

Grow your Community Sports club

*UNLEASH THE POWER
OF YOUR VOLUNTEERS*



By John Oates



Forward

I have been very fortunate to be involved in both community and professional sport for over 35 years. I very much recognise that running a sports club, at any level, is complex and challenging.

Prior to my current role as Chief Executive of Sussex County Cricket, I worked with John both at the Newcastle Falcons and the Rugby Football Union.

However, throughout my professional career, I have continued to be active as a sportsman at grass roots level playing in local rugby, cricket, tennis and squash clubs. Therefore I recognise and understand the huge role that volunteers play in providing the opportunities for us all to take part in sport.

Having worked with John over many years, I have witnessed how he combines his commercial sports expertise with his extensive teaching and coaching experience. It gives him a unique outlook on how to develop sports clubs into vibrant and profitable businesses.

This e-book not only provides a step by step guide on how to deliver specific projects within the club like sponsorship, data management, membership and events, it also contains best practice examples, hints and tips plus advice and training for the motivated volunteer.

I am sure that from each page you will find at least one or two points that can be immediately implemented into the daily running of your club, and which will make a difference.

Good luck and well done with all your club activities.

Rob Andrew MBE



Rob Andrew MBE



Preface



The development of sports clubs has been my passion and focus over the last twenty years. My experiences in community clubs, semi and full time professional clubs from across the world have shaped my thoughts on how clubs should be run.

The core requirement, in my opinion, is for the team running the club to have the necessary skills and knowledge needed to optimise the club's potential. Obviously a professional club can appoint skilled and trained people. It is more of a challenge for the Community clubs who are run by volunteers, many of them are skilled but some aren't. This e book aims to assist the clubs by providing the volunteers bite-sized and easy to follow guidance in relevant areas of club development.

The book will view the clubs as small businesses. Firstly, the necessity for the clubs to understand that they have products such as memberships, sponsorships and events, that need to be actively sold. We have provided a step by step approach on how to sell your products.

Secondly the clubs will need to understand what their customers expect from them (a sponsor will want business outcomes, a member will want good coaching, a family will want a safe environment). Templates on what your customers expect are provided across the sections.

Thirdly, the book will also explore the need for customer service and the fact that if the clubs don't give the customers what they want, they may well leave the club. (A family wants a safe environment with qualified coaches, without these the family may move onto another club). We have provided guidance within this area for the clubs to follow.

Finally we have focussed on the fact that underpinning all of this activity is the leadership at the club and how the leaders work with their teams to develop an achievable strategy at the club. One of the key roles of the leader is to ensure that everyone is welcome, regardless of race, age, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

In summary, this e-book provides simple and easy to follow guidance on how volunteers can make a difference in their clubs and move it towards being sustainable.



The game plan

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Section 1

Pre season preparation



Session One

Pre Season development
of the team



**Leadership in Community
Sports Clubs**

**Retaining and Attracting
volunteers to the club**





Leadership in Community Sports Clubs

The impact of Covid 19 and the changes that Community sports clubs have found it necessary to make has highlighted the need for them to have strong leadership.

The reason is that the Leadership group or individuals will need to develop a strategy for moving forward and influence/motivate the organisation in general to agree to the common goal and to support implementation of the changes. The leadership group will therefore need to provide guidance, direction and motivation.

Leaders have different leadership styles, which are outlined below, and they often need to alter the style they use depending on specific situations. The variables they will meet are a) the skills and ages of the individuals they are leading b) the environment in which they are working which includes the virus progression and economic factors c) the range of experience and skills that the individual leaders have.

Why is leadership so important?

Organisations that don't have strong leadership end up wasting their human resources and time, they lose opportunities, project the wrong image to their potential members and create dissatisfaction within the club.

Strong and effective leadership will;

- Create an environment in which the volunteers thrive
- Develop a strategy which moves the club forward
- Motivate all of the club members, supporters and business partners
- Create awareness and understanding for everyone regardless of their race, age, religion, gender or sexual orientation.
- Create a team in which people work together and in which any conflict is addressed in a professional manner.

There are three traditional styles of leadership:

Autocratic Leadership Style –

this is when the leader makes the decisions and decides what is to be done. There isn't any shared decision making, it's a case of "this is what is happening".

Democratic Leadership Style –

this is where the leader has an idea of what needs to be done but the discussion and decision making is shared within the group. In this instance responsibility is often delegated. In essence the leader has a meaningful interpersonal relationship with the 'team off the field/court/pitch'.

