



FFU604: How to Attract Owners

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Let's face it. You can't read a sports magazine or watch ESPN without seeing some form of fantasy football advertisement. Fantasy Football has become an enormous 'hobby to some, but many people make their living off their league winnings. If you're reading this right now, you have at least tried out fantasy football, whether it be in free online leagues, or playing with friends. But what if you wanted to start your own league? Being in a league as an owner has its rewards, but commissioning your own league with the rules you enforce can both be a pain and a pleasure. I am sure you are wondering how you can gather 10-14 people to join in your dream. It isn't really as hard as you may think. Here are a couple places that might be right under your nose.

The Workplace

Yes, I know. Most workplaces nowadays are cutting down severely on internet access, fantasy football in particular as many companies consider it a form of gambling (not to mention a deviation from actual work). But internet access aside, most men and some women (statistics show that more women are joining the ranks of fantasy owner every year) often use their spare time on Monday and Tuesday (don't forget Monday Night Football) mornings to discuss the previous weekend's games. It's a time honored tradition in most parts. The bragging rights for the people whose team succeeded and the ribbing of the losers. Out of all those people with whom you discuss football, I can almost guarantee that you can find a decent number who would be willing to start up a league with you. Not only does it bring employees closer together on a personal level, but it can also help in team-oriented environments where some people may be shy or find it harder to work with people they don't know very well.

The Family

If your family is like mine, Sundays in the fall are comprised of two things: food and football. The time honored tradition of getting together with family to watch sports on television is something that is passed down from generation to generation. What better way to make those get together's more fun than to set up a fantasy league with your family members. My brother and I have co-commised a league in the past, but just like the holidays this can sometimes be a headache. It has worked out since he is no longer the co-commish. On the other hand, if you do not tend to see certain family members often, getting them together in a league could be as nice way to keep in touch. And it does tend to give you an excuse to visit with those that; otherwise, you probably would never talk to or visit.

Online League Services

Sometimes getting together a group of people you see every day is not that easy. But there is a solution. Many online league services allow a person to start their own league using their rule categories and their easy step-by-step interface. To some, the internet can be a scary place. But if you do run into problems, many of the services offer free support to help you get your league up and running. Once your league is set up, the site will place other solo owners in your league. This depends on what type of rules you will be using and the time and date of your draft. While this option doesn't have the "personal" feel of the first two options, using an online league setup is a good building block for when you finally find the right people for your league.

Message Boards

This option might be good to use with the "Online League Services" as it could help you find people who you maybe not necessarily know on a personal level, but talk to everyday about the goings on of the NFL. Message Boards are a great way to make new friends

and also to recruit people for your startup league. Some fantasy football websites have a special section called "Classifieds", which you can use to post what type of league you are commissioning, the time of the draft, rules, cost, etc. Don't be frustrated if your post doesn't get many replies. Usually you won't get many during the offseason as most people take time off to get away from the hectic and chaotic world of fantasy football. But as we get closer to the regular season, reeling in owners is like shooting fish in a barrel. But I do stress one thing: If you do take this route, I advise you to set some sort of payout system. It's sad to say, but many free leagues lose owners during the season either because their team is losing, or the owner got in so many free leagues, he can't keep track of them all. I will discuss monetary payouts later on in this article.

How to Reel 'Em In

So now that you have a couple options on where to find the owners you need to fill your newly formed league, the next question is: How do I get them to join? It's not as hard as you may think. Many people who watch football are fans of the game and that's it. They don't want to deal with outside inconveniences of having to set lineups, worry about stats, etc. But for as many people who just don't want to do it, there is a bigger group who is thirsting for more than just watching their favorite team on television. Those are the people you want to try to reel in, and here are a few ways you can do just that.

