (2018) which provide plenty of information for potential franchisees. We found that all of these franchisors provide introductory videos explaining their franchising plans. Among other important details, these videos discuss the importance of

helping franchisees reach their personal and financial goals through step-by-step marketing strategies. These videos not only save time for the franchisors, who would have had to explain the details with each potential franchisee, but also help those interested get a sample of how franchising functions within the leagues. Finally, all of these leagues provide training sessions for franchisees that allow them to understand how to develop their businesses. Franchisees will have the opportunity to learn about marketing strategies, such as cooperating with schools, advertising at public events, and attracting sponsors, which they can apply to their operations. Details on advertising methods such as optimizing the website in potential franchisee searches are provided. In addition, although we could not locate much information on revenue, the main sources of revenue for the franchisees seem to originate mainly from registration fees, sponsor advertisements, and local partners in the form of sponsors. Franchisees are strongly recommended to utilize consumer lifestyle segmentation, like Mosaic USA, to locate behavioral, geographic, psychographic and demographic trends that will not only make interactions with potential customers more meaningful but will also make their business successful (Lake, 2018).

Best practices and steps for developing training materials

Legends Sports Leagues needs to create training materials in order to inform potential franchisees on how to operate a Legends franchise. Mark Siebert, CEO and Senior Franchise Consultant for iFranchise Group, Inc. states

that no task is as important for a new franchisor as that of training (2005). He also states that the most important piece of a training program, and the first step, is the operations manual, as it acts as the franchisee's textbook. The franchisor should include specific instructions on how to operate their business and what the expectations are for performance. Details may include: instructions for any equipment or software a franchisee is expected to use; health and safety rules and standards; staff hiring and training guidelines; marketing details; and, examples of best practices (Peleva, 2016). It is important to write the operations manual in a technical writing style designed to quickly and clearly provide information so that even a franchisee with no industry experience, or related skills, will learn the franchise's operations.

Dani Peleva (2016) argues that although operations manuals should be informative, they should not allow franchisees to use the information to form their own independent company. Further, a professional should edit and review each chapter once it is written, but having a professional write the entire manual is counterproductive and expensive as contracted writers do not know the organization well enough. It is better to first identify experts on the topic within the company and have them outline the table of contents and develop content relevant to their expertise before a professional revision. Additionally, a franchisor should avoid showing a potential franchisee their operations manual until after the franchisee has signed a confidentiality agreement. It is good practice to provide a potential franchisee with a copy of the operations manual after they sign this agreement, because it will help them make a fully informed decision on their fit (Peleva, 2016).

Marla Rosner (2018), a Senior Training Consultant at MSA Worldwide stresses the importance of precise wording in a franchise operations manual. The material should be reviewed by others to ensure that there is no ambiguity over responsibilities. The operations manual should be user-friendly and exclude words like "heretofore," "thereafter," and "shall." An operations manual with a legal tone could inadvertently provoke negative connotations around the culture the franchisor is trying to convey. Rosner (2018) states that there should be a distinction between requirements (musts and may nots) and suggestions (mays and shoulds) in the operations manual.

Before composing a training manual, Mary L. Lanigan (2010) suggests first completing a front-end analysis, dividing the training content into **chapters**, and preparing a **stylesheet** for consistency. When drafting a training manual, Lanigan suggests that material should be "chunked" into **short paragraphs**, sections, or **bulleted lists**, given in logical order and connected through **transitional devices**. Chunking makes the information more readable and less overwhelming to the reader, or trainee. The materials are easier to read when the writer uses **active voice**, provides enough **white space** between chunks, and includes **images** and bullets that provide **examples, definitions, steps**, and other detailed information. **Screen captures** of processes or **flowcharts** prove to be helpful visual aids. **Practice exercises** and feedback throughout a training manual is also helpful. Lanigan (2010) also suggests **usability tests** to ensure that the training manual is fully functional.

Benjamin Gertz (2017) suggests that an instructional design model, such as ADDIE, will provide further consistency and direction to the overall training program (Figure 10). The Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) Program Management Office (2015) explains that each phase of the ADDIE Framework leads to outcomes that directly influence the next phase. Organizations are asked to plan their training program by identifying their learning goals, target audience, and mode of delivery before designing, developing, and evaluating the content of their program. Through the development of a training manual, we hope to provide future franchisees with the information needed to operate a Legends Sports Leagues franchise. In what follows, we overview the methods we used to develop the training manual, marketing materials, and recommendations, drawing on the principles and best practices discussed in this chapter.



Figure 10. The ADDIE instructional design model (Gertz, 2017; CTIP Program Management Office, 2015).

Development of franchising and marketing materials: Methods and results

The purpose of this project was to help Legends Sports Leagues (LSL) develop marketing materials and recommendations for expansion. To accomplish this goal, we addressed four objectives, using a range of research methods (Figure 11).

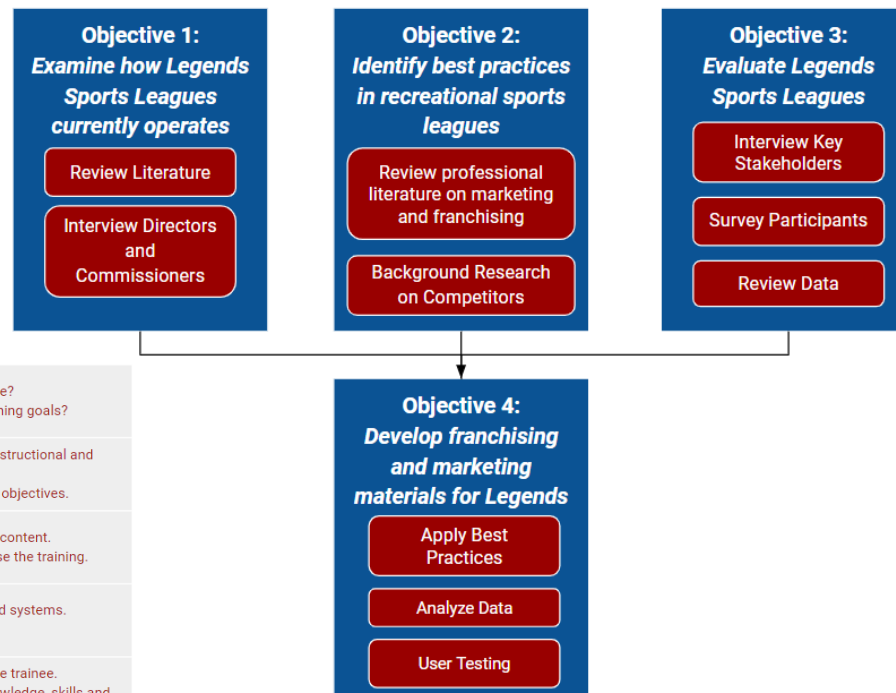


Figure 11. Objectives and methods.