The Laissez - Faire or relaxed leadership Style -

This is where the leader steps aside and lets the group make the decision without any guidance, direction or experience input from the leader. This style often leads to poor decision making, conflict and lack of motivation within the team.

In Community Sports Clubs the ideal leadership is the Democratic Style but it needs to be accepted that circumstances may arrive when the Autocratic Style is required for a specific decision.

What does a Leader need to consider?

Motivating the "team off the field" –

the leader needs to motivate the team and in order to do this the leader needs to consider what motivates the individual to volunteer for the club. It could be that they want to help others, to put something back into their club, to use the involvement to learn, to build their self-esteem or for social reasons. If they are being paid it could be for career development, for self-esteem, for the wage, to be involved with a sport they enjoy or the learning. A leader needs to consider all of these.

Communication –

the leaders needs to ensure that they communicate well in order to articulate their vision, goals and values of the club. They also need to have listening skills, to demonstrate trust via they communication and have cultural sensitivity.

Strategic Leadership –

the leader needs to ensure that any strategy that is developed is realistic, that it can be measured and that it can be achieved.

In summary, the Covid 19 epidemic has highlighted the need for strong leadership and for those in leadership positions to consider how they can develop themselves to be the best they can be.

Team Building –

Strong leaders build cohesive teams, they delegate work to their colleagues and they understand how to resolve any conflicts which occur in a fair and professional manner.



Retaining and attracting volunteers to the club

The prosperity and “health” of community sports clubs are built on the success achieved ‘off the field/court/pitch.’ The ability of the volunteer team to generate regular income and operate their club as a business is critical if the club is to be sustainable.

The key to this is finding the volunteers with the necessary skills in areas such as sales, marketing, accountancy and management. The difference between a community sports club and a business is that the working team isn’t paid and selected from a group of applicants for the role, they are volunteers!

One of the biggest challenges that community sports clubs face is recruiting volunteers. People are reluctant to commit to hours of volunteering in today’s “busy” world. Clubs are also finding that very often when they do find volunteers, they don’t have the specific skills that are needed i.e. selling, social media, event management, etc.

To build your off the ‘field/court/pitch’ team you will need to influence individuals to become involved. (Sell the role to them) There needs to be “something in it for them” to become volunteers. When you approach individuals or promote volunteering you need to think about selling the concept of volunteering and this starts with an understanding of what might be “in it for them” to volunteer.

Who might want to become a volunteer and why?

- There are young graduates or students who might do it to enhance their CVs
- Individuals might want to give something back to the club that supported them
- Parents who might get involved to improve the club in which their children are involved with
- Individuals might want to make a difference to their community.
- A group of friends might take on one project (an event) and enjoy working with their friends

Points to remember regarding finding and retaining volunteers

- Finding volunteers isn’t a five minute job. A campaign needs to be planned and delivered
- When you are influencing individuals to become involved, you need to remember the phrase “what’s in it for them” to become a volunteer
- They need to know what is expected of them i.e. job description, time commitment and who they are working with.
- Rewarding them and recognising their involvement is important, especially at presentation nights.
- For those volunteers that want to learn more, you need to encourage them to use the training that is available to them. This is another motivation for them to become involved, they will develop new skills by being involved.

NB. The trend today is for clubs to engage a group of volunteers on short-term projects as well as having the

primary roles of Secretary, Chairperson, and Child Welfare officer etc. The clubs bring a group of individuals who don’t normally volunteer together for a short period of time to run a project such as;

- Membership
- An event
- Sponsorship
- A summer school

The aim here is to get people with specific skills involved in roles that don’t need a huge amount of commitment and which introduce them to volunteering.

Where to find a Volunteer team

- Within the club you could target players, parents, spectators or other stakeholders. One club I worked with ran a free “wine and cheese” evening at which the food and drink had been sponsored. They invited parents from the junior side, participants and their partners, social members and their partners, sponsors and key people from the community who were interested in the club. There was a raffle with donated prizes that was also free to all attendees.

During the evening they made a short presentation about six projects they wanted to run, each one needed two/three people and was a short term project. They asked for volunteers and managed to get 6 people on the night and 3 people after the event to become short term volunteers.

- You can promote the roles on the club notice board, website or through social media.
- Current members might have work colleagues that could be interested and have relevant skills for specific roles
- Since you don’t need to have been a playing member to be a volunteer, promoting in the local community is a good idea since there could be individuals who want to support their local community or want to gain more experience in a particular area.
- Promotion could be through the local newspapers, posters or local sponsors to their workforce
- It is important to recognise the needs of young people in today’s harsh work environment. Students at College or University, graduates in their first job or even sixth formers, are all looking for ways to enhance their CV’s, to gain experience and to “stand out” from the crowd. Tapping into this group and using their skills, is becoming commonplace, especially in areas of IT and social media interaction.

