



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF PUERTO RICO

Boys and Girls Clubs of Puerto Rico: Transforming the Outcomes of Puerto Rico's Youth

In less than 10 years, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Puerto Rico has expanded its reach, improved its quality of services and revitalized its management and culture. Recognizing the added economic pressures in Puerto Rico, the BG CPR added entrepreneurship activities for children and career and educational courses for their parents. Club president Eduardo Carrera states, "things don't always turn out how you plan . . . but they could be even better than planned, as long as we look out for opportunities."

For most people, paradise looks like a tropical island. Yet despite its palm trees and white sandy beaches, the island of Puerto Rico isn't much of a paradise for children. The recent recession has made the plight of children especially tough. Today, 57% of the island's nearly 1 million children and youth live below the poverty line. Like many urban areas struggling in the wake of the recession, Puerto Rico is suffering with soaring high school dropout rates and skyrocketing rates of childhood obesity. Government social services have been overwhelmed, as the economy has strained budgets while aggravating need.

But in the midst of this harsh landscape is an organization that represents not merely an oasis, but also a lifeline for youth: the Boys and Girls Clubs of Puerto Rico (BG CPR).

For nearly 50 years, BG CPR has provided recreational, educational, cultural, and life-skills services to more than 50,000 Puerto Rican youths. An affiliate of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the organization strives to offer young people the hope of a better future and opportunities to develop their full potential.

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BGCPR pursues this mission through a strategy that includes squeezing the greatest benefit out of every donation and strengthening the ability of families and other organizations that support youth development.

Today, with a budget of \$11.5 million, the organization serves more than 16,000 kids, age 6 to 18, at eleven club locations throughout the island. BGCPR offers programs and services in five core areas: education and career development, character and leadership, health and life skills, arts, and sports and recreation. Since the financial crisis, BGCPR has stepped up its efforts and initiatives, particularly those that prepare young people for the real world.

Leaders soon realized that the new BGCPR had outgrown its old reporting system. To serve its broader aspirations, the organization needed a more robust, more agile performance management system, one capable of doing more than linking and aligning the facilities.

Despite the island's economic distress, BGCPR's results over the past decade have been nothing short of remarkable. From 2005 through 2010, participant daily attendance rates, satisfaction levels, measures of the sense of belonging and other engagement rates exploded, and have since continued to beat regional and national levels. And BGCPR hasn't just increased the number of youth it serves: its kids are making tangible progress. In the past three years, an index of participants' academic achievement, character development, and healthy life habits rose. In fact, participants' rates of grade promotion and high school graduation have exceeded those of the general population as recorded by the Puerto Rico Department of Education.

BGCPR's participants aren't the only ones who have benefited: BGCPR's ranking as one of the island's best employers has risen consistently, and the organization is widely regarded for its commitment to workforce development.

BGCPR's original mission may have changed little in five decades, but these impressive results are a more recent phenomenon. In fact, only 10 years ago, BGCPR was in the midst of its own fiscal crisis, one that nearly shuttered its doors.

FROM CRISIS TO REBIRTH

In 2004, BGCPR could hardly make payroll. Instead of its demise, however, the crisis precipitated sweeping change. CEO Jose Campos and then-Vice President Eduardo Carrera (today President) began to restructure BGCPR and professionalize roles and processes. In 2006, after stabilizing the organization, leaders adopted the Balanced Scorecard system to manage strategy.

Becoming a strategy-focused organization represented a wholesale transformation. In addition to adopting a full-scale scorecard rollout, BGCPR implemented quarterly strategy reviews and more frequent strategy discussions, along with a performance measurement program. Over the next few years, the organization also adopted an array of improvement processes, such as Lean Six Sigma, a change management program inspired by the book *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*, and the IDEA toolkit, a knowledge transfer process it developed in house. BGCPR also created a leadership institute, and put in place formal mechanisms for furthering organizational learning and best-practice sharing.

Pulling off such sweeping management changes called for an equally sweeping cultural change. Leaders cultivated staff buy-in and alignment in two key ways: by involving employees in strategy development and review, and through employee professional development—an activity considered by employees and management alike as the most valuable organizational asset.

PHASE TWO: A NEW ERA, NEW CHALLENGES

Implementing a strategy management program helped BGCPR focus on putting its house in order. It established managerial discipline, promoted cultural change, and helped hone operations and processes to deliver quality services. Winning the Balanced Scorecard Hall of Fame award in 2010 represented an important milestone—and in many respects, the close of an important chapter for BGCPR and the beginning of a new one.

The organization's rapid growth (from 8 to 11 facilities over the past 10 years) brought growing complexity. But a more profound shift has also taken place.

In tackling its internal challenges, BGCPR had a defined scope—its clubs and their neighborhoods. "In the process of acting more strategically, we began to ask ourselves what our real mission is. We realized our responsibility was not only for our core constituents, but also for older youth in Puerto Rico," says Carrera.



