

What makes for a successful Taekwon-Do Club?

Third Dan Essay

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Introduction

This work is not laid out in a strict report format. I wanted to answer the question of success in Taekwon-Do for myself and for the Tauranga club that I am a member of, without resorting to a format that calls for an objective style of writing, and of course this is also a great topic to help me achieve one of my 3rd Dan syllabus grading requirements. All opinions are my own unless stated otherwise, except for the section on the results of the survey I carried out. I have summarized certain answers for convenience sake, the full answers are given as an attachment at the end of this pseudo report for you to read and come to your own conclusions on.

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Purpose & Basis for this Report

'Why is the Tauranga Club so successful, what are you guys doing down there?'

Mr McPhail asked me this question at my 2nd Dan grading. He was sitting next to my instructor Mr Rimmer and at the time and I felt funny about answering this in front of him. I knew that he wasn't referring just to the clubs size, but afterwards I thought about my answer and thought there was a lot more to it. I did say however that it was mostly due to the instructor, and I still believe this to be so. Mr Rimmer does not believe this however. He is of the opinion that there are lots of things that make for a successful club and I agree with him, but only to a point.

So I thought I would try to answer this question now that I have the time to think about what makes a club successful and is the Tauranga club really successful?

I have read both Mr Pygott's and Mr Carvers works on success in Taekwon-Do. They are both very motivational in content and inspiring in thought. I would like to think my thoughts are complimentary to the work they have already done on how to work towards success. I have looked at it from a slightly differently angle, more to do with how clubs are run, their makeup, advertising, etc rather than personal motivational success.

The many facets of success

There are many ways to define success. Money, fame, recognition from your peers. The Tauranga Club is the Club of the Year and Mr. Rimmer is also the Instructor of the Year. Is this success?

How could it not be.

Recognition from your peers is surely the highest accolade. And after all, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery (old saying, not sure who said it first, but I know my Father said it a lot!).

Then again, do we even need to be successful in our endeavors to consider that we have achieved success, personally or professionally? Some will argue that it is enough just to even start Taekwon-Do, let alone achieve a Black Belt, or become an instructor, or represent NZ overseas. There are very different levels involved.

Bill Cosby the actor holds the record for the longest stay at No 1 for a hardback book ever, he has donated over 20 million to charity and universities across America and has won 3 Emmys and 5 Grammy awards, but he has steadfastly refused to accept them. His reason being that he does not believe that people should be singled out ahead of others, and how can someone be judged to be better than someone else. Who does the judging and what qualifies them? How does the person who came second or was nominated and missed out feel. What is it like to know that while this person or that person keeps doing what they do, I will never be the best, I will never win this award.

Some are pushed to achieve greater, to try harder, while others give up their dreams...

So, awards are not important to him. Mr Cosby says that he simply does what he does because he enjoys it, whether we like it or not or whether his peers like it matters not at all.

If only we could all live up to this standard! But I bet Mr Cosby would chastise me for saying that.

Ok then, what is success?

I think success is a personal thing and can only be measured by how we measure ourselves. To perform a pattern better than the last time you performed it is surely success? In short yes, providing that this is how you measure yourself and of course everyone is different.

We had training the other night, the same as every other Sunday, with different things of course. I performed Eui Am to a class of 50-60 students at Mr Rimmers request after working my way up with the other students from Chong Ji. At the finish of this Mr Rimmer said to me that that was the best he had seen me do a pattern ever.

That single moment was very defining for me, on par with my first Dan grading. Why? Because firstly, I had been more successful with my performance than ever before in my instructors eyes, and secondly because Mr Rimmer does not give praise lightly.

To me, this is personal success. I have tried to emulate Mr Cosby, but I have to admit I like people telling me wow, that's really great. This is, I guess, how I measure myself. How I know that I continue to improve. I doubt I will ever be as good as my instructor is with his patterns, but that does not matter.

So, what makes the Tauranga Club so successful and why do we think we are?

We are only successful if there is some way of measuring a previous level attained with a present or past one. Have I achieved this goal I set, or can I now do something that I previously couldn't. Some way of taking all the different club areas and comparing them to previous levels. (*I am not concerned here with other clubs, nor do I make any comparison to them. I am only going to try to measure what Tauranga has done in the past with what we do now.*)

Is the club bigger than before?	Yes
Are there more black belts than before?	Yes
Do we win more at our regionals?	Yes
Do we win more at the Nationals?	Yes
Is the club better recognized nationally?	Yes
Are club members part of the NZ team?	Yes
Do we have more training gear?	Yes
Is the training venue better than before?	Yes
So, is the standard higher than before?	...Yes

So, what have we changed? When I answered yes to the standard being higher than before, it took me several minutes to write yes. By saying yes, I was saying that either the standard of pupils had increased or that the level of instructing had improved. Which of course led me to ask if the standard of instructing before was sub standard. I know the answer to this question to be an emphatic no, the level of instructing has always been high, so what had changed to add to our previous success levels.

Quite simply, that as an instructor teaches, so he learns. This is what Taekwon-Do teaches.

That an instructor never stops learning and a student never stops teaching.

And no, this is not written the wrong way round. An instructor that understands this I feel then is the most important ingredient in a successful club.

OK then, apart from the instructor, what are the other areas that contribute to a clubs success.