Objective 1: Examine how Legends operates

Our first objective was to examine how LSL currently operates in Northern Virginia. We used the information acquired under this objective to develop the franchisee training manual (see Objective 4).

To examine how LSL operates, we conducted preliminary background research through the organization's website and key operational documents, reporting on that

knowledge in the previous background section. Once on-site, we expanded our research, conducting interviews and reviewing additional materials we did not have access to previously. We needed to know how LSL operates each season and associated events from beginning to end.

We obtained most of the information we needed in discussions with LSL's President and Chief Commissioner, Ron Cortese. We also interviewed other members of the Board of Directors and the League Commissioners, questioning them about the organization's operation and plans for franchising. We began each interview by reading a preamble that explained the nature of the re-

search, soliciting the participants' consent and explaining their right to review our reports prior to publication (see Supplemental Materials B).

For the complete set of interview scripts with senior members of LSL, see Supplemental Materials C-G.

Ron Cortese manages the majority of the league operations himself, but has assistance from the Board of Directors and Commissioners, as needed. Cortese provided us with key information and documents regarding LSL's operation. One of these documents was the Training Curriculum Outline (Supplemental Materials H) which, along with our conversations with Cortese, helped shape the table of contents of the Franchisee Training Manual. The training manual is proprietary, so we only summarize the contents below. For the cover page and table of contents of the Franchisee Training Manual, see Supplemental Materials I.

The Legends website is the heart of its operations, and LSL anticipates that setting up a website will be one of the first tasks undertaken by each new franchise. LSL's current website was set up through LeagueAthletics, a complete online sports management system. LeagueAthletics provides scheduling, management, and registration tools, an online store, and a mailing list. Cortese walked us through the online management tools he uses to operate LSL. In Fairfax, VA, Legends obtains permits for the fields and facilities through the County, but we learned that the process might be different in other locations.

Before each season, LSL and the league commissioner specifically, must handle tasks including announcing and closing player registration, creating teams, ordering and distributing uniforms, creating the schedule, and attending opening night. We interviewed several of LSL's

senior members about how they order and distribute uniforms. Stephanie Best, Little Legends Commissioner, told us that LSL obtains all uniforms from the same vendor. LSL orders the number of uniforms based on prior registration numbers for the league. Players can order uniforms with customized numbers and sizes, and teams can order their own team uniforms. LSL's Secretary, Amy Farabow, described LSL as personalized, and when uniform distribution happens at the Legends Office, parents and players use that time to ask questions about LSL.

Figure 12 further outlines the tasks associated with the operation of the sports leagues, including what happens during the regular season and post-season. LSL organizes and hosts tournaments and events in addition to operating the sports leagues. Some of the events LSL offers include a 3v3 basketball tournament, an annual party, and Hall of Fame inductions. Players nominate other LSL players for the Hall of Fame and then the current Hall

of Famers vote on which nominees to induct. The inductees get a plaque and a red jacket, along with their picture posted on the website (Figure 13). LSL is involved with charity events that include Jr. NBA, Home Run Derby, Pitch Hit and Run, and more because Cortese believes it is important to get involved with local youths and give back to the community.



Figure 13. Hall of fame players from 2017.



Figure 12. Associated tasks for the operation of LSL.

Objective 2: Identify best marketing practices

Our second objective was to identify the best marketing practices for recreational sports leagues. We compared LSL's marketing practices to our findings, which informed our final recommendations and deliverables.

We addressed Objective 2 through a literature review on the best practices in marketing, focusing on word of mouth advertising and promotional video production. We followed with research on the growth and marketing strategies for franchising of three competitive organizations that had successfully franchised, all of which had an average increase of five to eight franchises per year: Hi-Five Sports, based in San Francisco, California; N Zone Sports, based in Tampa, Florida; and, i9 Sports, based in Riverview, Florida. We reviewed these organizations' websites to identify available marketing or franchising documents and any existing advertising materials. We contacted each of the sports organizations and received several documents that we used as references. Some of these documents were also useful for McGrow Consulting, a company LSL hired to be its franchise consultant, as they had responsibility for the marketing strategies and the additional documents LSL needed for its franchisees.

As noted in our background section, successful marketing of a recreational sports league depends on many variables. More specifically, the organization must understand the perceived value of their product in meeting the customer needs and wants by weighing a variety of factors, such as the level of competition, convenience, and communication. By addressing the potential customers' wants and needs, the or-

ganization's marketing plan has a better chance to succeed.

Hi-Five, N Zone, and i9 Sports all have fully developed franchising websites that provide introductory information about their franchising opportunity. Videos and downloadable marketing brochures provide further information on the organizations' revenue model, start-up process, benefits, and frequently asked questions, as well as why customers should choose their organization. Franchisors want to provide potential franchisees with enough information to captivate interest, but not enough to steal their business model, as evident by the information available to us through these organizations' websites.

The marketing brochures of i9 Sports (Supplemental Materials J) and Hi-Five Sports (Supplemental Materials K) revealed that both organizations have a methodical way of conducting business, and have managed to streamline their operations to facilitate the franchisees in setting up their new business. Each league requests an initial investment fee from the franchisee. In return, the league provides the training and support that is necessary for the business model of the franchisee to succeed. Besides providing an operations manual to guide the franchisee through every step of the process, the companies also provide an extensive and comprehensive yearlong training program where new franchisees will go through every detail of the operation with experienced league officials. The reason why this program is offered is to educate the franchisees about the business model and to prevent them from repeating the same mistakes, saving them valuable time and capital. The leagues have a large number of employees, either working part-time for them or as volunteers, allowing them to of-

fer ongoing support and customer service, such as all-inclusive franchise management software, a customer service center, business coaches and even graphic designers to help streamline and make the business model profitable for the franchisee.

According to their marketing brochures, both leagues have developed a set of business practices they share with new franchisees that make the business affordable and easy to operate. This home-based business model allows franchisees to initiate and operate a league while working at another job. In addition, the organizations design business practices to keep staffing requirements and administrative costs as low as possible. They also order supplies on an as-needed basis, thus requiring minimal inventory, but also, due to the leagues' vendor relationships, franchisees can get preferred pricing on the supplies required.