Money Talks

Most people don't want to admit it, but our lives revolve around the all-mighty dollar and ways to make more of it. Offering rewards to owners who join the league will not only be a great way to get them on board, but also to keep them interested throughout the season. Set a price for your league. If you need money to help pay for an online football site, set a certain price everyone has to pay and let them know that a portion of their money is going towards the payment of the site. Many mistakes have been made where a commissioner did not let owners know where the money was going and it has caused major problems in the end. An advisable approach is to put in writing how much is going into the league and how the money will be paid out. Something else to consider is not making your initial league setup fee too high. One thing that will scare potential owners away is throwing out a fee that no one will be willing to pay. Set your sights low in the beginning. And as your league comes together, you can talk about raising the price. Once owners get that taste of what it's like to win, you won't have any problems getting them to spend a bit more each year. And make sure EVERYONE pays upfront. Don't make the mistake of letting someone in who will pay you 'later'. It's almost guaranteed that you will not see this person's money.

For The Love of the Game

While it may take some financial persuasion to get people to join your league, many people are just looking for something to do to escape their otherwise boring lives. Many football fans are always looking for ways to take their love of the game a step further. But be careful. As with many things in life, you have to be wary of whom you pick to be in your league. If a person doesn't show enthusiasm at the beginning of the season, there is a good chance he will either drop out or just not pay attention to what's going on with his team.

The Company of Friends

Businesses rely heavily on "word-of-mouth" when reaching out to potential clients. And running a league is no different. If you have found the perfect owner for your league, tell him to throw out feelers to his friends to see if they would like to join as well. If this particular person is excited about your league, he will likely have a friend or two who are just as enthusiastic. And don't be afraid of mixing in people who don't know each other. It's a great way for people to make new friends and to share in the love for football.

Be Specific

This is a big key to the success of your league. Once you decide you want to start one yourself, don't go out in the world without a game plan. If you try to recruit without a setup structure, no one will take you seriously enough. When you have it set in your head that you want to be a commish, study other leagues. Check out different rules. See what you think would work and what wouldn't. Then take all that information and set it up how you would like your league run. Everything from a point system to how the waiver-wire will work on a weekly basis needs to be written down so the owners can see how things will run all season.

Be a Leader

Don't think that you are going to get this league up and running and then go hide in a hole all season. Uh-Uh. Being a commissioner doesn't work that way. There are always going to be things to deal with on a weekly basis, I can assure you of that. It takes strong determination and you can't back down to anything that is thrown in front of you. There are two ways you can go about settling disputes, or other situations that come with being in a league. You can either take charge yourself or you can have owners vote on a certain matter that arises. Both have their strong points and their weak ones. If you take charge yourself, the matter will get done quickly. But you may also make a few owners mad enough to want to quit your league outright. With a voting procedure, the burden doesn't entirely rest in your hands. The downfall to this is that sometimes it's not easy to get in touch with people before the coming week's games. How you want to deal with such matters is at your discretion. I have personally tried both, and I've had both good results and problems arise, so it all depends on what route you want to take. The one big thing you need to run a league is thick skin, so don't give up when something bad happens. Take it and make it a positive.

Treat People with Respect

It's the Golden Rule people: Treat people how you would like to be treated. If you are enthusiastic about the league, you will have enthusiastic owners. If you act like you just don't want to do it anymore, your league won't last even a full season. If you run into problems with someone, be rational. Don't fly off the handle and talk this particular owner down or cut him outright. If that happens, other owners will see this and not want any part of what you are doing. The big key is to just remain calm and assertive. If you deal with a problem head on and resolve it the way you see fit, no one can blame anyone but themselves. And always be upfront. If you see that you have made a mistake, bring it out in the open and explain yourself. Don't try to hide it. This will cause further problems. And the one thing I can't stress enough: DON'T CHEAT!!!! I can't tell you how many stories I have read where the owner skews rules to help himself. If you do that, you might as well crawl back into that hole because you will have a league of angry owners looking for you.

We hope this information helps you in your journey as a potential commissioner. And don't forget,... enjoy yourself. Yes, running a fantasy league brings out our competitive nature. But if you aren't having a good time in the process, then what's the point?