Club Loyalty and Respect

The backing and the loyalty of all club members and non members ie family is vital. There are many false ways to ensure loyalty. Fear, terror, promises of promotion etc. The General talks about these with contempt. Loyalty can be commanded and indeed demanded by an instructor. From a students point of view, it must be given without question, until a reason presents itself for such loyalty to be withdrawn. I know of only one reason for this and that is a loss of respect. Instructors lead from the front. They may not be the best sparer in the club, or the best at patterns. But their combined knowledge in all areas and their ability to teach it demands respect. You cannot learn greatness from an instructor you cannot respect, nor can you be inspired by an instructor that does not show inspiration (this quote is mine, I think!)

So club loyalty and respect for the instructor and all other members is very important, for the atmosphere of the club especially, and I will discuss club atmosphere later.

Club Advertising verses the Humble Toothbrush

Advertising is a big part of growing and maintaining a club, but is this success? Some say yes, others say no. Again this depends on how you measure yourself. Some instructors are very happy with the size of the club they currently teach, while others would like to be a little bigger (see survey results). Even if you are not interested in advertising your club, or perhaps you think that you don't do any advertising, I would like to show you a different way of thinking. All I ask is that you keep an open mind.

There are many areas to advertising, and only a few of them involve spending money. Advertising is simply time spent thinking of great ideas and then using them. Advertising guru's do this all the time, they have a natural bent for thinking of new things, ways, or ideas. They then sell them to you and I and make lots of money. If we take this scenario and turn it into a Taekwon-Do club, we end up with the following.

The words 'Free Advertisement' become 'Instructor, Students and Parents'.
The words 'Money back, or Money back guarantee' become 'Club growth'
And the words 'Product line' or 'Services' become 'Students Ability'

We all know that the best advertising for our club comes from word of mouth. Great word of mouth talk or 'advertising' is the best way to get new members. It not only keeps new students coming in the door but it also tells you that you are doing something, or perhaps everything right.

This is also true in the business world. Product demand will dictate the success or failure rate of the product or service, providing of course it is managed properly. TV shows get cancelled or renewed according to a small percentage of the publics viewing habits. A new product can be a huge success or a big flop. It doesn't have to be a great product at all, in fact the product could

even be stupid, harmful or even dangerous. But with the right kind of advertising, the sky is the limit.

I would like to digress for a little bit to talk about toothbrushes, the connection to Taekwon-Do is not immediately obvious, but there is one there.

Did you know that the humble toothbrush has recently been rewarded with the title of... The Greatest Invention ever?

Not the wheel, not the computer, or the printing press, gunpowder, or even the invention of Taekwon-Do! None of these is as great as the toothbrush. Why I hear you asking. It's obvious if you think about it.

Still can't see why?

The toothbrush is singularly responsible for allowing humans to live past an average life span of 30 yrs. Without this humble and simple invention, we all used to lose our teeth and die during the ice age from starvation. You can't very well chew your Woolly Mammoth bone without teeth, now that's amazing!

So, what does all this have to do with Taekwon-Do?

Let me explain the connection.

Tooth brushes are a wonderful thing to watch being advertised. Once upon a time we used the split end of a willow twig, the natural sap was also the toothpaste. Now look at what we use. But what is really interesting is how the advertising company is able to constantly repackage the manufacturers product. It's almost like manufacturers spend many years developing dozens of advances and release them one at a time when sales begin to slow. And this is in fact what actually happens.

OK OK, so what does this have to do with Taekwon-Do?

Well, simply put, our 'product' has also undergone many changes over the years, but like the trusty toothbrush, it's purpose is exactly the same. It's just the publics perception of it that has changed.

Taekwon-Do was invented by the General, from basic moves he constructed from a variety of sources, as well as improving on existing ones. This is of course an extreme oversimplification, there was also a lot of blood, sweat, and tears as well as a study of physics and philosophy involved. Anyone who has read his memoirs will know what I am talking about. According to him it's purpose is clearly stated in the encyclopedia in that...

The utmost purpose of Taekwon-Do is to prevent fighting by discouraging the strongers oppression of the weaker with a power that must be based on humanity, justice, morality, wisdom, and faith, thus helping to build a better and more peaceful world.

So, while Taekwon-Do's purpose and perception has not changed since it's invention as far as we are concerned, for the public it has, and it's important to understand this if you are going to be advertising yourself and your club. Taekwon-Do is not the only Martial Art out there.

So, lets look at how the perception of martial arts has changed over the years.

The Karate Kid, one, two, three, four, and five!

Bruce Lee had a lot to do with the start of the Martial Arts culture. He was one of the first to start teaching his own special art of Jeet Kune-Do to non Asians, and he paid a high price for it. Of course the General also traveled the world spreading the art of Taekwon-Do rapidly to all cultures, but it was Bruce Lee who popularized martial arts through the movies and TV to the general public. I do not know what might have happened if the General had been able to also spread Taekwon-Do through Hollywood, or indeed if he would have wanted to have anything to do with this idea.

