

Keeping Barlow Bowling Alive

I believe I have demonstrated my leadership at Joel Barlow chiefly through captaining its CIBL Bowling Team. As one of its captains, I have worked hard to take all the steps necessary to help the team continue for another year and run smoothly, namely communicating with important contacts by the necessary deadlines and recruiting enough members to keep the team functional. I believe that leading the Barlow Bowling team has benefited the Barlow community by developing teamwork and coordination in a competitive but fun manner.

From my experience as being co-captain of the team last year (along with Noah Sobel), I have learned that communication, with the team and with the people necessary to make the team run, trumps any skill necessary to leadership. A leader who knows who to talk to to get his team running is the best leader. The combination of actively communicating with appropriate connections and the ability to make deadlines demonstrates a responsible leader. While I believe that there is no way to quantify leadership, I have described several major contributions I have made to the bowling team last year and what communications were necessary.

1. The first necessary communication was gathering all of the logistical data about the bowling league. Early in November I contacted Mr. Tom Smith, our club advisor, and our direct link to the CIBL bowling program at our local bowling center, Nutmeg Bowl. He got us the information about the league (which began the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, met Tuesdays and Thursdays for eleven weeks, was six dollars a meet per person per week, etc.) that I could then dispense to fellow teammates.
2. After receiving information about the league, it was time to recruit members! Barlow Bowling has historically not been very well known at the school. It's not uncommon that students respond, "We have a bowling team?" when they are asked about their interest in the bowling league, and our team comprised only five people for the previous two years, barely enough to participate in the league. Last year we only had two returning members, so we needed to recruit at least three more bowlers. I was in charge of creating flyers, of which I created several designs with the information given to us by Mr. Smith. Unfortunately, I only began this in November of last year, a mistake I will be sure not to repeat this year. The scheduling of meeting with administration and having the poster reviewed and corrected took two weeks, so that I was not able to get the final draft signed by Dr. Pin to be distributed. Nonetheless, I actively recruited members, mostly within my classes. In the end, we had fifteen members signed up for the team, a great improvement over the year before and enough to fuel a JV team as well as Varsity.
3. In the days prior to the start of the league, Mr. Smith and I also took the opportunity to meet with Mrs. Bender and Mrs. McTague to negotiate terms of funding from the school, which the bowling team had never previously received. We learned that the CIAC considered bowling an intramural sport, and therefore we could only receive money from the more meager intramural sports fund. While we couldn't get funding for bus transportation, we managed to work out a deal that would convenience us by paying for our six dollar weekly game fee. If we hadn't asked, bowling would be less accessible or at least less appealing for future recruits.
4. In the meantime, we also asked that Barlow Bowling be considered a school club, which the administrators did for us. This would give us a spot on the Barlow activity period sheet and in the Activity Fair at the beginning of every school year, both of which would improve awareness of the team amongst Barlow students.

5. While administration gave us the funding to pay match day fees, there was still the question of transportation. Buses were far too expensive, unless we began a booster club. We considered Uber, but that would also exact extra tolls. We ended up working out carpooling as we had done previous years by making sure everyone who was going to a match had a ride from the designated driver. In the end, we mainly coordinated transportation between Noah's parents and my own to drive us on their time off of work, since very few of our teammates could drive themselves.
6. By the time we began the season, we were without our coach. A gentle reminder to our coach—a local resident and the parent of a Barlow alum, Coach Tim West—was all it took to arrange his coaching for our team. He added value to our team instantly, teaching the fundamental skills that I had tried to fill in his absence in the first two weeks.
7. The final hurdle in setting up the bowling team was team apparel. We had ordered uniforms two years prior, with a design created by the previous captain. The problem was that my communication with him was limited and late. By the time that I had finally acquired the details of his earlier order and begun taking uniform orders late in December, it was mid-season. After requesting proofs of the uniforms multiple times before getting it right, it took until mid-February—almost the end-of-season tournament date—before the uniforms arrived. This procrastination and lack of quick, easy communication inconvenienced the team, but we still got uniforms to everyone that wanted one.
8. As with any team, we were also in need of day-to-day communication. We used a Facebook group and an SMS group chat to meet this end. Snow day league cancellations, illnesses, carpooling volunteers, and other events were reported on Facebook or the group chat to the team. Because of the popularity of text messaging and social media, this made communication with the team members very simple. It allowed quick decisions such as canceling the week's game and practice days during semester one finals week because of mounting stress, or changing up the driver due to some unforeseen work schedule change.
9. A little bonus I wanted to contribute to the team was a tool to track and automatically calculate the next week's varsity positions based on scores from previous weeks. I created a website (barlowbowling.github.io) that allowed bowlers to easily view their individual progress, as well as the team's overall progression. It included features such as score prediction and determining who improved the quickest. I hope this website can be my legacy to the team, a simple tool to make storing, viewing and analyzing the bowlers' scores convenient.
10. Cheering the team on! Bowling can get frustrating outside of a birthday-party environment, and Noah and I never underestimated the power of positive encouragement and staying optimistic.

It took so many steps to set a clear foundation for Barlow Bowling this year. It is a process of meeting with the right people at the right time to promote a certain cause. I believe the cause of bowling at Barlow is to encourage the active but social activity of bowling, which enhances fine motor skill, discipline, coordination, and builds teamwork — an interesting sport for those with the interest or aptitude for it. I tried to make that experience as memorable as possible last year. While I did procrastinate occasionally (i.e., with flyers and uniforms), I tried my best to vitalize the bowling team that had been losing steam in the previous two years. I believe that my experience in managing Barlow Bowling fulfills the leadership component of, and makes me a viable candidate for, becoming a National Honor Society member.