In comparing LSL to the two established organizations who have had success franchising, we found that LSL has not developed all the components these organizations provide to their franchisees because LSL is still in the early stages of franchising. It may be challenging for LSL to franchise initially, as it lacks the experience, staffing, and name recognition that the other competitive organizations are experiencing. The consulting company that LSL has hired will help start the franchising process. In contrast to the other leagues who have been in the franchising business for at least 3 years (see background section), LSL has only just started their efforts to apply the franchising model in its operation. In addition, LSL has just started the development process of an informational website, video, and marketing brochure similar to the ones that these organizations provide. LSL's training program is also in development;

however, it needs tremendous detail, as LSL does not currently have the staff to provide franchisees with ongoing support like its competitors do. The other organizations have both an extensive training program, as well as ongoing customer support service to ensure that their franchisees are successful. Nonetheless, LSL has already developed a set of logos for the individual sports offered which players are starting to recognize as well as promotional videos for the baseball and basketball leagues.

Objective 3: Evaluate LSL's growth, marketing, and operation

Our third objective was to evaluate LSL's growth, marketing strategies and materials, and operation. We used the data collected under this objective to inform our final recommendations and deliverables.

To address Objective 3, we interviewed eight key stakeholders who provided information on how LSL markets its league memberships and how it might improve. We interviewed members of the Board of Directors and other senior members of LSL (Supplemental Materials C-G), including the Vice President and Golf League Organizer, Joyce Eaby; the Secretary, Amy Farabow; and the Little Legends commissioner, Stephanie Best. We interviewed three current players (Supplemental Materials L-N) who provided information on LSL from players' perspectives. We also asked the players if they had any suggestions for ways to improve the current operations of the leagues, including their ideas about marketing and communication. Given our concerns about the status of the golf league and future expansion

of the pickleball league, we were careful to interview and survey those involved in those two sports leagues. In interviews, we asked golf league participants their opinions on why they thought the golf league was struggling to grow like the other Legends leagues, and what ideas they had to improve marketing and increase membership. We interviewed Legends pickleball players to learn the marketing strategies and materials LSL used to attract players, and to identify suggestions to build on the success of the first season.

In addition to the interviews, we conducted an anonymous online survey of the 8,172 current and former players, officials, and parents on the LSL mailing list (6,487 in basketball, 1,474 in baseball, 169 in pickleball, and 42 in golf). The survey included 41 questions with a mix of closed and open-ended questions on a variety of topics, including how respondents found out about LSL and their opinions about marketing and promotion. The survey opened on November 1, 2018 and closed on November 16, 2018; 235 were completed. The survey (Supplemental Materials O) was more standardized than our general interviews, and allowed us to reach more people in a shorter amount of time. In addition, we examined existing data on LSL participation for each season and sport. We looked for similarities that emerged across the interviews, surveys, and participation data.

Participation trends

In our effort to evaluate LSL's growth, we analyzed the total number of registrations and broke the numbers down based on the sports and divisions offered. At first glance, registration data suggests that LSL has grown steadily since its start, growing from 204 registrations in 2006 to 2,756 registrations in 2017 (Figure 14).

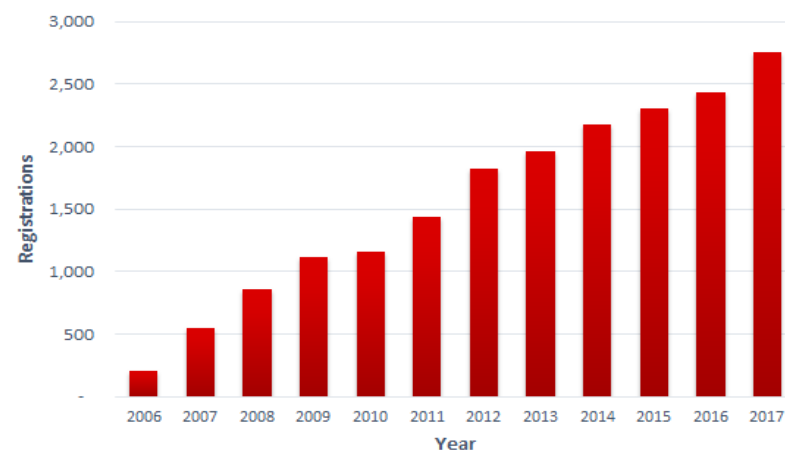


Figure 14. Total registrations per year across all LSL.

Nonetheless, while total participation continues to grow, growth in participation by sport varies. Baseball was the first LSL sport in 2006. Participation grew in the baseball league until it reached a peak of 541 registrations in 2015. It decreased for the next two years, and the participation for 2017 was down to 479 registrations (Figure 15). Results from our survey showed that, of the 65 respondents who

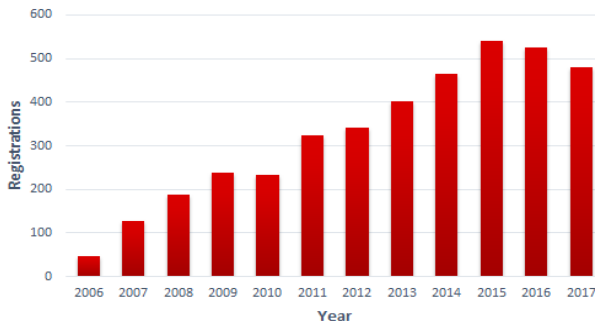


Figure 15. Baseball registrations per year in LSL.

rated their satisfaction with LSL baseball, 56 (86.2%) were either somewhat or extremely satisfied.

Basketball, LSL’s second sport, also started in 2006 (Figure 16). The growth of Leg-

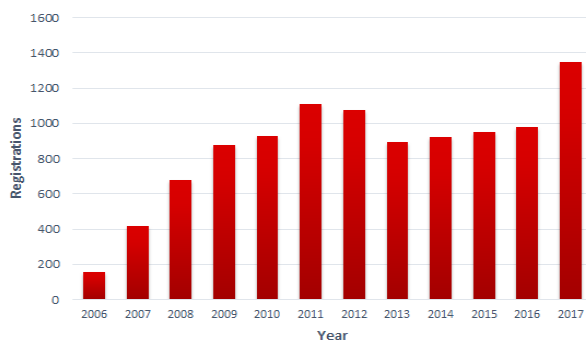


Figure 16. Adult basketball registrations per year in LSL.

ends basketball has fluctuated slightly, with a noticeable decrease in 2013. This decrease was partly due to the discontinuation of the summer league, which had 76 participants the previous summer. Additionally, partici-

pation in the fall 2013 season was down 81 registrations from the previous fall. The basketball participation increased in 2017, mainly due to the addition of weeknight and summer leagues, which accounted for 288 registrations combined.