Mr Lee pioneered the way for a later generation to become fascinated with martial arts by showing that the public wanted to see more of this kind of action movie, and because there was money in it Hollywood obliged by introducing a new generation to self defence through a series of 80's movies

Who remembers the Karate Kid, that famous 80's movie starring Ralph Macchio and Pat Norita? I spoke to Mr Rimmer and he informs me that Taekwon-Do went through a little boom session at about the same time this movie came out (and the same for number two, but lets face it, they went overboard with 3,4,and 5). How is this possible when it clearly showed Karate, not Taekwon-Do? I remember the movie well, and it was something that I thought about when I wanted to start a martial art, thank goodness fate interfered and Miss Holmes, Mr Joe, and Miss Joe came to dinner with my then flat mate and the rest, as they say, is history.

This benefiting from others advertising is what I call 'Piggy Back' advertising. One product (Karate) is advertised, however other companies (Read as ITFNZ) products (Read as Taekwon-Do) benefit. This is common in business. You see a 'new' product, lets use the toothbrush again, and you go to the supermarket to buy it. Usually with the rest of the groceries of course. Now what the toothbrush company does is they follow on with their TV advertising by making sure they have their flash new toothbrush prominently displayed. How do other toothbrush manufactures benefit from their competitions costly add campaign. They simply make sure their own flashy toothbrushes are better displayed, and you not being able to remember the exact one, buy the flashier one better displayed. OK, so this doesn't work all the time, but I am sure you can think of at least one occasion when you have found yourself the proverbial product of advertising, and brought that new toothbrush, and this is the key to the whole thing.

In New Zealand, the almighty dollar rules a lot of things. Advertising is designed to get as many people to buy the advertised product or service as possible, thus making more profit for the company.

Is profit the point of Taekwon-Do?

But since when has Taekwon-Do been about having more students, more money, and more profit? When did the change occur that transformed the art of Taekwon-Do into a business for profit company mindset?

Quite simply, it hasn't, at least not in New Zealand. It's just some people's perception that this has occurred.

Is making a profit part of a successful club? Obviously the more students, the easier it is to pay hall fees, buy training gear, and assist members with subsidizing seminars. The more people that walk in through the door will then produce a larger club with lots of members that continues to create more members. This is the proverbial golden spiral of growth, whereby a club or business seemingly grows itself without appearing to be doing anything extra. So from this point of view, profit is part of a successful club.

But this is not how Taekwon-Do is supposed to be!

We teach a martial art for what it is, not what it makes us in financial terms. However it is impossible to teach without some financial spending, even if it's a couple of pads being used on a school field only on sunny days during daylight saving evenings! This is of course absurd, students would not stay long without a suitable venue, and even the General acknowledges that he would not have been able to spread Taekwon-Do so successfully without the cash injections of a few benefactors from time to time (read The General's Memoirs, both volumes). So, money is a factor in Taekwon-Do, and in our culture it will always remain so, at least for the foreseeable future. How much so is up to the individual.

However, money doesn't have to be a factor in advertising. Word of mouth advertising is free. It can be good or bad. The important thing to remember is that it will take approximately 20-30 good reliable first hand reports to equal one 3rd or 4th hand bad one.

What do I mean by this?

If you hear a friend or their acquaintance talking about something they have recent experience of or have heard about being a great thing, it will stay in the back of your mind. Like mine did with the Karate Kid and I then ended up joining Taekwon-Do. We all have experience of this. But it takes only one bad report or experience to put people off for life, and this kind of bad news gossip or rumor spreads a thousand times faster and further than any good news rumor will.

The Water Rats Rafting Company - Taekwon-Do connection?

2 years ago a Dutch tourist lost her life while rafting, a very tragic accident that was widely reported on TV and in many newspapers. The Dominion Newspaper printed a front page story, like many others did, only they attributed the death to a trip organised by the Water Rats Rafting Company, which it was not. The next day they corrected their mistake and retracted their story. But it was too late, the damage was done and Water Rats, the largest rafting company in the country went out of business less than one year later. Currently they are suing the Dominion for compensation, to which the Judge has awarded blame attributing it to the article, but so far no monetary figure.

Again, what does this all have to do with Taekwon-Do?

It means simply that if word of mouth advertising is great for your club, then bad word of mouth advertising could be the death of it.

And here we are again back to you, the instructor!

You are the greatest advertisement for your club, how you conduct yourself, your skill level, your appearance, how you train your students to conduct themselves, and how you speak to your members and their families.

Mr Rimmer is fantastic with the younger members of our club, and he is also an inspiration to the older ones. He uses a teaching style combining fun, enthusiasm, and entertainment. You can't beat this. He has as much time for his elite students as he does for a new beginner, well he at least tries to. With 40-50 students training every night it is hard to see and talk to them all. This is where good club organization comes into effect (See the section on 'The support crew')

A club is only ever as good as it's instructor, and a student, even a talented one, will not realise their true potential under an unenthusiastic instructor.

So, you can start your advertising campaign for growing your club by looking at yourself. How do you talk to parents, do you greet everyone personally or wait for them to come to you, and then wonder why some do and some don't.

There are of course the usual ways of advertising like yellow pages, newspaper adds etc. But they cost money. How much money does it cost to put together a demo team, make it the best you can and then ask your local school if you can 'entertain' the students at lunchtime? If this doesn't bring in some new students, then I don't know what will. OK, so you may find it hard to get time off work, impossible even. But that doesn't mean this is the only way. Speak to your boss about what you are trying to do, invite them along, etc. Some instructors have had success with this, others say it has never worked for them. Perhaps the way the demonstration was done, the venue, time of the day, content, etc can be changed. I suggest if you haven't tried this, have a go, and if you have and it hasn't worked, then look at why it didn't. There is always a reason.

