1. SPORT

A lot of people will play for the fun of it. You’ll never win every game, but you’ve gotta have fun – that’s it. Having fun and making new friends

(15 year old male, Touch player).

The kids enjoy the social side of it, the camaraderie you get in sport… and they develop long-lasting friendships

(Soccer coach)

70% of kids who participate in sport drop out between 13 & 17

62% of kids who play sport indicate they are highly likely to drop out of sport

50% of kids don’t do any sport

25% of the audience claim their PRIMARY motivation to participate in sport was “fun” 12% say “social interaction”

One in six play five+ hours per week of non-competitive sport during summer / one in 11 in winter

One in 10 play five+ hours of sport during summer / one in six during winter

2. SOCIAL CURRENCY AND SPORT

There are three key influences that underpin teenage sports participation:

• Friends and Social Life • Success • Talent.

Sport is not limited to what happens during four quarters, 50 overs or 80 minutes. There is so much more happening on and off the sports field. Friends and active participation in a sporting environment ultimately has the power to enrich teenagers’ social relationships and improve their social skills.

“A lot of my friends played as well, so we actually all saw each other on Saturday mornings. If you wanted to do something on a Saturday you couldn’t really back out ‘cos you were committed to Netball. When you’re at that age it’s very cool – everyone’s playing”

(18 year old female, past Netball player).

“Sport is so cool and you get to know new people”

(18Tracker survey respondent)

3. SPORT IS COOL

“A lot of people will play for the fun of it. You’ll never win every game, but you’ve gotta have fun – that’s it. Having fun and making new friends”

(15 year old male, Touch player).

“The kids enjoy the social side of it, the camaraderie you get in sport… and they develop long-lasting friendships”

(Soccer coach)

Hanging out with friends and listening to music rank as the coolest social activities - 86% say these activities are becoming cool or are the pinnacle of cool.

Non-competitive sports is the third coolest activity (69%)

Sport is ranked as being just as cool as going shopping, using the internet and going to pubs and bars.
Excuses for dropping out of sport

• Sport is no longer important anymore because I can drop it at school
• It’s too time consuming
• Sport is boring
• Sport means I miss out on parties and socialising

Real reasons for dropping out of sport

• Friends have dropped out which breaks up teenagers’ social circles
• Too scared to play because of the threat of injury
• It’s intimidating – being laughed at for lack of ability or making mistakes
• Sport is too competitive
• Seeing unfair play or unsporting conduct

4. Barriers to Sports Participation

“The main reason [I dropped out] was I wasn’t getting any work done and I decided to concentrate more on studies…. It was always after school and it went on for two or three hours and I’d get home at like 7pm and I’d be all dirty and muddy, have a shower, eat dinner and then go to sleep. I had no time”

(19 year old female, past Touch player)

The reason I quit Cricket was that you spend your whole Saturday playing. Sometimes there is boredom and repetitiveness, training can be a bitch and also if I’m not very good at that particular sport it makes me want to quit or not participate”

(18tracker survey respondent)

5. Competition

The single most common attribute associated with Sport is ‘competitive’ (97%). The second is “something you do while at school” (79%).

Attributes least associated with sports are ‘can do even if not talented’ (19%) and ‘can do whenever I want’ (16%).

Non-competitive sports on the other hand had a ‘can do at any age’ and ‘cool’ attributes associated with them.

“I do realise that it’s quite competitive. You get a bit nervous because you don’t want to lose because everyone would be angry with you ‘cos you’d let the ball go past. But most of the time you’re just there to try and enjoy it”

(14 year old respondent, Touch player).

“When you’re young there’s heaps of teams that you can get into but as you get older it slowly fades out and there’s just less and less teams and to get into them you have to be like highly competitive to even find a team to play in”

(Teenage sports focus group participant).
6. Non-Competitive Sport

Non-competitive sport is rated as cool and second only to hanging out with mates and listening to music.

Having a go at sport creates a sense of inclusiveness and belonging.

The rules in non-competitive sport can be changed to suit the participants and environment to ensure everyone can ‘play’ and that no one is excluded.

Being social is the key ingredient of ALL non-competitive sport. Even structured ‘social’ teams would potentially classify themselves as non-competitive because for some the goal is not to win the game but rather a chance to get together, do the best they can and ultimately have ‘fun’.

7. Professionalism

“Kids are drawn to good organisation. In a world where the ground moves beneath them on a constant basis, it’s enjoyable for them to be part of something that’s organised and structured”

(Alec Astle – Cricket, Development Manager).

“Bad coaches are coaches that are negative and don’t know how to relate to you”

(18tracker survey respondent)

Professionalism is about the organisation, facilitation and supervision of sports that directly or indirectly encourages teenagers to play sport in a positive way.

Coaches who encourage and show their players respect provide the best results.

Good organisation is an absolute critical key to maintaining participation – kids who witness disorganised events and training can walk away from sport.

8. Parents

Cricket’s ‘Have a Go – be a coach program’ provides a successful case study of how to get parents involved. “In 6 years we have had 10,000 Mums and Dads become Have a Go coaches...Learning skills keeps you in the sport both from the kid’s perspective and the parents’ perspective.... It’s about developing the link between parents and playing.”

(Alec Astle – Cricket, Development Manager).

Some parents view sport as a vehicle that improves life skills such as team work, communication, discipline and general social skills. Accordingly they fully support the child with time commitments, travel assistance, financial support and encouragement.

However, as the child becomes a teenager or young adult, parental support and encouragement shifts from sport to part-time work as the next step in development and independence begins.

Parents often view the coach as the key influencer in generating successful participation.

PARENTS are the key influencer. If a parent is into sport as a participant or fan, then the likelihood of drop out decreases significantly.
9. Communication

Opening the channels of communication between coaches and their teams is vital for ensuring teenage sports participation is a POSITIVE experience for all involved.

Communication between coaches and their teams must follow an interactive model where all parties listen to each other.

Respect and understanding can be facilitated when the right kind of language is used by participants in the school sports system.

Don’t single out one person, talk to the whole team.

“Don’t tell them they’re wrong, it kills them. Never abuse your players in your team – never abuse them. Yell but you’ve got to yell positive. Yell encouragement – don’t yell because they stuffed up”

(Netball Coach)

“You want a coach that will take advice from you as well – he might not know everything but you might be able to give him some pointers”

(17 year old male Cricket player)

10. Leave School, Leave Sport

“One of my goals is to increase club contact because you do want the kids to carry on and maintain sport after they’ve left but a lot of them just don’t know who to approach, where to go and what to do”

(P.E. Teacher, Lynfield College).

Teenagers’ sports participation is again threatened when they leave high school.

Trying to find somewhere to play sport in the post-school world can be difficult or seen as too hard and this threatens teenagers’ sports participation as young adults.

OTHER STRATEGIES

• Standardisation of treatment and conditions across ALL teams regardless of skill level.

• Increase support of social leagues amongst teenagers, especially 15 – 19 year olds.

• Parental involvement must be facilitated from coaches talking on the pitch to parent only evenings to parent coaching sessions.

• Recognise and support teenagers’ who don’t want to be in the top team yet still want to participate.

• Encourage schools, codes and clubs to develop databases of players and share them thus creating an easy transition in the post-school arena.

• Encourage text messaging, regularly update sports websites with results and encourage youth ‘ownership’ through blogs, pictures, etc.

• Keep mates together – outside the top 20% of participants, sport is a social vehicle as much as it is a physical vehicle.