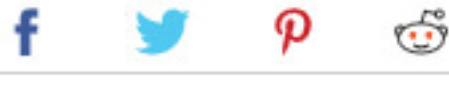


## SF Deltas ask for fans' help to guarantee future seasons

By [Douglas Zimmerman](#) on July 27, 2017 at 2:04 PM



Deltas players sign autographs after the pre-season game against the Sacramento Republic at Kezar Stadium. (Courtesy of Kelley Cox)

The San Francisco Deltas have always said transparency is one of the pillars on how they run the team. **Last Thursday in a blog post**, club CEO Brian Helmick opened up a dialogue with fans about the issues facing the professional soccer team in its first season and some possible solutions.

Although the expansion NASL team successfully reached the halfway point of the NASL Season in second place, the team averaged only 2,500 people in attendance per game. It is well below the 10,000 seat capacity of Kezar Stadium and the league average of just over 4,500. "The San Francisco Deltas (SFD) can't survive if we don't increase attendance," Helmick wrote in his post, noting the team can't guarantee future seasons if there isn't improvement.

"The analogy I think of is 'If I'm drowning, and I don't tell you I'm drowning, you're not going to jump into the pool to save me,'" Helmick told SFGate in an interview.

In his post, Helmick quoted statistics of ticket sales from the team's first eight home games. One of the most surprising statistics they discovered is that of the 15,000 unique fans who attended home games at Kezar, 88.1% came for just one game. Only .8% of Deltas fans have attended all eight home games so far this season.

In a survey of fans who attended only one or two Deltas games this season, the team discovered that 99.5% enjoyed their game day experience. Asked why they didn't return 64.8% of the respondents said they were too busy with other priorities.

The results confounded Helmick who noted that it was difficult to fix a problem if it is out of the team's control. "We are in a city with a plethora of entertainment options," explained Brian. "I do believe attendance, I mean how many people who were at the stadium, is actually a very good indicator of the engagement, interest, and health of the organization."



San Francisco Deltas forward Tommy Heinemann celebrates a goal against North Carolina FC with the Delta Force supporters group at Kezar Stadium in Golden Gate Park. (Robert Edwards-KLC fotos)

On social media, most complaints about Deltas games consist of the weather, the location of Kezar stadium, parking, and ticket prices. But according to the survey, only 13.6% of respondents complained about the cold, 10.6% about ticket prices, and 4.5% about parking and the location of the stadium.

Helmick proposed three ideas to help the Deltas increase their attendance. The first is to find a high profile investor to enhance the visibility of the team in the Bay Area. The second idea is to team up with an existing Bay Area sports franchise to maximize sponsorships and ticket sales. The third approach is to ask fans to promote the organization. The club is hoping fans will bring other friends to the stadium and use social media to encourage other Bay Area teams and prominent individuals to get involved.

"I think we have a really good substance with what we have built from an on-the-field product, from what we do in the community, from fan engagement, from an outreach perspective we see were touching a lot of people. But someone like [tech industry CEO's] Marc Benioff, or Brian Chesky or a Mark Zuckerberg could add a lot of sizzle."

The Deltas have reached out to professional sports teams in the Bay Area about forming a partnership that could not only increase awareness of the club but increase synergies in operations, sponsorships and ticket sales. "I'm open to whatever makes sense," he said. For example, he noted if the Giants became involved they could possibly share a venue.

Helmick added that if the 15,000 unique visitors who attended Deltas games this season tweeted Warriors owner Joe Lacob or Giants CEO Larry Baer, they would take a serious look at partnering with the soccer team.

Asked about the possible negative response from his post, Helmick compared the team and its fans to a married couple. "If you're having marital issues and you say 'you know honey I think we have some issues that we should talk about' you have a choice at that moment. You can either say 'we're having issues so this isn't going to work out,' and it doesn't and it becomes self-fulfilling. Or you make a choice 'you know what, you're right. I don't really want to talk about it, these conversations are never fun, but we have an opportunity to work through these issues and come out of it stronger.'"



The Deltas Pablo Dyego and Puerto Rico's Jairo Puerto fight for a ball in their game at Kezar Stadium in July. (Photo: Robert Edwards-KLC fotos)

"The fans are the heart, blood, and soul of the club," Helmick said, noting the data he provided in his post is the exact same data given to investors of the SF Deltas. "My responsibility is to report information to the people that "own" this club. This is information that all the team here internally knows, that the investors know, and fans should know."

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"It may sound alarming to say it or put it in print," he continued. "The concept of additional years in sports is never guaranteed."

"I always want to live my life in a way that is very intentional, and I always want to live my life in a way that I have no regrets. And if this didn't work out and I didn't post something that says 'hey fans you can save this' I'd feel regret," Helmick concluded. "I care too much about this to say I could've, should've, would've. I refuse to do that."

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