Training venues

The club training venue is very important. While the training venue remains small, so will the club. People cannot train properly if they have to continually take turns to perform patterns or the class has to train outside. Fine in the summer, but not the winter. Sure you can still increase your clubs size, but sooner or later a small hall will become a hindrance. The explosion in the Tauranga clubs growth occurred around the time that the college where we train built a million dollar gym. Coincidence? Perhaps, but I believe that this is another ingredient in the clubs success. Not only do we have one of the largest training venues in the country, but we have 2 other attached gyms as well!

When I visit other clubs I see instructors making do with what they have, and some of them perform minor miracles. It makes me very thankful for the venue we have. We fill our hall every night with between 40 to 50 students. There is a large vinyl separator that pulls across the hall as well for when we want to split the group into two.

We also have the use of the utilities gym. This is a smaller hall measuring about 10mtrs by 25mtrs. And we have the old gym which is about twice the size of the utilities gym. These three halls are attached by a large foyer which we also make use of. This allows us to use up to 5 completely separate training areas to provide specialized instruction or larger group sessions. But wait, there's more. The most amazing thing is that we only pay one small fee for the use of all these separate gyms. How do we do that?

Simple, it's called looking after people. And the most important person in the college for us is the caretaker. His name is Deano. He's a great hulking example of a typical Kiwi bloke. He lives on the college grounds and has been the best thing for our club. Each year we give Deano a present. He gets so embarrassed when he comes to collect it, never stays long.

Deano once asked us to chase some undesirables off the college grounds. Well, not exactly chase them, but to just wander outside and train real close to them. So we did, and off they went. All we ever have to do is ask him if we can train for an extra session and it's never a problem. If Mr Rimmer sees him when he arrives to start training he will always take the time to go and say hello, and he encourages us to do the same. It's made me realise how simple things can be with just a friendly wave.

So, if you want to help yourself expand your club, seek out the caretaker and buy him a beer and just see what happens. How about providing free or reduced training fees for students of the college in return for reduced hall hire fees. We pay a paltry amount for ours. This means that instead of having most of the costs go into the venue hire, that money can be freed up for sparring gear, pads, jackets, etc.

I went through a list of the things the club sponsors and provides for the students, below are some of them:

Club jackets/hoodies	Subsidised
Australia trip 2002.....	Subsidised
End of year breakup	Paid for by the club (all food, etc)
24 hr relay fun event entry fee	Paid for by the club
Food at the 24 hr relay	Paid for by the club
Black Belt Gradings	Subsidised
Regional Tournament entry fees	Paid for by the club
Seminars for students	Paid for by the club
Instructors course for students	Paid for by the club
Techniques seminars for students and instructors	Paid for by the club
Taekwon-Do patterns disk and full set of reference encyclopedias available to students.....	Paid for by the club
Judges and referees seminar travel expenses for students.....	Paid for by the club
Enough complete sparring gear for 15-20 students at a time	Paid for by the club
New belts for students after grading	Paid for by the club
Travel expenses for world junior team members	Subsidised

This is what can be done when a club is large, expenses are kept to a minimum, and all the money is given back to club members.

Another very important reason why our club has large numbers is that there is only one ITF club in Tauranga. This makes us strong. Why split resources into two clubs that would spend all their time paying for hall fees and training gear when one large club can have half the gear of two smaller ones, half the hall fees, but twice the income?

I can see that Tauranga will have another club soon, possibly within the next two years. But there is an unbelievable amount of dedication that comes with running a club, not something to be undertaken lightly. And it would of course be great to have another club closer than Hamilton, our next nearest club. Which brings me to my next topic

The support crew

In a smaller club the instructor does everything. This is in addition to the fulltime job they already have, family commitments etc. There are some very understanding husbands, wives and partners out there.

As the club got bigger it became apparent that Mr Rimmer could no longer do it all himself and as Mr Fitzgerald was also required to teach fulltime Mr Rimmer got together and organised us into kind of a committee. Some people say that committee's are the biggest waste of time this country has. There is also the old saying that goes something like:

“The English dither and nothing gets done, the Australians simply get on with it, but the New Zealanders will always form a committee.” (again, my dad said this one a lot too)

This is so true, as it was for us. We run 2, one and a half hour training sessions a week, as does most of the country. This time is so precious. It should not be wasted on extensive warm-up sessions and cold stretching, or fitness work (and indeed this is what Mr Lowe teaches at his instructors courses). This can be done on the students own time at home or before and after training. We were finding that Mr Rimmer was spending so much time before and after class collecting fees, paying bills, organising events etc that he was spending less and less time teaching.

An Instructor instructs. For them to have to try to do all the other stuff as well places additional strain on them and their family. Some instructors can do this, but when the club gets big, delegation is the only answer. It not only frees up the instructors time, but it allows students to take on new areas of responsibility which not only assists their personal growth and confidence, but allows them to gain valuable experience for when they become instructors themselves.

We have two club secretaries, both of them are parents who do not do Taekwon-Do, but have children that do. Coincidentally, or not, both children are gifted and committed students that enjoy their parents involvement in the club.

