

League Bowler Development System

Planning



Prepared by
The BPAA League Development Committee

Introduction

The League Bowler Development system provides bowling center owners, operators, managers and other personnel with fast and efficient guidance on the development and retention of league bowlers.

This system will provide you with the tools and techniques necessary to meet your league goals, regardless of the season.

No matter how much or how little skill you have in league development, the guidance in this system will make you a better, more proficient and more confident bowling center owner, operator or manager.

Why Do You Need This System Now?

In the past quarter of a century, America's appetite for entertainment has grown, expanded and become more diverse. Consumers want the latest and greatest, the newest and fastest and they want it now.

As a result of these changing lifestyles and demographic movements, the demand for league bowling participation, especially for traditional 30+ weeks has decreased, making the job of developing new and retaining existing customers even more challenging.

In an effort to get you plugged in to new and exciting ways to build leagues as well as tricks, tips and secrets, this **League Bowler Development System has been designed as a reference tool**, a tool that we believe is even more important than ever and is organized in a way that allows you to choose the topics and utilize the sections most relevant to your current business situation. You will find that the information is well organized and easy to find.

Planning Your League Bowler Development System

In This Chapter

- ✓ The Concept Of Planning
- ✓ The Three (3) Cycle League Planning Guide
- ✓ What is Your League Inventory?
- ✓ How to Match Day Parts To Specific Target Audiences
- ✓ Setting Goals For The Cycle
- ✓ Developing and Implementing Your Action Plan
- ✓ Tracking Your Implementation Progress
- ✓ Planning Tools
 - Lane Availability Chart
 - Team Commitment Forms, Contract Forms
 - League Tracking Forms
 - Condition Red Forms

In the Planning section of the system, you will learn to develop a plan for your league business. We'll guide you through the process and show you some ways to get you to think strategically and tactically.



A strategy tells you HOW you are going to meet your league development goals while a tactic tells you WHAT you are going to do.

An example of a strategy:

“Reduce dropout percentage from 28% this past year to less than 15% this upcoming season by creating an incentive program that targets existing league bowlers and staff.

An example of a tactic:

Create a direct mail campaign and in-house flyer that targets both league bowlers and staff with an offer/incentive of \$50 per NEW bowler that joins a traditional league in September.

✓ **The Concept of Planning**

In the planning process, after you decide on your quantitative goals, you will then decide on what strategies you will implement and then what tactics you will use to support the strategies. You will follow that up with timetables for implementation, assignments of responsibilities and budgets assigned to specific projects to get the job done.

✓ **The League Planning Cycle**

Similar to other businesses, the retail bowling business is subject to seasonal shifts in demand. And because it is an indoor activity, it is in greater demand in the colder months and of lesser demand in the warmer months in most parts of the country. However, in more temperate climates like California and Florida, seasonal shifts in demand for the product may not be as steep as in colder climates.

Our business can be divided into three unique cycles – the characteristics of each are defined below.

Characteristics of Cycle 1: September 1st to December 31st (on the left in Exhibit 1.1 below)

- Demand growing
- Supply stagnant
- Price should be increasing
- Decreasing competition from outdoor activities
- Traditional league formation opportunities...key foundation
- Open play “get a running start” with new programs
- Nontraditional league programs can influence new users and create new revenue
- Holiday availability is high for special events

Characteristics of Cycle 2: January 1st to April 30th (the middle section in Exhibit 1.1 below)

- Demand at its highest
- Supply stagnant
- Price increasing
- Outdoor activities in very cold climates increasing, but in most of country decreasing until “spring.”
- Mid-season leagues have greatest demand, especially for adult/child programs and young adults 21 to 34 yrs. old
- Greatest ability to generate more data base names from increased open play traffic as a source for new short season league bowlers

Characteristics of Cycle 3: May 1st to August 31st (the right section in Exhibit 1.1 below)

- Demand declining
- Summer outdoor competition growing
- Demand decreasing for “indoor” activities
- Opportunity to experiment with new products and programs against “people who don’t know they are not supposed to bowl in the summer.”
- Supply constant
- Price “adjusting”
- Opportunity for new people to come into center
 - More availability

