



**Tackling the 5 key concerns
of soccer organizers**



Every season comes with new and exciting challenges, but these may sometimes leave you feeling anxious and uneasy.

Will we get enough players and coaches to sign up?

How many returning players will we have?

Are our registration forms set up correctly?

Will our coaches align with our mission?

We're here to tell you that you are not alone. Many other soccer organizers have the same questions and concerns and have been in your shoes.

We spoke with 131 soccer organizers to understand what their biggest concerns were going into a season, and their number one piece of advice for others in a similar situation.

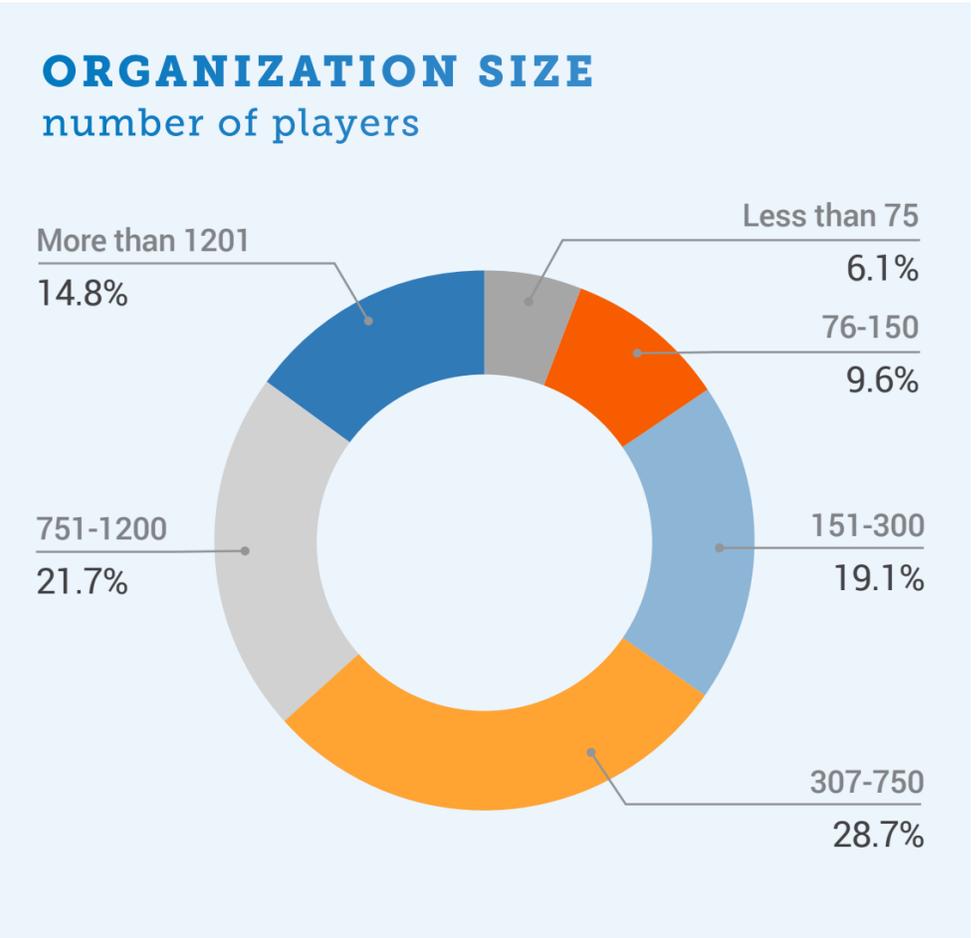
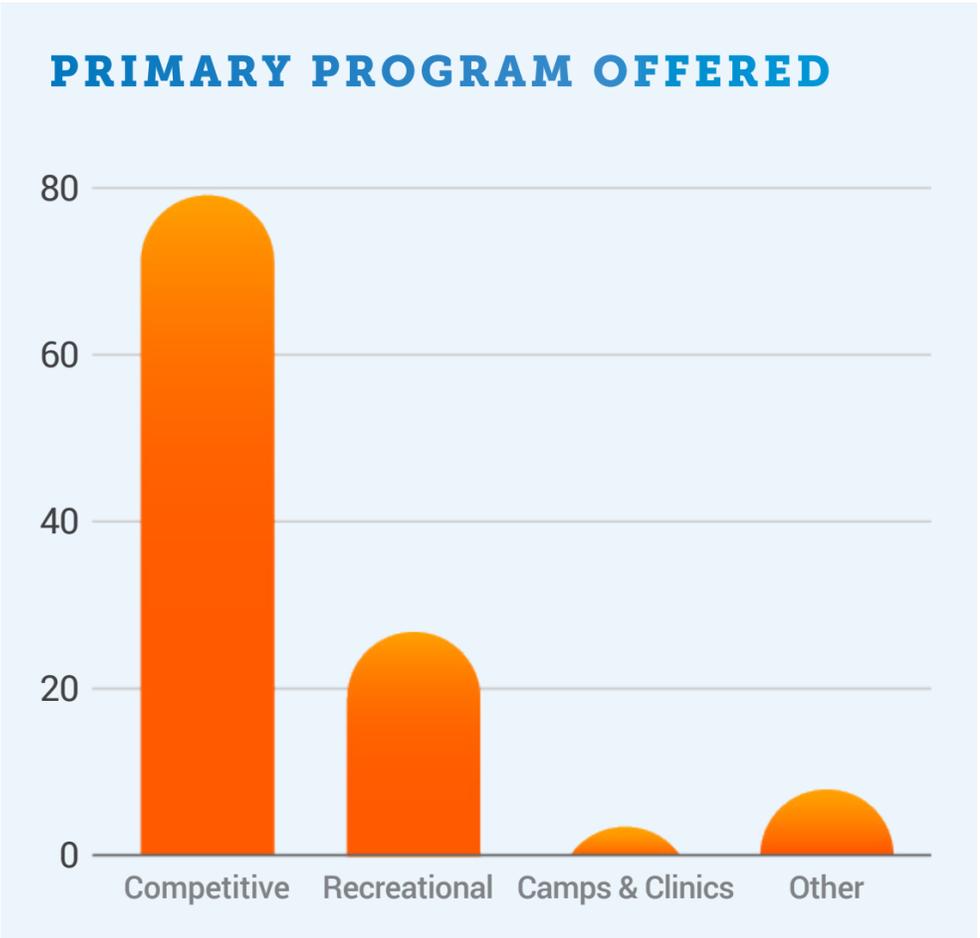
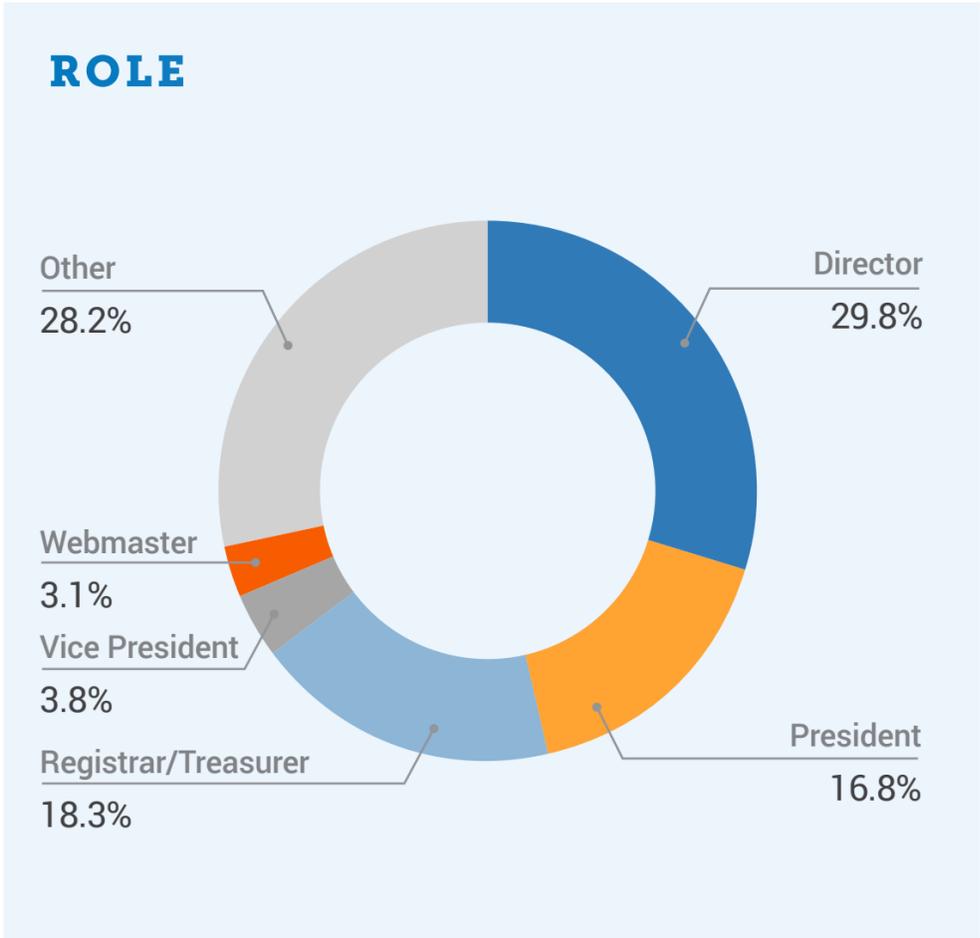
Let's dig into our findings.