The secretaries job share and one of them is always at training to take fees, record enrolments and invoice students. This has relieved great pressure for our instructor. Not only does he not have to worry about who hasn't paid, but students are no longer keeping him at club to pay fees after class. Instead he has time to answer individual questions, or to speak to a student if he needs to, or talk to parents etc

I spoke to Mr Rimmer about parents involvement in the club. He feels it is essential for a club to prosper. Mr Rimmer still takes inquiries from students over the phone, usually through their parents and will sometimes spend 30 minutes or more talking to Mums and Dads about Taekwon-Do. Every new face that walks through our doors is greeted by Mr Rimmer, or if he is busy, by Mr Fitzgerald or a senior student.

Various community and Taekwon-Do projects that the club gets involved in are delegated to senior students to earn credit points and so that the Instructor is not once again doing everything.

It is simply amazing what some families and students do for a job, from doctors to policemen to teachers, electricians, local businessmen and woman. One student works for a printing company and does the newsletter, which is probably the best looking and colourful club newsletter in the country. Another has designed and built a storage box and a breaker board holder for us.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of involving everyone in the club and taking the time to get to know as much as possible the parents of your younger students. Our club has a large number of children. Over 75% of our students are under 16.

Mr Rimmer is famous for his emphasis on a fun and enthusiastic training style. With this many junior students you have to be. There is the usual no nonsense attitude with the training sessions involving the junior students, but there is also a definite sense of entertainment and laughter to go with that. The seniors are also encouraged to follow this style. Juniors are great to teach, but the really young ones need to enjoy what they do with their Taekwon-Do and have fun with it, or they will not stick with it. As they get older they develop an understanding of what they are doing, but the under 10-12's must have that fun and entertaining element or they will not come back.

There are some really great essays by instructors on this subject on the ITF NZ website that I found of great use, in particular those by Mr Atutahi (*Training children*), Mr Walton (*Ways to make training more fun*), Mr Niven (*Understanding the ideals of being a better teacher*), Mr Rimmer (*Instructing a class*), and Mr Kraiger (*Children's motivation and reward program*). Also on the must read list for instructors is the essay by Mr Mantjika (*Significance of social interactions among club members*), many of his points are what has occurred naturally at our club. Remember that these younger students could be Black Belts one day, and seeing a student progress from white belt to black is an immensely satisfying experience.

So, seek out your students parents. Have a club BBQ and talk to each of them about what they do. Network and make connections with these parents and you will be amazed at what you can learn.

I was stunned to find out recently that the Midlands gradings are the only ones where all the students and families stay after the grading and spend time with the examiner, the instructors, and other students, talking over coffee and finger food. Mr Rimmer refers to this time as 'Tea and Tiny Cakes'. It is compulsory for all students to 'bring a plate' and to help out with the money the club contributes. We will usually use this time for a regional meeting as well for those instructors that can make it. Being a spread out region it is impossible to have regular meetings throughout the year and we are in the same boat as the South Island in this. However I imagine that their problem is even greater than ours.

The examiner is also able to talk to parents and students if they wish. When I joined the Tauranga club from Mt Albert club as a red belt, I found this to be a great way of meeting senior students and instructors and making new friends.

New Students

There is a business saying that is appropriate for Taekwon-Do.

“There are only three sources of customers. Those you have, those you don’t have, and those you have had.”

Please don’t get the idea that I think of Taekwon-Do or ITFNZ as a business structure. I don’t. But there are many parallels to consider that we can use. Taekwon-Do is about many things and not just self defense, there is a philosophical side, a moral culture full of respect for other people and oneself, and indeed a way of living your whole life differently if you choose to. If you think about it, this is uncannily like how a business is run, although I wish more business’s would follow Taekwon-Do’s philosophy. Taekwon-Do is not about money, but without some money for training hall fees etc, students would have to train outside, or rely on others generosity. In New Zealand there is no getting away from it. This is in direct contradiction with the philosophy of Taekwon-Do...or is it.

New students fall into the category of customers that you don’t have. Your existing students are obviously those you have, and previous students are those you have had. When a new student walks in the door, they are an opportunity to increase your club size. If you don’t want this to happen then ignore the following!

Someone in the club should be made responsible to greet every new face. They should be a black belt as the uniform commands respect, but if you are the only one, then any senior will do just as well. They should be greeted as soon as they are noticed, just the same as any visiting senior. I personally think the senior should break from the class instruction if they are able and spend a few minutes greeting the newcomer. Children can be greeted before the adult with a simple hello, and then the adult. The reason for this is that a child will not train if they are uncomfortable, or made unwelcome. They will go away with Mum or Dad afterwards and say I don’t want to come here again, so say a simple hello to them. Your uniform and manner will make a lasting impression on them, and also on the parents. Answer any questions from the parents, and make sure you know the fee structure and training times by heart so you don’t give any wrong information. Guaranteed that they will be the first two questions asked, then closely followed by ‘what makes Taekwon-Do different from Karate!’ In answer to this question I always explain that any martial art will teach you self defense, but Taekwon-Do is scientifically designed and philosophically and morally based, and I believe it to be the most ‘powerful’. Depending on the newcomer, I make a point of pointing out a similar aged student and saying how they have been doing, obviously this is easier with a bigger club.