Youth basketball started in 2012, with over 400 players in its first year. Youth basketball has been following a steady trend of growth, and the participation was up to 1,000 players in 2017 (Figure 17). Golf began in the fall of 2016 with 24 players, then had 48 play-

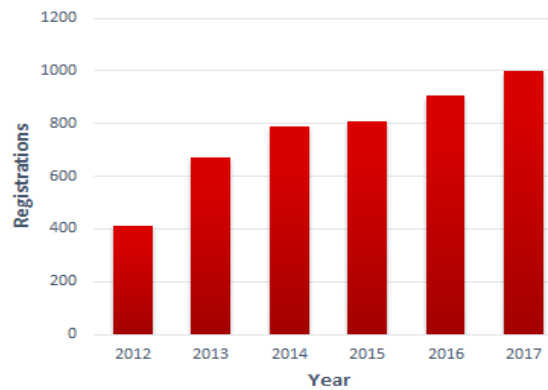


Figure 17. Youth basketball registrations per year in LSL.

Table 3. Interviewees’ quotes suggesting word of mouth is a big reason for growth.

Interviewee	Quote
Amy Farabow, Secretary	“The biggest [cause of] expansion is word of mouth”
Joyce Eaby, Vice President	“It was mostly a word of mouth thing”
Stephanie Best, Little Legends Commissioner	“A lot of Legends has been word of mouth”
Wayne Stevens, Baseball Deputy Commissioner	“The biggest thing for us is word of mouth”

ers in 2017; remaining at 24 players for both the spring and fall of that year. Registration numbers dropped to 16 in the spring 2018 season, before LSL cancelled the fall 2018 season. Pickleball, the newest LSL sport, began in 2018 and totaled 162 participants as of the start of the winter season in December 2018.

Marketing and communication

In our interviews with LSL’s senior members, we asked questions about any marketing materials or strategies they use. Almost all of the interviewees believed that word of mouth was a major reason for LSL’s growth (Table 3). LSL does not put a major emphasis on other marketing strategies because they believe word of mouth is so effective.

Joyce Eaby explained in her interview that LSL had tried social media and Google advertisements in the past, but they were relatively ineffective. Cortese sends emails to the mailing list to notify the players that registrations are open for new seasons. There are “Register Here” buttons on the website to direct website visitors to the registration pages for each sport. Cortese posted information about LSL’s winter pickleball season on the Facebook page “DMV Pickleball,” which is a public group for pickle-

ball in the Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia area that had 246 members as of December 2018. Our team attended several Legends pickleball games on three different nights and observed the number of spectators and marketing materials present. The only marketing materials were Legends pickleball t-shirts that were distributed at the gym. We observed the shirts worn by a few players on later nights.

In addition to the pickleball t-shirts, LSL has uniforms for their other sports leagues. Basketball and baseball both have uniforms available with the Legends script on the front. We saw that LSL had a banner for pickleball at the start 2018, however, that banner was not present at any of the fall pickleball games we attended. LSL also has logos for each of their four sports leagues. Both adult and youth basketball, and adult baseball have promotional videos posted on the LSL website and YouTube channel. LSL does not currently have many marketing materials in addition to these uniforms, logos, and videos.

Through our interviews, we discovered that the first participants in LSL's history came from an advertisement in the Vienna Presbyterian Church's bulletin. LSL has developed different forms of communication, including a website and mailing list, to recruit participants to the league. The survey revealed that most of

the 235 respondents found out about LSL's different sports leagues through the website (46.4%), email (30.1%) and word of mouth

(43%), which are the same means of communication surveyed participants said they use to stay informed about league activities (Figure 18 and Figure 19). 47 respondents said they knew about the golf league, and 69 said they knew about the pickleball league. The most common response for how they found out about those leagues was through email (24 and 29, respectively). This data may reflect participants' preferences for information but the fact that Legends mostly uses the website, email, and word of mouth for communication likely has a strong influence. The majority of participants do not use the mobile app, blog, or Facebook page, which could also reflect the absence of updated postings and difficulty of the mobile interface.

Furthermore, we asked survey participants an open-ended question about their frustrations with the website and any suggestions they had for improvement. Out of the 235 respondents, 39 answered this question. Upon conducting a content analysis, six types of suggested improvements emerged, including making the navigation easier, updating the site more often, making the website material more mobile friendly, im-

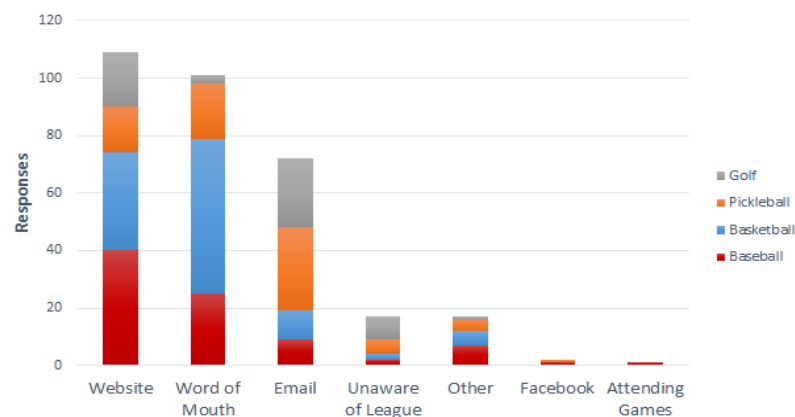


Figure 18. How participants found out about each individual LSL respectively.



Figure 19. How participants stay informed about league activities.

proving the overall aesthetic, adding more player statistics, and making sure the information is more consistent. Figure 20 shows that 18 (46.2%) thought the website could be easier to navigate and nine (23.1%) thought it could be updated more frequently.

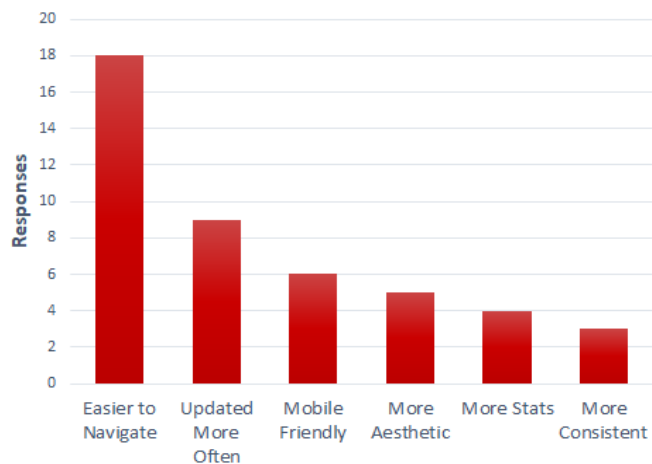


Figure 20. Participants' suggestions for website improvement (63/235 respondents).