Organizers Like You

When you have questions, it's natural to seek out the advice of your peers and colleagues—the people who understand our situations best. They've been in your shoes, which is why they can give you the best guidance.

We knew that in order to create a valuable guide for soccer admins, the best people to get insight from were other soccer admins. Here are some of the most important tidbits we gathered from dozens of your peers.



Shared Concerns

No matter the size or makeup of the soccer organization, there were five core concerns that resonated across the board: player recruitment and development, coach recruitment, planning and communication, payment and financial management, and organizing around registration.

PLAYER RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Teams, clubs, and sports organizations are nothing without the players that help drive their success—which is why the recruitment and development of players can make or break a season.

Soccer faces some significant challenges, especially in youth soccer leagues, which are experiencing a decline: Over a three-year span the number of 6- to 12-year-old players [fell 14%](#), according to a study by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA). The increasing specialization of many youth sports, which require kids to focus on one sport year-round instead of seasonally, as well as traveling and tryouts at younger ages, are [two of the factors](#) experts are attributing to the drop.

The soccer admins we spoke to voiced a variety of challenges recruiting players for the youth and adult leagues they organize. Several mentioned having to compete for players with other better-known leagues in their area was hard; others added that their program simply wasn't well-known enough in their community. Entirely different sports programs also caused competition due to seasonal overlap. Travel time and financial commitments were an additional issue for some organizations. Some of the high-performing leagues have enough good players but can't recruit as many of





the “top” players in the area as they’d like, putting them at a competitive disadvantage.

These are big challenges, but soccer admins are coming up with some creative ways to attract new players and coaches.

Soccer admins all agree that making community connections is key to a successful program. Hosting meet and greets for prospective families and inviting prospective players to practices are two important ways to showcase the program you’re building and convince fence-sitters to sign up. These meet-and-greets are also a very good way to meet volunteer soccer coaches, who are often the parents of prospective youth players. Participating in local community events and working with institutions, such as schools, community centers, and libraries are easily accessible channels that can end up being your best referral sources, especially in tightly-knit communities. One soccer admin told us they view the soccer field itself as a hub for the community—to them, it’s also a place where people come together.

Advertising and social media promotion are other great ways to get the word out. As an alternative to traditional advertisements, local newspapers often offer “sponsored content” stories that you can buy; it’s an ad in the form of an article that touts all the great things about your program. Several admins emphasized the importance of a friendly, well-maintained social media presence, which can answer questions related to schedules and other issues prospective players may have. Social media is a great way to mobilize your existing base of players, parents, and volunteers to spread the word about your program.

Lastly, soccer admins are great at getting creative and using events and clinics to drum up interest. Offering multi-day camps or free half-day clinics provides parents with a way to keep their kids occupied—something that all parents are looking for during school vacations. Think of these shorter-term offerings as a gateway for parents to learn more about your organization and the ongoing programs that you can offer.