Exhibit 1.1 Typical Three-Cycle “Northern” Bowling Business

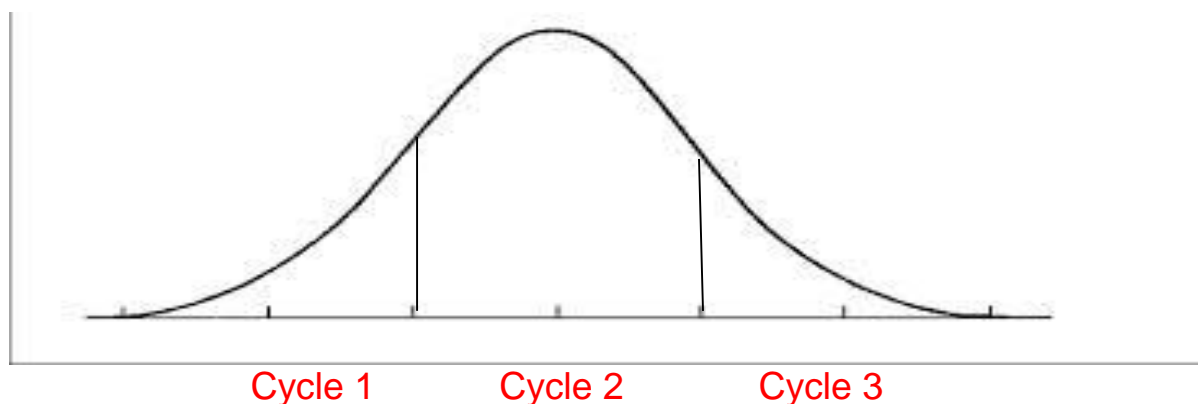
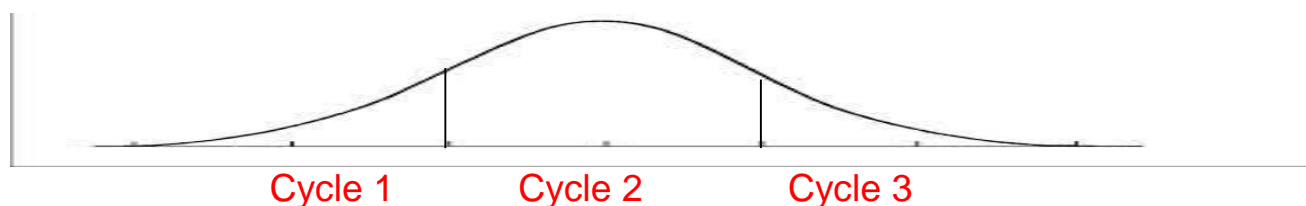


Exhibit 1.1A Typical Three-Cycle “Sun Belt or Southwest” Bowling Business



As you can see, the northern bell shaped curve displays more volume in the second cycle in proportion to cycle 1 and cycle 3; but for those centers that are in moderate to warm climates with little seasonal changes, the relationship between cycles is less severe. Nevertheless, the cycle characteristics may remain the same, but their intensity will vary.

In fact, in some climate areas, the heat of the summer and the frequency of rain during the May to August cycle may make the third cycle more appealing for indoor activities and thus, you will have to adjust your marketing strategy for your specific location and decide where your three cycles actually fall. Also, centers in “heavy tourist” areas may find the summer a better and more productive cycle than the winter and vice versa (consider competitive activities such as the beach and the ski slopes).

Most businesses have historical data

This type of data provides the owner or manager with information on past performance for a specific cycle or for an annual plan (which is merely the cumulative number or result of the performance of the three cycles). If you are a new owner or operator, it is possible that past league bowler data is not available.



If past league bowler data is not available, you can use the BPAA’s program called Customer Connect™ to get the names, addresses and phone numbers of your league bowlers going back 3 years. For more details, please refer to the Marketing chapter of the League Bowler Development System.

If you do have league data on hand, complete this form to see the trend of your league bowlers.



The best way to get accurate counts is to add your total league lineage from Labor Day to the last week of the season, divide that number by the number of total weeks in the season (32? 34? 35? etc.) and then divide that number by 3 games. That is now your official league bowler count.

For example: 160,000 games/32 weeks = 5,000 league games per week/ 3 games = 1,666 OFFICIAL league bowlers AT YOUR CENTER.

Exhibit 1.2 Historical Synopses of Fall and Winter Bowlers

Type of league	% Change Year over Year	Fall/Winter This Season Projected	% change Year over Year	Fall/Winter Previous Year	% Change Year over Year	Fall/Winter Two Years Ago	Fall/Winter Three Years Ago
Men							
Ladies							
Mixed							
Children							
Adult/Child							
Seniors							
TOTAL							

Before you can set up your projected goals, you have to make some assumptions which means **that you have to ask questions.**

Exhibit 1.3 Assumptions List and Questions

- ✓ Is the population in my market growing, declining or staying about the same?

