

Challenges for the Promotion of Bridge in Japan

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Challenges for the Promotion of Bridge in Japan

Seeking tips in BAMSA Conference


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What is 'bridge' we play?

"It's a **card game** but not a physical exercise"



NO!!



Yes!!

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Bridge in Japan – Some facts

- ❖ Bridge Population in Japan (JCBL estimate) – 70,000+
- ❖ Two groups of players formed Japanese bridge society in 80s/90s.
 - 1) Expats spouses who learned bridge in overseas
 - 2) Businessmen who learned bridge in universities and/or companies' bridge clubs.
 → Maybe seen as a posh game for highly educated and relatively wealthy people?
- ❖ No. of JCBL Members – 6,177 (as of May21) 7% decrease in 12 months
- ❖ Nearly 90% are residents in Great Tokyo Metropolitan areas.
- ❖ Members' Average Age – 70+ years old
 (Japanese average life expectancy: M 81.41 F 87.45)
- ❖ 50+% of the new members over 65 yrs old
- ❖ Student players (2019) - university 111, middle school 23 ↘
- ❖ No. of schools having a bridge club – universities 8, middle school – 1 ↘
- ❖ No. of universities having bridge class in curriculum 5 →
- ❖ Corporate Leagues – 11 teams in 2 flights. (at peak: 35+ teams in 6 flights) ↘

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Key Challenges for the Promotion of Bridge

<Crucial Challenges in Japan>

- ❖ Bridge is not known in Japan - No more than 0.1% of the population knows or has heard about the game. This requires a lot of extra work just to explain the game upon recruiting new players as well as key stakeholders such as schools, local communities and sponsors of competitions etc we'd like to work with.
- ❖ Bridge is not the game people like to recommend to the family members while 76% of the players would like to recommend the game to somebody mainly their friends. Parents and grandparents cannot be the powerhouse for bringing new young players.

<Global challenges>

- ❖ Bridge is not an easy game to master. Takes time and efforts. So many steps to overcome to continue. (But that's also why people cannot stop learning and playing this game.)
- ❖ A pair (team) game. Different from chess, i-go, shogi etc. Interpersonal skill (and patience) may be required. Finding a good partner is sometimes not easy.

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What JCBL as NBO may want to do

- ❖ Raising awareness of bridge is crucial above all. (Feature of the player and the game in the morning paper, advertisement of the free hands-on classes at the major bridge clubs/centres on morning paper twice a year.)
- ❖ Implement more strategic and effective marketing for the target groups ie students, working generations (26-55) and retired/semi-retired age group.
- ❖ Careful review of the former promotion activities with poor KPI/ROI concept.
- ❖ Focus on wider benefits of bridge as a mind sports eg wellbeing, isolation of senior age groups etc and invite new stakeholders/supporter of the game.
- ❖ More active promotion via SNS and YouTube etc.
- ❖ Effective use of on-line bridge for learning and delivery of the games.
 (Proactively used by clubs but not by JCBL.)

We are keen in learning from the best practice of other nations despite the huge difference of the scale and maturity of the bridge society/market.

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Bridge Club in the Central Tokyo in Pandemic

Acrylic partitions are installed in all the bridge clubs.




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