Patterns, sparring, breaking and self defense are the ‘show’ points of Taekwon-Do. We all know that these come from fundamental movements that must be mastered first, but a new student will only see what they ‘could’ be doing if they join. So if you are able, show them some of these by getting some club members up to demonstrate, preferably someone of similar size and age. There is nothing wrong with stopping line work to get a student or two up to demonstrate their pattern to show off to the newcomer. If you are trying to get them to join, then use every means you

have. Most clubs offer a one month free trial period as well, and this is a great idea. That way new students can have a go before Mum or Dad pays out for a uniform, joining fees etc. Make a point as well of explaining your clubs affiliation to ITFNZ and ITF and some of the benefits of belonging to these organizations like Taekwon-Do talk, awesome examiners!, camps, gradings etc.

For past students, there is sometimes something you can do to encourage them back, and sometimes not. Every now and then, see if you can track them down and find out what they are doing now, they might have left for financial reasons and can now afford to come, or they might have been indecisive about rejoining or have matured enough to take on the responsibilities of continuing up in the ranks. I know you are already busy and this suggestion is possibly not practical, but when you hear of a past student that has moved back to town, or someone has seen them...well who knows! Remember that students will leave for reasons real to them or imagined, and there is not always something you can do about it.

As for existing students, they are your best asset. There goes that business mindset coming through again! How many instructors think of their students as an asset. Probably most of them. However I am not talking about a wonderful representative, great example of good instructing asset to the club, that your student might be. I am talking about their potential as a fee paying revenues gathering, walking advertisement. I can hear all the exclams of disgust already. Taekwon-Do is about self defence, not money. It's about teaching a way of life, not advertising. It's about...well you get the message. Yes I know all this and I feel exactly the same way as well. But if we for a minute take a step back and think outside the square, we can see something interesting.

If you want to maintain the size of your club, it's simply common sense to start with retaining those students you already have. This is done through fun and interesting training sessions, great instructing, and a knowledgeable and respected instructor. But if you want to really grow your club and maintain that growth, you must understand how all the different areas relate to each other and one does not work without the other. In the end though, it is your decision through your own actions, whether conscious or unconscious, that will determine what happens to your club, it's size, it's growth, and it's success. Part of this success is the financial resources to pay your club bills, which of course comes from training fees, so yes, money has to be a factor, even if only a small one!

So that's new students for you. They walk in the door because they are interested in what your club can do for them, or they wouldn't be there. So show them what you can do.

Survey results

There were some really wonderful replies to the questions I asked of ITFNZ Instructors. A complete list of all the replies can be seen at the end of this essay. You can of course read all the replies for yourself and come to your own conclusions which may be different from mine, and I would be delighted to hear from anyone that has actually read this far!

For my 2nd Dan grading I also sent a survey to Instructors about how they approached new members. The response back was from my point of view, disappointing. However, I did pick a subject that probably appeared uninteresting and Instructors are busy people. However this time, boy did I get a volume of wordy replies! This says to me that there are a lot of dedicated people out there thinking about what constitutes success, personally, professionally, and in Taekwon-Do.

Question 1: I asked instructors what they personally defined as success in Taekwon-Do?

About half replied that being able to take the Tenants in some form and adhere to them in their personal lives was success for them. This I feel is a direct result of the philosophy behind Taekwon-Do, in that it's far more than just a self defence art. It was interesting to note that I asked what defined success in Taekwon-Do for them personally. I expected to get replies of what they had done and achieved over their years of Taekwon-Do, and a few answers were like this. A lot of answers also included achieving goals they had set. But the overall feeling I got from their answers was that Taekwon-Do really means something to them, something more than a mere personal goal. And this is what being an instructor means, it's not just a job, you don't turn up and be unenthusiastic about what you do. So it seems that the little things constitute success. Just achieving a new goal is success, and watching a student achieve a goal is also success. Just having a club, being an instructor, and getting to training on time is also success!

Question 2: What do you define as your clubs successes eg just being a club, students individual achievements, etc?

With out a doubt, students achieving their goals and the club atmosphere were the winners here. Some instructors also feel that club survivability is a huge success for them. I think this reflects the difficulty some clubs have in finding and retaining members. This is not through poor instructors but due to their environment, large and small town mentalities, students drifting to the bigger centers, other martial arts competition, in fact a whole range of things (see recommendations for assisting smaller isolated clubs). What was notably missing here that is interesting to see is that no one thought their club size was a success. Club atmosphere was mentioned by just about everyone, and having a family feeling too. But not the clubs size. I will talk about the size of a club later, but obviously the size of a club is not related to the success of a club. Students realizing personal goals was definitely thought of as a success. This is again the

sign of a good instructor. Being able to help students achieve a goal is immensely satisfying as I have mentioned before. And this is after all one of the main reasons instructors turn up week after week.

Question 3: What do you think are the elements that make a club successful?

This question was designed to see if I thought the same as the instructors did. The replies were unanimous in their belief that it is the instructor, their relationship with their students and families, and the club atmosphere that are the main elements of a clubs successes, and especially an atmosphere of fun. It seems to me that the further I get into analyzing these replies, the more convinced I am that it is many things that make a club successful (see below for the ‘definitive’ answer!). Success was also defined as just being able to get to training, or just having a club in the first place. This again reinforces how we all think differently as to what success is, and that it can be something small, something big, or many things together.