- ✓ What is the median household income of my market? Is it growing, declining or staying the same?

- ✓ Is there any new competition (bowling, movies, theme parks, water parks, etc.) moving into my market?

- ✓ Are businesses, companies, plants opening or closing or staying about the same?

- ✓ Are any bowling centers in my market closing?

- ✓ Do I know today, if I have any leagues, teams or individuals that are NOT planning to return this season? How many?

- ✓ Do I know how many league bowlers dropped out last year from the proceeding season? And for the season before that? It is not unusual for a center to lose 20% PLUS of its league base season to season due to lifestyle changes as well as other economic and health factors.

- ✓ When I examine all of these factors above, would I assume that I would be even to last year, below last year or up to last year? WHY?



Demographic reports for your market area are available through the BPAA as a membership benefit. Contact the BPAA for more details.

✓ **What Is Your League Inventory?**

What do you have available to sell? In this section, we are going to develop an inventory system so you can see exactly what you have to sell during a particular time period. The chart below is a lane availability chart and it will very quickly show you what you sold last year and what you MIGHT have to sell this year.

Here’s what we mean by “might.” Let’s assume that last cycle 1; you had 16 lanes of league in your 24 lane center going on Wednesday night from 6:30pm until 10pm. This year, you already know that two teams are not coming back, therefore you are down to 14 teams and you MIGHT have 10 lanes in inventory (not the 8 from last year).

Exhibit 1.4 League Bowling Lane Availability Chart for Cycle 1 – Example (describe how many OPEN lanes you have for sale for your 24 lane center)

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
9a to noon	12	18	12	24	12	16	24
Noon to 3pm	18	12	16	8	24	16	24
3pm to 6pm	12	12	12	12	12	24	24
6pm to 9pm	6	12	10	4	4	6	16
9pm to close	18	16	24	12	24	24	24

Based upon this example lane availability chart, it appears that we have some “low hanging fruit” on Tuesdays and Sundays for league development between 6pm and 9pm. We also have an opportunity to increase our junior bowler count on Saturdays because we only have 8 lanes of youth bowling going.

Exhibit 1.5 Example Priority List for Cycle 1 League Bowler Development

Priority	Day Part	Who is Responsible
Priority #1 September	Expand 6 to 9pm league on Monday	Lou Ann
Priority #2 September	Expand 6 to 9pm league on Wednesday	Earnestine
Priority #3 October	Increase Junior bowlers	Jethro
Priority #4 October	Build new 8 to 12 week league Tuesday at 6:30pm	Homer
Priority #5 Late September/ early October	Build new 8 to 12 week league Sunday at 6pm	Jethro



As you can see in the above example, we have **decided to floor ALL OF OUR EXISTING leagues in September and put 100% of our focus on bringing them back BEFORE GOING after NEW LEAGUE BOWLER DEVELOPMENT IN OCTOBER.**

✓ Matching Day Parts To Specific Targets

Every day part has a target audience that best fits the time slot based upon lifestyle and demographics. Below is a cheat sheet to help you quickly identify the different target markets for your products. No doubt, you will be able to add to these targets based on your particular area, but here's a "kick start" for you.

Exhibit 1.6 Cheat Sheet for Target Market Identification

DAY PART	POTENTIAL TARGETS
9am to Noon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Seniors ✓ Senior Dropouts ✓ Policemen, Firemen, EMS ✓ Stay at Home Moms/Dads ✓ Empty Nesters ✓ Shift Workers (shifts ending between 7am and 9 am) ✓ School Bus Drivers ✓ Security Guards ✓ Day Cares ✓ Pre Schools
Noon to 3pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Day Cares ✓ Pre Schools ✓ Shift Workers ✓ Seniors ✓ Senior Dropouts ✓ Kindergartens & Moms/Dads
3p to 6p	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Shift Workers, Construction/Blue Collar (shifts end at 3:30 or 4pm) ✓ Policemen; Firemen EMS ✓ Government Employees ✓ Hospital Nurses, Maintenance and Administrative Employees ✓ School Teachers ✓ School Bus Drivers ✓ Restaurant Shift Employees ✓ Car Mechanics, Body Shops
6p to 9pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Office ✓ Retail ✓ Banks, Insurance, Financial Institutions ✓ Dropout Bowlers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Existing League Bowlers ✓ Targeted Open Play Bowlers (depending on program) ✓ Small Businesses (with less than 10 employees)
9p to Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Restaurant and Bar ✓ Shift Workers ✓ 18 to 34 Yr. Old Singles ✓ Policemen, Firemen, EMS

The aforementioned is only a sample of targets, but as you come across new targets, be sure to write them down and add them to this list.