Roles, Job Descriptions and Rewarding Volunteers

Many governing bodies provide detailed information about volunteer roles, job descriptions and rewarding volunteers on their websites.



Building a culture within the club

Overview

Volunteers give up their time and expertise to support the club, but the number of volunteers and therefore the resource available to the clubs is limited. To optimise this resource, it is therefore essential that there is a culture or feeling of “togetherness” within the club where everyone works in the same direction.

If this is not the case and the volunteers work to their own agendas instead of the club's agenda, it will result in upset, frustration and a loss of opportunity.

To build a culture the leadership team will need to work with the volunteering group, agreeing on a simple culture of “how we do things around here”.

What is a culture?

A culture is the expression of a club's values, attitudes, and beliefs about their sport and their club, which promotes success

“Culture is often defined simply as ‘the way we do things around here’ or ‘the way we behave around here’. Culture is not what you think, or want to do, it is what you do”

It determines whether, for example, the volunteers all work together to create a successful club, or they work to their own agenda for their own personal achievement.

When a culture is developed in which the group strength is greater than the sum of the parts it has been said to create “one of the most powerful forces on the planet” For example...

- 1) We witnessed this in the 2015/2016 Premiership when Leicester City defied all the odds to become league champions.
- 2) The All Blacks are often quoted as the team where the togetherness culture creates season after season of successful teams. Where all the individuals buy into the concept of the All-Black values even down to the fact that one team member “brushes out the sheds/changing room” after every training session.
- 3) Businesses have also recognised that by building a culture in which there is a belonging, a togetherness and a team that works together, it unleashes “a hidden force” that drives the togetherness behaviour of the whole team. Apple are an example of this where they have defined their values as - Innovation / Simplicity / Collaboration / Excellence / Honesty

The culture within a community sports club

The need to having some sort of togetherness within the group of volunteers in each sports club is critical because resources are often limited and skills within the group often do not match what is required.

Where there is a poor culture the volunteers will feel undervalued, over worked and stressed.

However, for the club to move forward and for the group of volunteers to work together there needs to be some sort of consensus/ development of a basic culture unless energy and motivation will dwindle. They will probably not however, be able to create the togetherness that the Leicester team have, or the Apple employees have.

That takes time and is usually driven by the leadership group

What is achievable for a community sports club in the short term?

They need to get to a point where -

- There is a strong leadership group who recognise the need to develop a culture, a togetherness, however simple it is
- They all agree on certain values of how they work together
- They all understand what they are trying to achieve and that they do not try to achieve unrealistic outcomes
- There is not any patriarchy within the team
- There is equality where representatives from all groups are included
- They all work together to support each other
- The leader needs monitor the wellness (mental) of the team

How to develop and agree on a basic culture within the volunteering team

Step One

The volunteers need to agree on which points from the above list they believe are achievable and by when. The important point here is to have the right leaders or leadership group to lead with this and to monitor the development of it.

They will then need to agree on how they will work together. This will include discussions around the following -

Feedback – they will need to accept different views and to use the agreed values as a guide

Supporting – they will need to support their colleagues in the following areas, emotional, self-esteem and areas of influence

Teamwork – they do what is best for the club, not the individuals

Step Two

Agreeing the values

The leader brings the group of volunteers together and initially they write down the values they feel are important. (Usually 4 or 5) These could be community focussed, Teamwork, excellence or customer experience

They look at the ones that they have in common, debate the ones that are not in common, to find consensus on what is important to the group. They should agree on between 4 and 6 values.

Step Three

The culture will take time to develop and the group will need to work at creating it. My suggestion is that they start with one project such as building up membership. Agree a SMART strategy in which roles are designated - who does what and when.

The club will then make the first step on the journey of unleashing the hidden power of group culture.

Session Two

Pre Season thinking



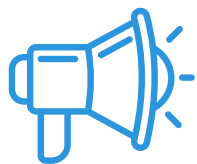
Developing the club's brand -

The image of how we would like our club to be seen and thought of by it's community.

How to develop an effective and achievable strategy

The community sports club - is it a small business?





BOOST YOUR
BRAND

Developing the club's brand

The image of how we would like our club to be seen and thought of by its community

Every Sports Club Business needs to develop its own identity or brand, which sets it apart from the other clubs and which is recognisable within its community. A strong brand commands customer loyalty and becomes a valuable asset that drives club revenue and growth.

