

“Business as Usual” or “Unusual Business”

Submitted by Mark Rieniets

Background

It is as a result of the dedication, commitment and skills of administrators, classifiers, coaches, officials and staff members that IPC Swimming has become a recognized, well respected and functional organization. The dilemma IPC Swimming now faces is the assumption that having come so far in this manner will it continue to grow and be successful, without actually knowing where it is heading ? Without expectation or measurement for achievement, how will it know when or if it will arrive at this mythical and futuristic place that is currently envisaged as being desirable or possible?

All large organizations are aware that in today's corporate environment it is necessary to have a Vision, Mission Statement and Goals in order to motivate, focus on desirable outcomes and benchmark achievements against. These provide the essential guidelines that ensure the individuals within the organization use their knowledge and skills in a cohesive and mutually beneficial manner, with minimal waste or duplication of efforts.

On the financial and administrative side, a mandatory requirement is a strategic Business Plan, incorporating budgets and auditing of expenses against expected income. Large benefactors cannot be expected to continue to contribute to an organization which cannot demonstrate how the money is planned to be spent in advance, and a process for continued monitoring to ensure that achievements meet stated expectations.

On the field of play the NPC's, coaches and athletes set high targets and standards with training regimes that ensure the highest possible athlete achievement and results. This is reinforced by IPC swimming ensuring that only the high achieving athletes obtain selection for the Paralympics games. Further, IPC Swimming continues to reward and measure the achievements by awarding medals and certifying records as they are broken.

The Conflict

Whilst IPC Swimming is goal and achievement orientated on the financial and athletic side; it has not set nor monitored expectations and achievements on the day to day administration side of the sport. This is what provides the essential infrastructure which permits the sport and the athletes to be successful.

For example, Volunteers are one of the most valuable assets within IPC Swimming, yet instructors for Classifier and Technical Officials courses (with a Technical Delegate course being developed) for Regional and International certification have historically been appointed to train and mentor without any set criteria or means to evaluate their skill sets or the degree of success in the presentation of these courses.

IPC Swimming has no published targets for the following:

- Number of classifiers who will be recruited into a class for the first time during 2010

- Number of classifiers who will obtain Level 1 (Regional) accreditation prior to London Paralympic Games.
- Number of classifiers who will obtain Level 2 (International) accreditation prior to London PG's.
- Number of classifiers who will be the 'first' from their country to obtain accreditation prior to London PG's – thus working towards the IPC goal of total inclusion on an international level.

This same list can be extrapolated out to include Technical Officials and Technical Delegates.

Quality and competencies must never be sacrificed in order to achieve arbitrary targets. To chase numbers because someone set a target is a dangerous premise, and not one this paper is intended to suggest.

However, if goals are not formulated and then set, neither the plan of action, nor the plan for continuous measurement and review of the performance against annual and quadrennial plans can be developed and implemented. Without these, the sport cannot be expected to grow and evolve in a controlled and cohesive manner.

More importantly, without targets and measurement, how will it be possible to determine if the best service possible for the athletes is being provided? There must be continuous striving for higher results and rigorous and ongoing measurement and comparison of achievements against goals

Without a continual process of review and adoption of any necessary corrective action, IPC Swimming is doomed to move forward based on good fortune and initiatives implemented by the minority of the membership.

Recommendations

That the IPC Swimming Business Plan, include and quantify by region, quadrennial targets for the following:

- Number of Classifiers, Technical Delegates and Officials recruited into the respective IPC swimming courses.
- Number of Classifiers, Technical Delegates and Officials who obtain either initial or advancement of an accreditation.

All goals and targets must be set and agreed to by the international community prior to instigation. It is they who will contribute to and promote the success of these goals.

Once these targets are set and agreed to the following needs to be implemented:

- Development of plans and monitoring to ensure movement towards realizing these objectives.

- Continued measurement of any achievement level against the targets
- A continual process of review and corrective action be planned and instigated.

The Final Steps

Once the goals have been agreed to, it will fall to our IPC Swimming staff and the Sports Technical Committee to implement the most critical piece of the solution.

They must:

- Embrace these goals and objectives, and then formulate plans, time frames, check points and actions which will ensure that these targets remain a continual focus in order to promote and improve the sport.
- Develop and publish a cohesive and structured course of action which will benefit the entire sport in a timely and cost efficient manner.
- Periodically report back to the membership on the progress towards achieving the targets which were set.

This will ensure that the scarce resources available are employed effectively and efficiently to achieve the required results in the most efficient manner possible, rather than randomly in the hope that something positive will be achieved.

Success is never accidental. It is envisaged, defined, planned, worked for, and then and above all, accepted only in its pure form with no compromises. Only then it can be taken for granted for just a fleeting moment, before the process starts again.