CORE FOCUS

With a budget of \$11.5 million, the organization serves thousands of youth on the island, offering programs and services in five core areas.

As its mission has expanded, so have management requirements—its systems, data needs, and reporting needs.

For example, two years ago, BGCPR adopted the measures of the National Youth Outcome Initiative, the standard for the youth development community—to benchmark its clubs. At the same time, it implemented the Formula for Impact Assessment, an index required by the Boys and Girls Clubs of America that tracks the organization’s impact on its constituents. Since the recession, donors (or “investors,” as BGCPR calls them) have been demanding more hard evidence of organizational results so they know that their contributions are making a

more than linking and aligning the facilities. It needed to be able to perform real-time updating, better integrate different types of data, support trend and benchmarking analysis, and enable more sophisticated ways of analyzing correlations and causal relationships among metrics.

In 2012, BGCPR adopted ClearPoint. Leaders chose it because it was designed for the needs of non-governmental organizations. The system was easy to configure, and implementation was “very quick,” according to Carrera. “ClearPoint is easier to work on, and easy to train people to use,” he adds. It has also simplified reporting—a plus for an organization that shares results with board members and other stakeholders.

Says Carrera: “We started with nothing. We were able to put a system together in relatively short period of time. We built a culture of measuring, planning and strategy—plus leadership.”

difference. “The tighter funding gets,” says Carrera, “the more effective we have to be with our resources.” This reality has triggered a major shift in emphasis from lagging to leading indicators, a shift that requires the ability to ferret out correlations and causality in the drivers of performance.

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But ClearPoint is more than the sum of its features, Carrera noted. “We consider them a partner. They understand our needs, help us navigate issues, and help us improve the way we present information.”

PARTNERING FOR GREATER IMPACT

Beyond meeting BGCPR’s more complex data and analytical needs, the new reporting system is also better suited to serve BGCPR’s newest organizational direction: partnering with other organizations to achieve greater impact.

As successful as BGCPR has been since its strategic transformation, leaders began realizing that the needs of youth are constantly growing and the challenges of meeting them can be overwhelming. They are too

immense for one organization to tackle on its own. Working in partnership, BGCPR and other youth service organizations could coordinate their efforts and leverage resources.

Beginning in 2012, BGCPR joined forces with several academic and civic organizations on the island—EDP College, Taller Salud, Agenda Ciudadana, and Sacred Heart University – to develop a citizen’s agenda to mobilize community efforts for youth.

But partnership alone isn’t enough. In Puerto Rico, all youth organizations have been hamstrung in their efforts by the lack of reliable data on the condition of youth.

In response to this need, BGCPR launched the Youth Development Institute (YDI) in the fall of 2013. The Institute’s goal is to provide data, statistics, and studies on the youth situation in Puerto Rico to policymakers, donors, and the public, and to track the impact of social services programs. “It’ll take years to know the true impact of the skills we help a youth acquire, but we’re measuring what we’re doing now so we can understand it,” says Carrera. Because of BGCPR’s professional management and focus on data, the Annie E. Casey Foundation—the nation’s leading youth foundation—selected the YDI as its primary representative in Puerto Rico for information about youth at risk across the commonwealth.

The YDI’s ultimate goal is to make youth development one of Puerto Rico’s three priorities. Funded by founding partners and investors, YDI has a website (www.juventudpr.org) to raise awareness and disseminate its research. One of its first products (produced jointly with the Statistics Institute of Puerto Rico) is the Well-Being Index, an indicator of economic, educational, family, health, and security conditions for youth. The Institute held its first Youth Development Congress in November 2013 (launched with a TED event), and has plans for a second Youth Development Congress in November 2014.

BOLD ACHIEVEMENTS FUEL BOLDER ASPIRATIONS

In less than 10 years, BGCPR has come a long way. Apart from reaching more kids and improving the quality of services, BGCPR’s revitalized management and culture have also led to a raft of bold new programs and services. Among them are self-funded initiatives such as In the Club Pizza (a pizza parlor) and In the Club Productions (a multi-media studio) that nurture kids’ entrepreneurial and job skills. A remedial education program helps build life skills, such as how to present oneself effectively and using a budget for decision making. As Carrera says, “Kids need more than academics to be well-rounded and fully prepared to connect to the 21st century economy.”

Recognizing the added pressures on parents, BGCPR has also introduced workshops on career and educational development and time management that have so far served nearly 2,900 parents. In the past couple of years, it has also held workshops for some 290 youth-development professionals.

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Today, BGCPR’s reputation as an influential leader and advocate for Puerto Rican youth extends far beyond the island’s shores. The organization was invited to present to a White House Task Force on Puerto Rican issues in February 2014. And this June, it was honored with an achievement award from the Malcolm Baldrige Foundation.

Carrera and his leadership team have high hopes for BGCPR and its partners in this next phase. “Things don’t always turn out how you plan...but they could be even better than planned, as long as we look out for opportunities and attack the challenges.”



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