Question 4: What goals, if any, have you set for your club and yourself this year

Most instructors have set goals for their club for this year, and some have listed goals more personal to themselves. I will leave it for you to read through them all though they mostly concern helping students to achieve their own goals. It is great to see that all the goals I read were realistic and achievable. Setting goals is all very well, but the how to and when to are another thing altogether. How will I achieve my goal, when is the time I will need to start preparing for it. Is it a long term project with many smaller goals, or is it simply getting to training tonight. What resources do I have, what can I get from other people, etc

These are all steps that need to be taken in order to achieve a goal. I have found the best way to do this is to use a goal chart that lists exactly the steps needed to be taken and when they need to be taken. Again I refer you to the works on the ITFNZ site by Mr Pygott and Mr Carver.

It’s all very well for me to sit here and say you need to do this, or that, without actually showing what needs to be done. In fact I don’t need to show this because a goal chart and time table has already been done for you and is freely available on the ITFNZ website. It is called the Black Belt Training Schedule, written by Mr McPhail, and is located on the Black Belt Grading Information and Forms page. I don’t see how anyone can fail their grading if they follow this schedule and adapt it for themselves. At least as far as the physical side of the grading is concerned. The mental aspect is another matter all together.

Question 5: Does your club have a treasurer, or a committee to assist you, or do you do it all yourself?

I thought this question would show that larger clubs used a committee or assistance from other members as I had assumed they would. I cannot see how an instructor can concentrate on teaching and still do the admin work. However quite a few large clubs do manage this, and quite successfully it seems. I did find some relation with the club size compared to the amount of assistance the instructor received, however a few instructors still managed to do everything themselves. Far be it for me to say how a club should be run, however I feel that the more an instructor is freed up to simply instruct, the more that club will benefit. I guess this comes down to how much time an instructor has available to give to their club combined with who is able in their club to take over roles such as treasurer, secretary, etc. See the section above titled 'The Support Crew.'

Question 6: What is the size of your club, what would you like it to be, or are you happy with the way things are?

Not every instructor wants to have a big club. This is not surprising. In fact, some instructors wish their club was a little smaller or at least maintaining the same size. I have been a member of a few different clubs over the years and visited and trained at many more. I have seen the Tauranga club grow from 6-8 students at times to it's current level of 50-60 students. Some instructors said they would rather have fewer students that are more dedicated. This would be ideal I guess. A dedicated student doesn't have to be good at Taekwon-Do, they just have to try their best. Lets face it, a lot of people turn up, think that they are Bruce Lee, reality then sets in and they realise that a huge amount of work and dedication is required, and they are either up to the task or not. Does this mean that you are then unsuccessful as an instructor if you can't keep everyone that starts. Of course not, as I explained in the section on new students, they will often leave for a variety of reasons and there is sometimes nothing you can do about it.

Question 7: What assistance do you think would help you to increase your clubs size, if you would like to, from ITFNZ or any outside organisation.?

This was quite a topic for some instructors with replies ranging from no help at all, to suggestions on what to do and what clubs need. Some of the suggestions include scrapping the bonus system and using the money to subsidize training aids, while another was to scrap the joining fee, as it was seen as a barrier to members joining. A standard brochure was also requested, although I am not sure if this is in addition to the existing one, or some instructors were not aware of it. It does need to be updated though.

One important point that I feel needs to be discussed is the apparent lack of knowledge as to what the marketing committees role is and the direction of marketing in ITFNZ. I get the message that the marketing committee needs to be more visible in what it does, it's role, and how it can assist each club. Each region has a representative, perhaps they could be funded to have more contact with the smaller clubs in their area. I would like to see a report commissioned on each area,

carried out by the marketing representative as to who needs help and what that help might be. (see recommendations section).

Question 8: What does marketing mean to you, and do you do any for your club?

I asked this question to see how instructors felt about advertising and most instructors had a good understanding of what marketing is. In fact some of them had a great understanding. However not many actually followed through with it. This seems to be due to either a lack of time, a lack of knowledge, or they simply don't need or want to market. Of course, without some form of marketing, and I include word of mouth in this topic (see marketing section), your club will never increase in size, which might be ok if that's what you want. However sooner or later all students move away, this is the natural progression of events. We have to remember as well that not all instructors wanted a larger club and didn't relate the size of their club to it's success.

My thoughts on Te Whaariki & Taekwon-Do

So, here we go, this is what I have come to feel about success and the Tauranga Club.

The Tauranga club *is* a successful club I believe, not because of it's size, or the students, or the instructor, or the training venue, the fees, the terrific atmosphere, the outside socialising etc...but because of all these things together.

Maori have a saying for this, 'Te Whaariki', it literally translates as 'The Mat'. Because like a flax mat, our club is the product of different strands coming together to work as one. On their own they are not much, but when they combine together, something wonderful happens.

I believe I have answered the question of why the Tauranga club is so successful. I have given lots of areas that make up a club as well as stating that every ones perception of success is different.

I think we are successful, and that's all that really matters.

Does Mr Rimmer think that the club is successful? I believe he does, but I have deliberately not asked him so that his answer would not colour my own, so I don't really know!

I also believe that there are a lot of other clubs out there that are successful as well. And I base this not only on what I see at other clubs, camps, or tournaments. But also on the replies from the instructors I emailed. (This doesn't mean that if you didn't reply, you are not successful!)

I have read how passionate they are about their club and how enthusiastic they are about what they do and what they have achieved with their club and their students. It is inspiring and makes me want to have a club of my own, something I am aiming for perhaps towards the end of this year.