We asked survey participants who had played in other sports leagues (n=94) to provide us with general suggestions for LSL improvement based on their experience. Out of the 94 respondents we asked this question to, 60 answered. Upon conducting a content analysis, we identified six general improvements. Figure 21 shows that, of the number of respondents who mentioned suggestions, 25 (41.7%) suggested better organization, 14 (23.3%) suggested that the competition could be more balanced, and 10 (16.7%) suggested that the cost could improve based on their experience with other leagues.

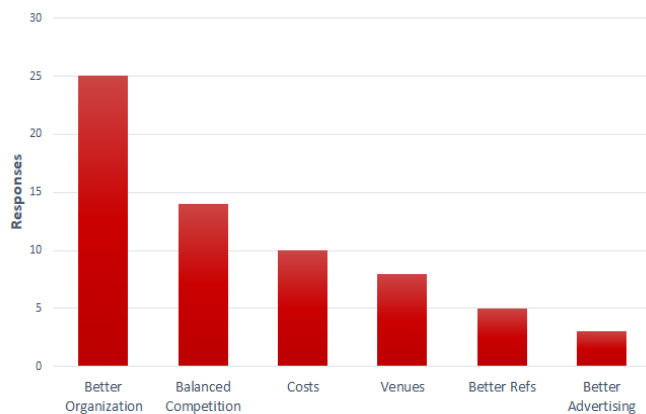


Figure 21. Participants' suggestions for general improvement.

Why Legends?

In our survey, we asked the 235 respondents why they chose to join Legends Sports Leagues, and 156 answered the question. We made the question closed-ended with seven options, and allowed the respondents to choose all the options that applied. Figure 22 shows that 135 of the 156 respondents (86.5%) indicated reasons relating to competition; consisting of playing with people of similar skill level and using the league as a competitive outlet. 124 (79.5%) of the respondents indicated reasons regarding the social aspect of LSL, including joining because their friends were in the league. Furthermore, 87 (55.8%) respondents indicated that they joined for the exercise and 66 (42.3%) joined to play the sports they played when they were

younger. Our interviews and pickleball video testimonials suggested similar reasons as to why players joined LSL, with several participants indicating that LSL is a great opportunity to play and have fun with family and friends in a friendly, but competitive, atmosphere.

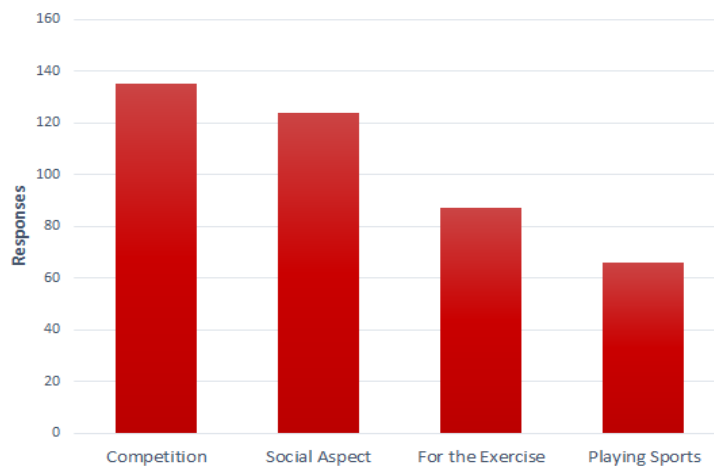


Figure 22. Main reasons why participants joined LSL (412 out of the 425 responses).

We compared the data above to an open-ended survey question regarding participants' favorite parts of LSL, and 83 people responded. Figure 23 shows that 29 (34.9%) said the social aspect and 26 (31.3%) said the competition level were their favorite parts, which are the same top two response categories for why participants joined the league. 23 respondents (27.7%) also indicated that they enjoy playing sports, which is another main reason participants joined LSL. The players we talked to also suggested they had similar favorite parts of LSL. This data reveals that, as a whole, the same reasons participants joined LSL are also their fa-

favorite parts of the organization. Through this, we know that those who joined LSL for the social aspect, competition, or enjoyment would most likely be satisfied with their choice overall. The data does not reveal if there are individual cases where LSL did not meet a participant's expectations. However, we can conclude that in general, LSL has created an organization where people find their favorite parts to also be the reason they registered.

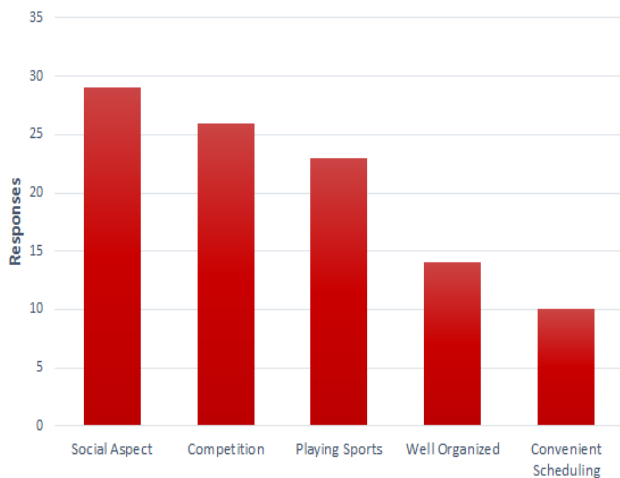


Figure 23. Participants' favorite parts of LSL (102 out of 111 responses).

Why is golf struggling?

