Wisconsin Youth Soccer Association

WYSA Selects LeagueOne Registration Software to Improve Organization, Efficiency, and Meet US Youth Soccer Requirements

Background

For over 30 years, the Wisconsin Youth Soccer Association (WYSA) has been committed to providing the resources and environment to develop Wisconsin youth through soccer. WYSA has approximately 130 affiliated member clubs serving nearly 52,000 players throughout 12 districts of Wisconsin.

Challenge

The sheer size of the WYSA was the primary reason the organization needed to find a comprehensive software solution. Yvonne Bennett, Executive Director of WYSA, explains, "We worked under a self reporting system with our 130+ affiliated clubs. The clubs had the responsibility of collecting fees at the club level, then remitting those fees to the State Association. For a number of reasons, the payments would not always make it to the State Office or they were delayed for months. Our State Association had a difficult task of presenting an accurate view of players and revenues."

The player registration process often started with players filling out hand-written forms and making payment to their local club registrar. From there, the information would be manually entered into a static software program or spreadsheet. The registrar would create a file on a floppy disk and mail it to the State Association Office, along with payment for the players registered by the club or district. That was the process for the majority of clubs. For those not quite as adapted to computer technology, the State might only receive player counts and payment.
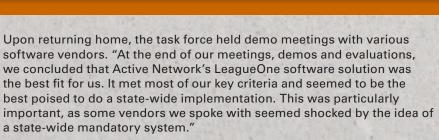
"There was no centralized database – we didn't know who all of our players were," noted Bennett. "Moreover, US Youth Soccer requires the names of all registered players, a requirement we found extremely challenging to meet with our existing registration process."

League/Club Name: Wisconsin Youth Soccer Association
Location: Wisconsin
Contact: Yvonne Bennett, Executive Director
Client Since: 2009
Annual Program Participation: 52,000
www.wiyouthsoccer.com

Solution

WYSA President Peter Mariahazy appointed a task force comprised of staff and volunteers who were representative of registrars throughout the state. The task force was challenged with finding a comprehensive, integrated, flexible solution that would allow them to effectively manage player registration as well as providing a platform for league and team scheduling. The team met a few times in person, and regularly by conference call, to identify and define the organization's needs. After presenting the list of requirements to the Association and incorporating feedback, an RFP was created and disseminated to key industry players.

"We were already familiar with several of the registration software companies," says Bennett. "At the USYSA Workshop in Pittsburgh, we had the opportunity to meet with a handful of these companies, one of which was Active Network."

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Upon returning home, the task force held demo meetings with various software vendors. "At the end of our meetings, demos and evaluations, we concluded that Active Network's LeagueOne software solution was the best fit for us. It met most of our key criteria and seemed to be the best poised to do a state-wide implementation. This was particularly important, as some vendors we spoke with seemed shocked by the idea of a state-wide mandatory system."

Bennett also noted that business ethics and integrity were very important to WYSA and, with Active Network, Sports, the team felt like it was dealing with honorable people. "That's an intangible benefit."

Implementation

WYSA held software training throughout the state with Active in April and May of 2009 in preparation for League One's debut for the 2009-2010 registration.

Bennett notes that WYSA learned early on that some of its business processes may need to change. "While that's never an easy thing to face, it's provided us with an opportunity for good outcomes."

One such example has to do with WYSA policies relative to the movement of players. "With a new registration platform in place, registrars were no longer able to move players in the same manner they did before, sometimes inconsistent with WYSA policy. That has also forced us to re-evaluate some of our policies, a process we are still going through today."

Results

What was once a registration process that consisted largely of paper forms and checks on someone's kitchen counter is now an integrated, organized and efficient registration process where every player is accounted for. "The clubs now have a complete history of their youth players in relation to teams and registrations."

Bennett notes two of the greatest benefits of using the LeagueOne system are the access to a comprehensive player database file and the real-time information on player registration which, as a result, enables the association to process registrations on a more timely basis. Additionally they are able to target message to specific groups of players and families based on demographic data important to the marketing of specific programs and services.

As for the support from Active throughout this process, Bennett says, "We have found that Active Network customer support is pretty darn good. The follow-up after the sale has been responsive to our needs."

"We went into this process knowing that it would not be easy, but we also felt that with the right people and partners in place, we would have a positive outcome. We are absolutely in a better place than we were a year ago."

WYSA's Advice for Organizations Implementing an Integrated Registration Platform:

1. **Look to your end-users.** "We had a diverse workgroup of real users from around the state helping to define the requirements of a new system. Had we not involved those people, the results would have been much more difficult. Our clubs would not have adopted the change so readily."

2. **Understand your needs.** "Involve the right people and recognize the needs of your clubs, leagues and districts before holding demo meetings. Lay it all out and create a list of very specific criteria."

3. **Allow time for change.** "Our implementation schedule got significantly compressed, so we had to make a very aggressive timetable for district and club level training. With any software implementation, it's going to take a bit longer than expected because you're going to re-evaluate everything."

4. **Designate a point person.** "We had one person on the staff that was fully dedicated to this software implementation and the ongoing tweaking necessary throughout this first year. We empowered this person to do what they needed to do. It could've been easy to have too many hands involved, but we were fortunate that our point person had the commitment and took the time to do this right."

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