So far, you have completed the following:

- ✓ The Concept Of Planning
- ✓ League Planning Cycle
- ✓ What is Your League Inventory?
- ✓ How to Match Day Parts To Specific Target Audiences

Now we can move on to:

✓ **Setting Goals for the Cycle**

We are using Cycle 1 in the example below. This part of the planning process requires creativity in order to develop programs that have specific benefits for your target group.

Exhibit 1.7 is your goal vs. actual sheet. On this form you will mark down the programs you are going to offer; when they will start and the goals of the program. After the programs start, you will go back to this form and write in the actual number of bowlers.



At this point, you will want to review the priorities established in Exhibit 1.5 (Setting Cycle Priorities) TO ESTABLISH YOUR GOALS.

During this process, it may be necessary at times to establish goals and then work out the strategies and tactics to get there.

It's kind of like saying, "I want to be in Los Angeles at 5:30pm on Saturday. That's an objective. The strategy choices are to: fly, take a bus or train or drive. If you choose "fly" as a strategy, you have certain tactics you need to implement such as: going on line to find flight schedules and fares, finding best schedule and fare, reserving your seat, selecting your seat, paying for the ticket and printing out your E- ticket.

In this case, you will be setting up your goals, and similar to the analogy above, write your action plan after developing the Goal vs. Actual sheet

Exhibit 1.7 Goals vs. Actual Sheet Example

Program name	Start date	Program type	Goal	Actual
League Bowler Incentive program to expand existing league		Traditional league incentive - \$25 per new bowler	Add 4 teams (16 bowlers)	
League Bowler Incentive program to expand existing league		Traditional league incentive- - \$25 per new bowler	Add 4 teams (16 bowlers)	
Junior have a ball programs		12 weeks	8 teams of 4 at 10 am (32 bowlers)	
10-week company "league of your own"		10 weeks or 20 weeks every other week (TBD by research with companies)	8 teams of 4 (32 bowlers)	
\$8 bucks for 8 weeks have a		8 weeks	8 teams of 4 (32 bowlers)	

ball and instructions				
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✓ **Developing and Implementing Your Action Plan**

In this stage you take your knowledge, research, staff's input and write down what you will specifically do as a TEAM to achieve the center's league goals. At this point, your marketing plan comes together and action items are established in order to implement your plan. Utilize the following Action Plan Checklist (Exhibit 1.8) to guide your team through the process.

Exhibit 1.8 Action Plan Checklist - Variables YOU MUST Include To Achieve Your League Goals

What	Who	By When
Name of program		
Start date and length of program		
Target market		
Decide on most important benefits of league for prospective customer		
Write and design flyer using benefit in the headline		
Include 1 st week guarantee on all offers in flyer and all social media vehicles		
Approve flyer		
Write and design a series of Facebook posts		
Write and design a series of emails		
Develop a YouTube video to include in your email, on your website		

or as a link in your Facebook post		
If you have a blog, write some content and find people to provide you with testimonials for use in your blog campaign		
Write press releases to be sent to websites that are specific to your target market (i.e. adult /child program- send press release to Mommy blogger sites and join their Facebook page)		
Create in-center POS displays for overhead monitors, banners or posters (22 x 28)		
Train staff on program and create an "FAQ" (Frequently Asked Question) sheet to provide them with all details necessary for speaking with prospects		
If your program involves a premium such as a bowling ball, all sport jackets, skate boards, etc., have the item on display near or close to the customer service area		

Make sure flyers are placed in settee areas every day and in a customer rack by the entrance		
Decide on using direct mail, target audience, size of postcard, letter, offer, action required, timing, graphics, copy, approval		
Email to existing database of customers that have opted in to receiving email communications from your center		
Telemarketing follow up		
Free parties or incentives offered to get prospects to come to the center for their first visit		
Outside sales program What will objective of program be?		
Anything else?		