One primary concern among LSL's board members was whether the golf league should continue since it has been struggling with membership. Our interviews revealed that the time of day and the long duration of golf matches are the main reasons golf continues to

struggle. Joyce Eaby, who organized the first golf season, stated, "The timing of [the golf league] is very challenging for people. People loved it, but [matches] were hard to get to" (personal communication, November 9, 2018). Eaby was referencing the fact that golf matches are after work, so there is a lot of traffic getting from work to the golf course. That makes it difficult to get a full match in after

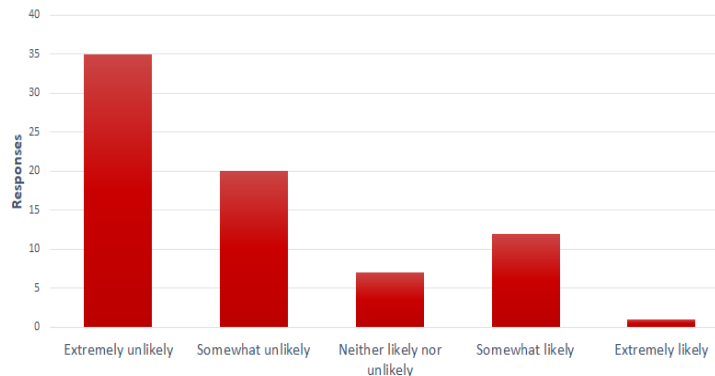


Figure 24. Likeliness of golfers to play in LSL's 2019 golf season.

work, because it takes about two and a half hours to play. Since golf matches require a lot of time, weekday matches were not popular, as most of the participants would have to leave work early, which they were unable or unwilling to do. This is especially true in the fall when it gets dark much earlier in the day. Easy access to golf courses was also a limitation because of traffic and tee time availability.

In our survey, we specifically asked all golfers, including those

who play for leisure, if they would play in LSL's spring 2019 golf season. Figure 24 shows that only 13 (17.3%) of the 75 respondents who answered this question said they would be somewhat likely (12) or extremely likely (one) to play in the golf league. Most respondents (46.6%) said that they were extremely unlikely to participate because of the time commitment, participation cost, and a lack of interest (Figure 25).

Figure 18 shows that 43 out of the 55 respondents who knew about the golf league found out about it through the website and email. This suggests that LSL was mainly trying to find golf players from within the league, but the survey also shows that very few people in the league are interested. This data could indicate why golf has struggled to grow.

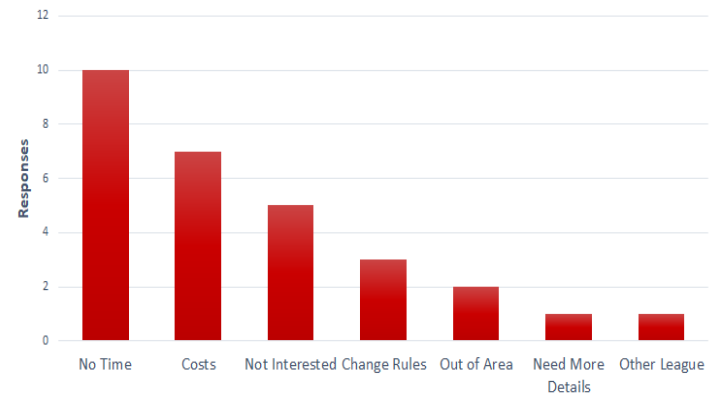


Figure 25. Reasons why the golfers would not participate in the 2019 golf season.

Ideas for improvement and growth

In our interviews with LSL’s board members and executives, we asked if they had any ideas for improvement and growth. Three interviewees indicated that LSL needs more people to help operate the league. Wayne Stevens, Amy Farabow, and Rob Romo believe that commissioners for each sport would be beneficial for LSL. Stevens argued that the president needs to delegate responsibilities to avoid the perception among players that the president has control over every decision in the league. He suggested that a commissioner and deputy commissioner for the baseball league could handle questions and concerns, and that way there would not appear to be a conflict of interest. Stevens also suggested that the league could benefit from sponsors, but finding sponsors and additional funding for the league could be a full time job in itself. Farabow stated that if the league were to expand further, it would need more than one person to manage different areas. She believed that the structure of Little Legends was effective because Stephanie Best was the Commissioner, and Cortese only needed to get involved if there was an issue that required his input. She recommended that the pickleball league follow the Little Legends structure and have its own commissioner. She emphasized there are a lot of details in managing a league, so the commissioner needs to be very organized, and a new commissioner would experience a steep learning curve. Romo noted that the former Pickleball Commissioner went to other pickleball venues to introduce and discuss LSL as part of the process of starting the league. Romo thought this ‘scouting’ was

“extremely helpful” because pickleball is a very social sport and people like to put a face to a name, but that personal touch has been missing since the Pickleball Commissioner stepped down. Furthermore, pickleball registration numbers have declined since the commissioner stepped down, suggesting that the commissioner role was helpful from a growth and marketing standpoint.

The former Golf Commissioner and current Vice President, Joyce Eaby, had an idea for a LSL general-purpose facility that could eliminate the need for LSL to acquire permits for the use of local gyms and eradicate the problem of low quality facilities, as they would have their own facility. Although the total investment would be considerably high, the possible increase in participation could eventually turn this idea into a profitable one. This location could also be a place for players to gather and spread word of mouth about the leagues in which they are involved. Consequently, a community can gradually build, which may also be useful for spreading the news about the league through word of mouth with outsiders. Additionally, this location would give LSL the opportunity to hold daily activities where the players could bring their families and socialize with other LSL players.

Eaby shared an idea for an annual All Legends Golf Classic that could be a fun tournament for all LSL participants and their friends and families with prizes and raffles. This would not only help LSL increase their participation numbers for the golf league but also help build an even bigger LSL community. Romo also suggested in-

troducing a new pickleball tournament to increase participation in LSL events instead of increasing memberships in the sports leagues.

The survey revealed that many participants considered it expensive to participate in the Legends leagues. Stevens’ suggested that letting people purchase their own uniforms as well as going to different umpire associations would help reduce costs. Stevens also thought that recruiting additional commissioners could help the organization focus more on attracting sponsors, which currently is not a priority for LSL, and sponsorships would help defray some of the costs.

Objective 4: Develop franchising and marketing materials

The fourth objective of our project was to develop franchising and marketing materials for LSL. Excluding our recommendations, our project had five deliverables (Figure 26). We used the results described above, including our review of best practices, to shape our deliverables. Throughout the design process, we con-

1. Logo
2. Video
3. Hashtag / Flyer
4. Franchisee Training Manual
5. Marketing Brochure

Figure 26. Final deliverables of our project.

sulted with LSL, our advisors, and peers to review the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of our materials.

Pickleball logo

To help market LSL's pickleball league, we produced two items: a logo and promotional video. The first item that we created was the LSL pickleball logo. We chose to create a logo for Legends pickleball because they needed a logo that matched their brand. LSL had already developed logos for their other sports' marketing purposes, so we followed their "L" design for consistency (Figure 27). Using Adobe Photoshop, we included a pickleball to represent the



Figure 27. LSL's pre-existing logos for two of their sports leagues.

sport. We provided LSL with an array of color combinations (Supplemental Materials P) to choose from, and ultimately, the final choice was a green background with blue text (Figure 28). The green represents the coloring of some pickleballs, while the blue text is a signature color associated with LSL.