We are all successful if we keep trying to be the best we can at whatever it is that interests us. You don't have to come first to win, but you do have to enter. The worst thing you can do is to let yourself down.

When you look at it, this is exactly what Taekwon-Do is. I find it an amazingly blinding flash of the obvious that the reasons the Tauranga club is successful are firmly rooted in the art of Taekwon-Do!

Truly, the General was a man of huge insight.

So, how did we send 33 members and families to Australia?

Easy, because we thought it would be fun and didn't see why we couldn't do it. And this how it happened

James Wouldn't it be cool to take the club overseas?

Me Well, why don't we?

James Ok, what about returning the visit the Australians paid to us?

Me How are we going to pay for it?

James Lets not worry about that, lets just do it!

Me Of course!

And this is how it all got started, as near as I can remember. Isn't it funny how really big things can start from something so small, a mere suggestion or a passing thought or conversation can suddenly become a monstrous time consuming beast.

Wouldn't it be cool to take the club overseas? Well, yes it would, but really, how would we do it? Who wants to go? Where and when will we go? Where will we stay? How much will it cost?

All we had was an idea, but sometimes that is all you need. And so the idea was tossed about for a while before being announced at club one night not long after. We decided to go to the Bai Rui tournament for lots of reasons. It was close, there are not too many places closer than Australia. They had visited us earlier in the year and it would be nice to return the visit. There was a tournament to enter, and also the date was a year away which gave us a reasonable amount of time to start fundraising. We plucked a figure of \$1,000 per person out of the air based upon airfares, accommodation, food, traveling and spending expenses (not personal) and felt this was realistic.

James(at club) Wouldn't it be cool to take the club overseas? All those people who are interested please stay after class tonight.

Approximately 45-50 people stayed and said they were interested, nearly all of the club. I was very surprised, but they were all keen to talk about the idea. They asked where, how much, could families come, how long were we going and a hundred other things. So we left them to think about things for a week and arranged a meeting at James and Sandy's house for those that still wanted to come. About 36 people, kids and their families turned up to hear our plan. Which was really great, considering we didn't have one!

As you do, we formed a committee! In reality it consisted only of myself, James, his partner Sandy and my soon to be wife, Melany. There were a few others that helped but most of the work was done by us four. Anyone that has ever organised a tournament or a trip for a large group knows the amount of work involved, so I won't go into details, however we had some lucky

breaks with finding cheap accommodation that was more suited to families with young children. Two of the families that went totaled 1/3 of the total numbers, and mine was one of them!

As far as fundraising went, we really were slack with this. We raised enough to cover uniform costs, a free entry into Movieworld, and the float money for sausage sizzles, car washes etc. Next time we will be more organised and use outside funding that we could of applied for had we known about it.

But whats really amazing is that 33 club members and their families got together, organised, and then went away together for 10 days to Australia without the fundraising. Now that has to say something about the club atmosphere.

However, this has now set a precedent and on the way back from Australia in the plane, this happened:

James Well, where should we go next?

Me Easy, we are all going to the USTF camp in Denver, Colorado, 2004

James You're crazy, all of us?

Me Yep, the whole club...why not?

James Of course!

At the next training session, Mr Rimmer asked the class this question:

James All those people who are interested in traveling to America in 2004 for the USTF camp in Denver, Colorado, please stay after class tonight.

Pretty much the whole club was again interested. We have already got \$5,000 towards the costs. Does this make us successful, well, I will let you be the judge of that.

Recommendations

I think that some of the clubs out there need more support than they are currently receiving. And I think that the best way for this support to arrive would be in the form of a mentor. Someone or a

group of people that could visit those clubs that are smaller and have indicated they would like some help in growing their numbers.

The stripes on tour program could and is being utilized for some of this. Perhaps someone could go with them, or they could spend some of their time talking to instructors about what they have done and ways to do it better, if they are comfortable and experienced enough with this topic. This relates to club management, advertising, etc, not instructing. There are many great instructors in ITFNZ that would be of assistance in offering their management expertise. Or if this was too expensive, what about holding a seminar in each region, conducted by the marketing committee, and available to those instructors that would like the help. The local marketing rep can assist with this. They already know the local problems, lets use them more effectively

Below I have listed in no particular order what I think are the key points in all that I have discussed. Some of them may be useful to you, some may not, this will depend on what you want to do with your club, what size you want it to be, what size it can be given your time, support, training venue and commitment restrictions.

Look at yourself

Reorganize your club seniors

Place people in positions of responsibility and make sure everyone knows

Don't try to do everything yourself

Delegate, delegate, delegate

Know what your students, parents do for a job

Make someone responsible for greeting new students, preferably a BB and make sure the BB knows their stuff (fees, appropriate answers to questions etc) and are polite and responsible, they are your representative and first impressions last

'Show off' to new potential students, make them go 'wow!'

Believe that you can make changes if you want to enough, you know you will not break those boards unless you believe you can do it, this is no different

Form a marketing plan. If you don't know where to start, contact your marketing rep and ask them for help

Use a goal chart, make it a very visual colourful one, and put it somewhere visitors to your house will see it, this will help to keep you honest!

Contact other instructors you think are great at what they do and talk to them, ask their advice, invite them to visit your club, pick their brains

Have an idea about what you want your club to be, and actively work towards this goal

Survey Replies