Brand perception is central to sports business transactions, especially sponsorship deals and merchandising. A strong brand increases the perception of value, making the club more desirable by association and belonging.

Where to Start

- The name, design/logo needs to be distinct from the competition so that customers and potential customers (participants, members, families, businesses, schools, etc.) recognise it. Ideally the logo should draw its inspiration from something that is well known within the community.
- Once you have a logo it is important that its appearance is consistent across all media, advertising and promotions. It should be used at every possible opportunity so that it becomes recognised within the community.
- The brand is what gives the club its "personality", particularly its 'brand values' by which it becomes known. As an example the Brand Values of Rugby are Sportsmanship, Teamwork Discipline, Enjoyment and Respect. The brand values of Adidas are performance, passion, integrity and diversity. As a club you may decide that your brand values reflect the game or you might include values such as welcoming in to everyone (race, gender or sexual orientation), reliable, professional, community orientated or family orientated.
- Once the values are decided, the club must be consistent, in the way they deliver these to the community.

How to build a strong brand

Marketing

- Product Give-aways. Caps, children's summer camp goody bags etc, is a good way to develop awareness.
- Relationships and interaction with the general public
- Good customer service should be provided by everyone the participants come into contact with from the coaches to the committee members.

Communication

Do you develop strong relationships with the community by supporting community events?

Do you support local Charities by partnering with them for an event or promoting their causes?

Do your coaches provide a safe and supportive environment for the young participants?

People

- **Brand is represented by all individuals at the club.**

This means:

- **Participants**
 - Players can affect opinion by the style of play, tactics employed, player discipline.
- **Off field staff, from coaching groups to committee**
 - Very important that everyone "buys into" the brand and culture. For example, if your club wants to be a family friendly club do all of the committee and coaches know this and focus on it?

Facilities

- **Good facilities have a big impact on brand status.**

• Matchday experience points to consider:

- Are the toilets clean?
- Clear venue signage?
- Litter free?
- Does the place look welcoming and friendly?
- Does the club follow environmental friendly practices?

Don't forget, your home ground is also your brand

Logo and visuals

A strong brand does of course deserve a good logo and smart graphic design and visuals. The narrow definition of brand is "name, sign or symbol". Even in a sports context when results on the field have a huge importance, a good logo is important and not just for commercial reasons.

Don't take any short cuts when deciding upon the club's logo. If possible and if the budget allows then use a specialist agency to assist you in its development. If you don't have the budget then:

- Explore local colleges to find out if there is any opportunity of linking it to one of the student projects
- Find out if any parents work in this field of work
- Find out if any of the members have a friend who might help.

Points to remember

- Branding is not just the name and logo. It's the reputation and the values that it becomes known for. If the club builds a name for "nurturing young talent," then it is likely that parents will trust the brand and bring their children
- Make it stand out. A good brand is memorable with a strong logo.
- Consistency in how the brand logo is used is vital to building recognition. This must be backed up by reinforcing club values and making sure all personnel, coaches, etc. understand the importance and the need to enhance and protect these values.



How to develop an effective and achievable strategy

Every sports club “business”, no matter how small, needs a working plan, detailing where they are now, where they need to be in the future in order to be sustainable, or where they want to be in order to grow. They also need a plan/strategy of how they are going to get there. The planning process will enable the club to:

- Recognise problems that may be developing
- Efficiently utilise all the resources it has
- Recognise any additional resources it may need to fulfil the plan
- Track progress

Without a plan and an initial audit that precedes it, the club may not recognise the need for specific action and may waste resources or take on too many changes and fail to achieve any.

Key Principles to be considered

- The volunteers need to recognise that changes will almost certainly have to happen if the club is to become sustainable or even grow.
- The club may identify several required changes but should focus on one at a time and ensure each one is successful. Too many try to change several things at once and end up achieving very little.
- When developing a plan, the club should focus on the detail, because often this is what makes the difference. For example, if the club creates a good “sales letter” to convince parents that they should bring their children to your club, the message is only effective if the parents read it. The detail is to make sure this happens!!
- When the plan is developed, the club needs to make sure that they have the skills available to deliver it. If for example, they need to telephone up 20 businesses to sell sponsorship they need to have a person making the calls who has experience of this type of situation.

STEP BY STEP GUIDE

There are 3 main steps:

Step One – The Audit

Step Two – Developing the Vision

Step Three – Delivering the Vision

1 Step One – The Audit

In this phase, the management group will start by looking at where they are today in relation to each of the fundamental business pillars such as sponsorship, membership, data management, events, social media etc. (In smaller clubs not all of the fundamentals will be relevant).