As you can see we have developed a pretty exhaustive list of action items that you can use, **but we left off traditional broadcast media like TV and radio and even newspaper.** This type of media should be used to drive traffic into the center for an event to set up a selling situation about your league, but NOT for the league itself.

✓ **Tracking Your Implementation Progress**

So far, you have completed your action steps and now these tasks must be monitored for quality of the work, meeting completion dates and accuracy to the plan.

After your initial staff meeting, all employees should walk away clearly understanding what is expected, and you must now be able to hold your employees responsible for deadlines and sign up goals. Thus, your monitoring process must be bullet proof. We have several ways to monitor this process.

Create a league sign up chart (Exhibit 1.9) and display it in an employee-only area of your center. Use the chart to monitor individual and team progress against the weekly sign-up goals.

Exhibit 1.9 The Daily League Sign Up Chart.

Week Ending: _____

Weekly Sign-up Goal: _____

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total
Goal set by day								
Employee Name								
Employee Name								
Employee Name								
Employee Name								
Employee Name								
Employee Name								
Employee Name								
Employee Name								
Employee Name								

We know from experience that not everyone who signs up for a bowling league shows up. In fact upwards of 20% of people who say “yes sign me up” never show up. Thus, watching this chart on a daily basis lets you know how many sign ups you have and...how many more you have to go.

Worst case scenario is that you have TOO MANY bowlers and will have to start a new league. 😊



By making sure that you have at least 20% more sign ups than goal, you should meet your goal. If your goal is 1,000 league bowlers, you will need at least 1,200 sign ups.

The next control device you have is what we call a “war room.” For each league you are going to put on the floor, you will make a folder with the title of the league. Staple the following sheet on the outside cover of the league folder.

Exhibit 2.0 League Names, Call Back and Sign Up Status

League Name _____ Start Day and Date _____
 Time _____ GOAL _____

Bowler's Name	Phone Number	Email	Caller's Name	1 st Contact Date	Result	2 nd Contact Date	Result	3 rd Contact Date	Result

Inside of each league folder, place all paper sign-up forms, notes about people who call on the phone, hand in names on scrap pieces of paper, etc. On the inside flap of this folder, you will write the name of the league secretary along with all pertinent contact information.



It will be your job OR YOUR MANAGER’S JOB to contact this person at least once a week to find out status of any calls she or he has made or will be making.

These folders will be kept in your “WAR ROOM”, a designated secure area where employees can write the name of the new sign up and put any other information in there as well as updating the league sign-up chart in Exhibit 1.9 which will be “blown up” and laminated and posted on the wall of the war room for all to see every day.



As part of your action plan, your shift supervisor needs to conduct a FIVE MINUTE meeting with all employees to tell them the sign up goal for the night and whether there is a league that really needs some “pushing” and in order to meet that sign up goal.

It is vitally important that your employees know how to match the product to the market. For example, if a family of four or five people comes in on a Saturday to bowl and there is a mom AND a dad present you could approach them about three different products.

Do you know what they could be?

1. Adult/child program
2. Children’s league or kids have a ball
3. Parents-only fun night every week or every other week

You would then approach this group, introduce yourself, ask them how they are doing, if you can get anything for them, and then ask if they have ever bowled in an organized program before. (Be sure to bring the three flyers referencing these programs as you go down to the lanes to speak to them)

Several additional examples of appropriately matching your casual guests to leagues:

- **Whenever you host a company party**, it’s your opportunity to speak to the organizer of the event and talk about “a league of your own”, specifically a company league that might meet every other week with 4 on a team. It would be important to point out that the same people do NOT have to bowl each session. Different people can fill in if one team member cannot make it. What you are selling to the organizer is
 - A continuation of team camaraderie
 - Low commitment; won’t interfere with work