Great logos should be easily recognizable and identifiable, and leave a lasting impression that interests consumers. Our design allows people familiar with other Legends sports to recognize that Legends pickleball is part of the same organization. The new logo will also make the pickleball website consistent with the other Legends sports websites.



Figure 28. Legends pickleball league logos.

Pickleball promotional video

The second item we produced for LSL's pickleball league was the promotional video, which was a key deliverable requested by our sponsor. We developed our video from our review of

LSL's previous videos and other recreational sports organizations' promotional videos. We found that LSL's previous videos had a popular musical track with slow motion clips of gameplay. In reviewing videos from i9 Sports, we found that participant testimonials and text callouts describing the league were key fea-

tures for promoting their brand. Promotional videos are a great way to attract an audience, so we designed our video to combine the best features from both of these sources.

To create our video, we developed a draft storyboard that identified the types of content to include (testimonials, action shots, graphics, text callouts, and a musical track) and the sequence of these shots (Supplemental Materials Q). We filmed footage with a Go-Pro HERO6 at the Legends pickleball games held in the fall 2018 season. We used various Adobe software to produce the video, including:

- Premiere;
- After Effects;
- Photoshop;
- Media Encoder; and,
- Audition.

Figure 29a allows viewers to get a sense of what, or who, they are about to watch in the opening sequence of our video. Action shots, such as the one in Figure 29b, showcase gameplay to help viewers quickly understand some of the basic motions of pickleball, while Figure 29e showcases a rally that gives viewers a longer clip of gameplay for reference. We decided to include player testimonials in our video, which not only give verbal insight into LSL's pickleball league, but also allow viewers to see who can play in the league. We included testimonials from a man (Figure 29c), a father and son (Figure 29d), and a woman (Figure 29f) to show the diversity of the participants. Participants discussed how they found LSL's pickleball league, what the league of-

fers, and what they like about LSL. We added text callouts to emphasize LSL's distinct qualities that would appeal to potential players (Figure 29g). Figure 29h showcases pickleball players with their medals for winning the finals, which shows viewers that LSL remains somewhat competitive. To conclude the video, we provided viewers with a URL they can use to find more information or register for the league (Figure 29i). Since we included the pickleball logo in the video, viewers will associate the logo with LSL and were they to visit the website, they would be able to recognize the logo from our video.

Legends flyer and hashtag

In addition to the pickleball marketing materials, another deliverable LSL requested was a flyer for the Legends 2018 Annual Hall of Fame Party. The purpose of this flyer was the launching of a hashtag, as part of our social media recommendations. This marketing idea came about as an effort to build an online community for LSL through photo sharing and we made it in collaboration with our sponsor and advisors. It would be beneficial for LSL to start using social media to recruit new members and reach a wider audience. The hashtag is a great way to start marketing LSL on social media, as it does not require LSL to create an account, and essentially works the same as word of mouth, but digitally. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook allow posts to include hashtags and users to quickly search for posts and images associated with a specific hashtag. In addition to the hashtag, the flyer had information for the basketball and pickleball activities planned in the near future (Figure 30).

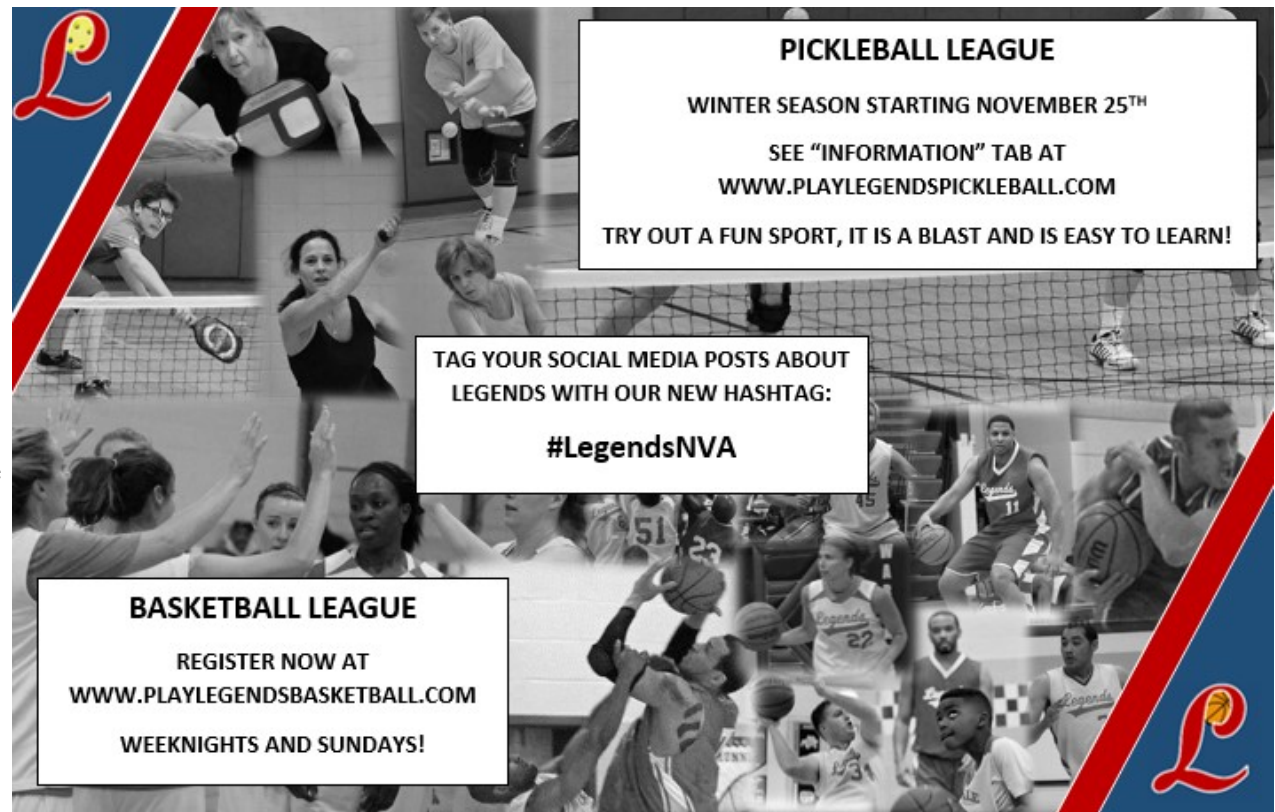


Figure 30. Legends flyer for pickleball and basketball winter activities and the new hashtag.



a. Introduction to video.



b. Slow motion action shot.



c. First player testimonial.



d. Father and son testimonial.



e. Gameplay of a rally.



f. Final player testimonial.



g. Text callout of distinct LSL quality.



h. Players with medals.



i. Outro with logo and URL.