COACH RECRUITMENT

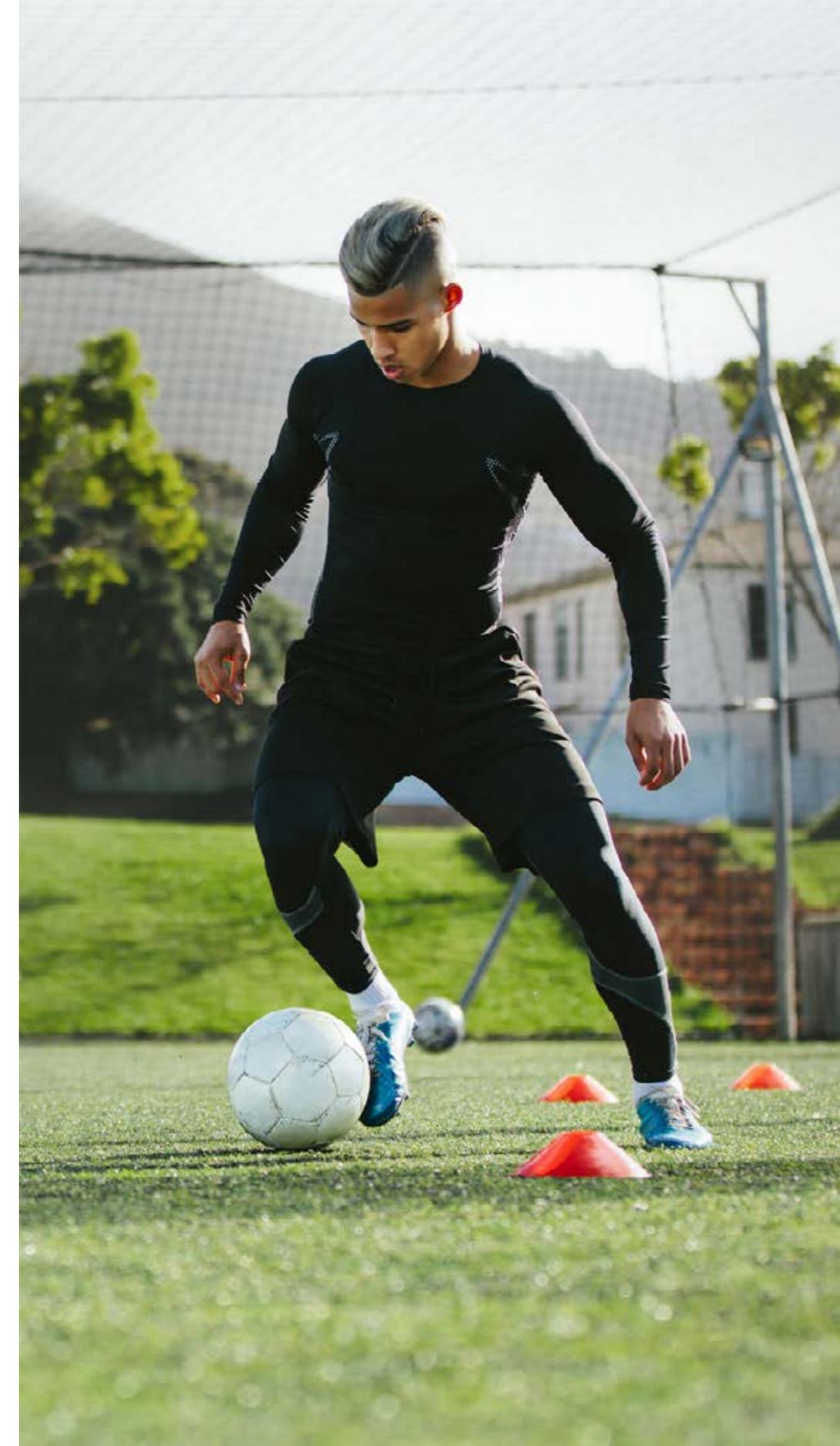
Interestingly, some programs have a problem with being too popular. They have plenty of players but cannot find enough volunteer coaches to coach them all.

This is where coach recruitment plays a vital role. Good coaches want reassurance that the organization they're working for has the tools and capabilities to provide a seamless and enjoyable experience—from registration and tryouts to practices and gameplay. And they want to make sure they'll be matched with a team at their level and supported by their organization.

Players want coaches that they can trust. They want to know that the people developing them have their best interests at heart. That's why soccer organizers told us that finding—and retaining—enthusiastic and talented coaches was essential to building and maintaining teams. The better the coach, the better the experience, which is particularly true for kids' teams. Continuing to educate your veteran coaches is a worthwhile year-to-year investment as

well. One admin told us that they host coaching clinics and encourage coaches to upgrade their referee licenses through US Soccer and state-level professional organizations.