- Short season 10 to 12 sessions
- Spirit of achievement and competition
- **Two couples walk in; late 20's early 30 somethings.** You don't know if they're married, engaged, just dating or if this is a 1st or 2nd date.
 - What you want to find out is if they have ever bowled in a league before; if they have equipment or do they know how to bowl (visual observation) will tell you that.
 - Most likely this group will come to the center later; (probably after 9pm or so) and therefore could be a candidate for a Thursday night 9pm 8 week league where they get to bowl free and get a bowling ball for just \$7 or \$8 per week.
 - They will think this is a great deal (and it is) and best of all, they will spend lots of \$\$\$ on food and beverage
 - Once they have their equipment you can get them into another 10 week session where they pay lineage.
 - Our suggestion would be to make this an every other week league
- **Group of guys come in on a Friday night** about 830pm to open play bowl. Some of them think they are good bowlers.
 - Others have bowled in a league, but mostly they have quit and found it boring.
 - Your challenge is to find out what other activities they like to do.
 - Do they go to concerts
 - Are they into going to good restaurants
 - Do they go to sporting events
 - You could flat out ask them if they would like to bowl in a fun league as a team where everyone gets \$25 restaurant.com card (your cost is \$4) each week do they can go out with their significant other and not spend a lot of dough
 - Or you could form a new league and get everyone tickets to the "ABC Team" in your town plus a t-shirt or ball, hat or food voucher or anything else to add to their enjoyment and motivate them to join a league.

- You could also offer this as a 9 pin no tap league so **“everyone would score”**

If you do get a sign up, make sure to put it into the appropriate league folder, write the person’s name and contact information on the outside sheet.



It is good practice to immediately send out a postcard or email thanking the person for signing up and reminding them when their league meeting or start date will be. Of course you will do this process again, about one week prior to the league start date and call them as well.

✓ **Planning Tools**

In this section, we’re going to review some tools you can use to plan, implement and monitor your league development plan.

✓ **Lane Availability Chart**

This form is just slightly different than the one we described earlier (pg 9) in that we added your priority choices. Remember priority choices are **USUALLY IN THIS ORDER**, but may vary because of the demographics in your specific market (i.e. seniors may move to #2 in retirement-type communities)

1. First shift 6pm to 9pm
2. Saturday youth
3. Daytime seniors, ladies or moms
4. Weeknights 2nd shift
5. Daytime High School (free) 3pm to 6pm

Exhibit 2.1 Lane Availability Chart

Center Name _____

of Lanes _____

HOW MANY LANES WILL YOU HAVE AVAILABLE FOR LEAGUE DEVELOPMENT?

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9a to noon							
noon to 3p							
3p to 6p							
6p to 9p							
9p to close							

Leagues Only	TIME	DAY	STARTS	#WEEKS
FIRST PRIORITY				
SECOND PRIORITY				
THIRD PRIORITY				
FOURTH PRIORITY				
FIFTH PRIORITY				

✓ Team Commitment Forms

Many centers no longer put out a league contract. It is highly unlikely that even if the league doesn't come in with the stipulated number of teams agreed to that a proprietor would actually sue them...although it has been done.

Instead, sometime in the February to mid-March time period, utilize a “Team Agreement Form” (Exhibit 2.3). This form lets you know if your bowlers are satisfied, coming back or if there is an issue that needs to be fixed NOW.

Exhibit 2.3 Team Agreement Form

We hope you are enjoying your bowling experience at (Center Name). We would like the opportunity to serve you better. Please check the appropriate line to indicate your league status next year at (Center Name). If you are unsure of your status, please indicate that as well.

Thank You Very Much

Team name _____ League _____

- Team Captain _____ Yes ___ No___ Not Sure___
- Bowler 1 _____ Yes ___ No___ Not Sure___
- Bowler 2 _____ Yes ___ No___ Not Sure___
- Bowler 3 _____ Yes ___ No___ Not Sure___
- Bowler 4 _____ Yes ___ No___ Not Sure___
- Bowler 5 _____ Yes ___ No___ Not Sure___

Comments _____

The Condition Red Form (Exhibit 2.5) is a tool that can be used to identify any leagues that may be at risk for the upcoming season. By simply listing each of your leagues and the current status of those leagues (percentage yes, no and maybe) you will be able to determine which leagues require further attention and follow up.

Exhibit 2.5 Condition Red Form

Name of League	Percentage YES	Percentage NO	Percentage Not Sure
Kings N Queens	65%	25%	10%
Just Kiddin'	55%	30%	15%
Always Fun	60%	20%	20%

Planning Summary:

The process of planning and taking the following steps will set your center up for a successful league season.

- ✓ League planning cycles
 - September 1 – December 31
 - January 1 – April 30
 - May 1 – August 31
- ✓ Define historical league bowler data for each cycle
- ✓ Define league inventory/lane availability by day part
- ✓ Match day parts to target audiences
- ✓ Define league goals
- ✓ Define action plan to achieve league goals
- ✓ Track league sign-ups against goals and adjust plans accordingly in order to achieve seasonal goals