Figure 29. Screenshots from the pickleball promotional video in the sequence that they appear.

Franchisee training manual

Besides the marketing materials that could help LSL's current growth and marketing, we were also tasked with producing franchising materials for potential franchisees. The main deliverable of our project was the Franchisee Training Manual. The manual introduces LSL and takes franchisees through the steps of operating their own LSL franchise. Chapters

include: Homework/Planning; Start-up; Pre-Season Kickoff; Regular Season; Post-Season; Tournaments and Events; and, Other information. Key features of the manual include a cover page and table of contents (Figure 31), and informational screenshots to help franchisees visually learn how to set-up their own LSL website through LeagueAthletics. Additional materials, such as bylaws and the code of conduct are included in a separate appendix.



Legends Sports Leagues Franchisee Training Manual

Legends Sports Leagues, Inc.
www.playlegends.com

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Figure 31. Cover page and table of contents of the franchisee training manual.

Marketing brochure

In addition, we developed a marketing brochure LSL can send to parties expressing interest in a franchise. The brochure will be the first item sent to someone inquiring about the LSL franchising opportunity. The document's purpose is to give interested people introductory knowledge of LSL before they pursue the opportunity any further. Figure 32 showcases the cover page of the marketing brochure, while Supplemental Materials R contains the contents. Similar to the brochures we examined from Hi-Five and i9 Sports, we included the following sections:

- Introduction
- Why Legends?
- Legends Franchise
- Our Ideal Franchisee
- Financial Investments
- Legends Opportunities
- Legends Franchise Start-up Timetable
- Cost to Start a Legends Franchise
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Contact Us

Conclusions and Recommendations

Legends Sports Leagues (LSL) is interested in expanding in Northern Virginia and across the country, and we contributed through the development of franchising and marketing



Figure 32. Cover page of the marketing brochure document redesign.

materials. Additionally, we provided recommendations to improve LSL's operations and increase its marketing presence. Based on our analysis, we have six conclusions and several associated recommendations.

1) LSL has limited staff, which may make expansion efforts challenging.

Our interviews and survey responses revealed that Ron Cortese has a large number

of responsibilities. In increasing membership and adding franchising, it would be helpful to distribute some of the workload by appointing others to positions of responsibility. Three of our interviewees highlighted how a designated commissioner for each sport could help. For example, the individual commissioners could pick up some of the organizational and marketing responsibilities like finding venues for their leagues, updating the website and social media, and recruiting new players outside the league. We therefore recommend that LSL should consider appointing commissioners for each sport.

2) LSL has not fully exploited social media for marketing.

Through our interviews and review of LSL's marketing efforts, we found that LSL has not effectively exploited social media for marketing purposes. Although the organization has a Facebook page, it is not active. We recommend LSL recruit a volunteer to manage and update social media accounts across all platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.), or distribute this task amongst League Commissioners.

We also recommend that LSL introduce the hashtag "#LegendsNVA" (Legends Northern Virginia). Hashtags are free and economical in that they take little time and effort to create and maintain, unlike having a social media page. People can add hashtags to any social media post, which gets added to a collection of other posts with that same hashtag. LSL could use the hashtag as a way to start spreading news about their organization on social media through participants in the league.

3) Although the website and email are facilitating communication within the leagues, some members would like to see improvements.

Survey respondents had several suggestions to enhance the website, including making it easier to navigate and updating the schedule and games more frequently. Regarding website navigation, we recommend that LSL informs its users about bookmarking the web pages they have trouble finding. This would save users the trouble of navigating through the website, as they could simply follow the link at the top of their browser instead. LSL could satisfy the want for more frequent updates by distributing tasks to additional commissioners as discussed above. Therefore, we recommend that LSL recruits several people to help maintain and update the website content.

4) To expand the golf league, LSL may need to market beyond its current members.

Golf's growth may depend on bringing in new players from outside the organization, since our survey results showed that the majority of respondents found out about the golf league through the mailing list (current members), and the golfers we surveyed did not express interest in joining the golf league. Therefore, we recommend that LSL markets to people outside of the mailing list to obtain new members. They could focus on people who can play during the day, such as retirees or stay at home parents. LSL could put flyers in golf course clubhouses to attract interest from golfers.

Golf still has potential to be successful despite its initial struggles. As an alternative, we also recommend that LSL organizes the All

Legends Golf Classic event that Joyce Eaby mentioned, with the ability to bring in friends from outside the membership circle. This event would be an annual golf tournament for all members of the LSL community to have fun playing golf with their friends and family. Similar to the Annual Hall of Fame party, this event could also have raffles and prizes.

5) To reach a larger audience, LSL should share the pickleball promotional video beyond YouTube and the website.

LSL has its three other promotional videos (baseball and both youth and adult basketball) on its YouTube channel and website. LSL should also share the pickleball promotional video to these platforms, but may find benefit in sharing it elsewhere as well. The target audience for the video should be people outside of the league. Therefore, we recommend that LSL shares the pickleball promotional video to local pickleball pages, such as "DMV Pickleball" on Facebook. This page was brought to our attention during our interview with Rob Romo.

6) LSL is still in the early stages of franchising and could further review the best practices from other recreational sports franchises.

Hi-Five Sports, N Zone Sports, and i9 Sports have successfully franchised their recreational sports organizations. I9 Sports provides franchisees with a training program spread over a year, a personal business coach for every franchisee, and a customer service center for franchisees and players to call with any questions. There is more detail about what each organization offers on their websites and in their marketing documents. Therefore, we recom-

end that LSL reviews what these organizations provide to their franchisees, and implement what it can at this early stage of franchising. Since the recreational sports franchises developed their levels of staffing and support over several years, it would be beneficial for LSL to offer these services after gaining more franchising experience. Therefore, we also recommend that, in the future, LSL should develop the services that these competitive organizations offer.

LSL has experienced constant growth in participation since it started back in 2006, which is a testament to its success. We hope that our contributions of deliverables and recommendations help LSL build on this success. We wish LSL the best of luck with their exciting new franchising opportunity.

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- *Our interviewees and survey respondents*

Supplemental Materials and Marketing Brochure for this project may be found at <https://digitalcommons.wpi.edu/studentprojectsandresearch/> by entering this report's title in the search bar. When the window appears, click on the appropriate project title and scroll down to "additional files".

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