In order to successfully find the right coaches and staff, admins should consider starting their recruiting efforts early—long before the season begins—to ensure they have enough knowledgeable candidates to choose from. The next step is bringing in each coach for interviews in order to determine whether there is alignment in culture and approach. Making sure returning coaches are still aligned is just as important, especially if there have been changes in philosophy or if you have received valuable feedback. This is the second key point—feedback. Some organizers set up opportunities for parents, and even players, to provide feedback. Understanding the concerns and suggestions from the people you are serving will allow your organization to find and retain the best coaches available.



PLANNING AND COMMUNICATION

As one admin put it, “clear, concise, and continual communication” is an essential ingredient to a successful season. Admins use a multitude of platforms and products to cover all their bases and make sure everyone involved has the details they need. They told us that keeping open lines of communication with parents and players almost always resulted in a more enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

Software allows admins to contact everyone in their organization in segments (such as the coaches or select teams) and get their message across in a variety of ways, whether it’s emails, in-app messages, or group chats. Setting up automatic reminders for everything from registration deadlines to game days will help keep everyone in the organization on track. And alert messages are particularly useful when there is a last-minute change (such as a match switching fields during a tournament).

PAYMENT AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Depending on your level of competition, soccer can be an expensive sport, which is why admins emphasized to us that getting fees paid upfront and accurately is essential to a successful season.

To do this, admins use software to deliver an online registration and payment experience. This provides them the flexibility to set up things the way they need, offer installment payments for parents, and add more automation to financial management and reporting. The addition of technology allows organizations to greatly decrease the amount of manual work that goes into collecting payments from each member and documenting the most up-to-date information.

In addition to bookkeeping, another important goal is to find enough sponsors to offset costs that some families might not be able to afford. A good way to do this is by networking with players and their families, many of whom may have local business connections and can make introductions on your behalf.

If your organization has a dedicated treasurer, it’s a good idea to set up ongoing reviews with them before and during the season. This helps you gauge costs and gives you a continuous view of your finances; these frequent check-ins will make it easier to stay on budget and keep a track of your cash flow.





ORGANIZING AROUND REGISTRATION

A successful season is downright impossible without being prepared and organized. To make sure they are prepared, many soccer organizers strongly suggest starting the groundwork as early as possible. Planning a season takes time; giving yourself enough of a window allows you to make sure you cover each question and concern.

The logistics of registration and rostering is a major priority for soccer organizers. They told us that registration needs to be accurate, rostering needs to be easy, and they preferred using tools they can share rather than emailing around spreadsheets. More than one admin mentioned how essential it is for players to be able to upload IDs and documents correctly. For organizers who are dealing with a high volume of registrations, their systems need to be glitch-free from the get-go. Being able to rely on easy-to-use tools makes the whole process easier.

It's a good rule of thumb to start preparing your registration and rostering process a month or two in advance and test it out to make sure everything's running smoothly when the season starts. Make sure you review the registration forms to confirm that you are collecting the right information and everything is working as expected. Take the time to run through every potential scenario for team formations, travel arrangements, and tournament schedules—and think through different mistakes and errors registrants may encounter (or have encountered in the past). Some organizations even ask parents and coaches to give their procedures a test run as well—they may catch inconsistencies and have valuable suggestions. Finally, make sure your coaches and other admins are aligned with the plans, so that everyone is on the same page.

Being well prepared and organized will allow you to provide a much better experience for all involved—including yourself.

Sage Advice

There will definitely be challenges that come with running your sports organization, but always remember that you are not alone—there are others experiencing the same set of concerns and hurdles.

"Always prepare for what could possibly go wrong, so that if it happens you have a plan in place."

"Meet one-on-one with all coaches and managers prior to each season. Set the expectations high and don't let off!"

"Establish the culture that works for your club and don't try to be everything to everyone."

"Don't take criticism from angry parents to heart."

"Stay ahead of things—don't wait until the last minute to schedule things or make changes."

"Be proactive through your planning and always link it back to your core values."

"Stay engaged with all stakeholders. Communicate, communicate, communicate!"

"Have a formal communication and promotional calendar that lays out how often and what topics are sent out to the community you are trying to retain or attract."

"Focus on the individual players and develop them the best you can. Players come before teams, before coaches and before club. That takes strength to do."

"Organization is key in keeping your parent community happy."

"Learn the sport and how to balance the competitive and fun aspects. Do not try to emulate professional sports."

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**Single
Solution**



**Increased
Efficiency**



**Streamlined
Operations**



**Seamless
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**Happy
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