



Four Ways to Keep Your Competitive Funnel Full



CRUNCH TIME! Something we all anxiously prepare for and are so relieved when it has passed. Yes, we are right in the middle of crunch time. Fall leagues are going on the floor and there is a mad push to fill the openings. How do you develop competitive players for your center? Are you waiting for league and tournament bowlers to walk through the door? Why not take a more proactive approach?

1. *Develop relationships*

People go where they know others. It feels good when people call you by name. I call this a warm fuzzy. It's the feeling you get when you walk through the doors and it feels like you are home with family. It's easy to develop a relationship with league bowlers since they are in the center each week and it's quite easy to look at the monitors and learn their names. This relationship generates loyalty and is part of why competitive bowlers were the first to return to most centers upon reopening from COVID-19. Centers should strive to have this same relationship with social bowlers too. Showing customers they are more than a number is part of a great experience. Make it a point to give every customer that walks through your doors a warm fuzzy!

2. *Provide resources to help them improve and learn*

It's just human nature that people don't want to feel like they aren't good enough or that they aren't knowledgeable enough. Isn't it more fun to participate in things in which you excel or at the very least, that you know enough to enjoy it? Providing tools to help bowlers build their confidence, refine their skills and continue to learn more about the sport is important to the future of competitive bowling for the center.

This starts with having an onsite Pro Shop that is stocked with the latest equipment and an operator that is able to assess the needs of the customer and make recommendations. Many times, Pro shop operators are certified instructors and can serve as the House Pro.

Consider bringing in industry experts to host coaching clinics or hosting clinics to obtain coaching credentials. Plan an educational clinic that helps to better understand what all goes into dressing the lanes, or perhaps hand pick some of your top league bowlers and have them participate in developing the new house shot. Have you ever shown customers how to take tapes and read the results? How about a clinic on keeping score by hand? Bring in an industry expert to work on spare shooting, timing or aspects of the mental game.

Build a youth program and support High School Bowling. Youth are the future and providing resources for this demographic can establish a relationship that will provide a loyal customer for many years.

2. Offer a diverse selection of competitive choices

Centers enjoy a diverse demographic for customers and should offer diversity in the competitive choices offered. The favorite leagues for most proprietors are the traditional 30 – 36 week, prize fund league. These are the bread and butter of centers and an important part of the competitive offering. However, not everyone feels they are good enough to compete in these types of leagues and don't want to join and feel inferior or embarrassed.

Instant gratification leagues or short season, fun leagues are good stepping-stones for more competitive leagues. These types of competition provide a great opportunity to utilize some of the BES X features to level the playing field and provide fun ways to win. For example, turn Lucky Train into the Lucky Dinner Train and give away a restaurant gift card to a lucky winner each game. Winning is based solely on luck so everyone has the same opportunity to win. This is also an opportunity to network and partner with restaurants in the area. Gift cards can be purchased out of the prize fund collected or you can barter with the restaurants for cards in return for advertising on the monitors or bowling vouchers for their employees. This fun format, can be the bridge between social bowlers and traditional league bowlers.

Another way to provide diversification for those looking for competition is offering in house tournaments with various competitive formats. BES X makes it easy to put a new spin on competition with Odd Duck, Even Better, Head Hunter or Last Pin Standing. These games can also be woven into a traditional league that is looking for something more than traditional formats.

Another way to satisfy the competitive bug is to offer fun flash tournaments or sweepers outside of league times. How about a Crazy 8's flash tournament for bowlers to earn a little extra cash? Sign up, pay the fee, knock down 8 or more pins across 10 or 20 lanes (depending on number of participants) to move one lane to the right. Last person standing wins!

3. Center and equipment maintenance

When it comes to competitive bowlers, it is crucial to have stellar center and equipment maintenance. Competitive bowlers expect every piece of equipment to be in great shape, from the ball returns to the oil machine and everything in between. They also expect the building to be well maintained and if something breaks, it is fixed in a timely manner and fixed the proper way, not with duct tape and twist ties. Remember, competitive bowlers feel like family and want their house to be the best and become even more loyal when they can see money put back into the center to better their experience.

4. Invite them

Plain and simple, people do things because people ask them. This goes back to having good communication with customers. How many times have you done something you were not planning on just because a friend asked you?

Have the best fall ever! It's time to focus on new and creative ways to continue grooming competitive bowlers, social bowlers and putting more money in the register.

What are your plans to fill league openings this fall? What creative ways are you using the BES X features? We'd love to hear from you!

Feeling inspired? Start promoting Lucky Dinner Train or a Crazy 8's Flash Tournament with this week's freebies.

[Lucky Dinner Train Social Media Post](#)

[Crazy 8's Social Media Post and Tournament Sign Up Sheet](#)

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