Wherever possible, it should include numbers. For example, number of members, number of participants and number of e mails on the data base etc. (if possible for the previous couple of years as well as the current year).

This will provide information and comparisons about the club's progress and highlight their strengths and weaknesses. For example, the audit might show that membership has dropped by 50% in the last two years or that the sponsorship income is 20% below budget.

Below are some of the questions that need to be asked as part of the audit

Selling

- How many members, business supporters and participants does the club have?
- What levels of income does each group generate - and have they achieved their targets?
- Have any trends developed over the last few years? For example, has social membership been falling, or has the numbers of families joining the club been increasing?
- Does the club understand the different customers it has and their individual “wants and needs?” For example, the “wants and needs” of a family joining the club are different to those of a senior player.
- Does the club have a marketing strategy for each of its products? For example, sponsorship, Corporate Social Responsibility funding, memberships and families?
- What marketing does the club do today? What has been successful and what has failed?

Customer Service – retaining “customers.”

- Do all of the “team off the field” recognise the importance of retaining all of the clubs “customers” and do they know what needs to be done to achieve this? Customers would include current members and anyone else linked to the club.
- Does the club focus on being welcoming, on communicating with all “customers” on a regular basis, or on training its coaches to a high level?
- Is the competition (this could refer to other sports organisations) doing better in retaining their “customers” such as families, members or businesses, and is it known why this is?

Communications

- Which channels does the club use?
- What are the numbers involved for each channel? For instance, the number of unique users of the web site or the numbers of people on Facebook etc.
- Does the club understand which segment of its customers use which channel? For example, Facebook will be followed by 16 to 32 years old people, while 50+ members might only get their information from local newspapers.

Database

- How many records do you have in your data base and is the club GDPR compliant?
- Does the club hold all the data of participants, families, sponsors and everyone who attends the events?
- Importantly, is the database up to date? How often is it updated? Are records of each customer complete? Are some missing telephone numbers, email addresses etc?

Visibility in the Community

- Is the club in all local directories and on all local web sites?
- Does it work to support the local community in any way?
- Does it run events which would attract members or a wide range of individuals from the community?
- Is work done in the local schools?
- Is the club's logo consistently used across all materials and in all communications?
- What are the club's core values and are these promoted? For example, does the club, for example, want to be known as a community orientated club and/or a family club?

Financial Management

- Give the club a "health check" and decide if anything needs to change.
- Which promotions/activities/events were financially successful.
- Could the club improve how these are run to increase the profit margin? For example, with various children's camps, is there added value that can be included, such as gift packs from sponsors etc. Could some of the future costs be offset by other means, such as water/food etc., supplied by a local business?

Volunteers

- How many volunteers does the club have?
- Are there any areas where the club doesn't have any expertise in its volunteers?
- How does the club strive to find more volunteers?

These are examples of the questions that the planning group should ask. They are not all relevant to every club as not all clubs have the resources to do everything. The information collected will highlight what the club needs to focus on for the next year or two to make the club sustainable, and what could change if they want the club to grow.

2 Step Two – Developing the Vision.

The management group will need to discuss each fundamental business pillar and identify where changes need to take place and/or areas where changes could be made.

For example, if it was identified that membership had dropped from previous years, a plan needs to be formulated to address these falling numbers. Alternatively, they could decide to develop a women's section, starting with an adult team for the next season.

When any changes or new proposals are discussed, it is critical that the club identify it has the necessary resources to deliver this change or is prepared to invest time and effort into achieving its aims. The club must then prioritise which changes they will be able to make during the next year or even two years.

Next, they will need to develop a goal which correlates to each of these changes. Each goal will need to be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time framed



As an example a membership goal club might aim to identify which categories of membership the club could sell and grow to agree that it is attainable to increase the membership by 10% and this can be done within 3 months.

The club may set one goal or several goals for the following year or two years. These goals combined will make up the "vision" of where the club wants to be within the set period of time

Developing the Goals

Actions

- The audit will highlight the actions/changes that need to be made for the club to be sustainable and the actions/changes that the club could make if it wanted to grow.
- There will be points under each of the fundamental business pillars.
 - For example, if adult membership has dropped by 50% resulting in a budget deficit and the senior teams being short of players, the club will need to create a marketing campaign to attract more playing members.
 - Or, if the club house has recently refurbished the kitchens and installed Wifi, an option that could be to develop the club house into a training and meeting venue for local businesses.

IMPORTANT NOTE – If the latter were a consideration, then before carrying out any renovation/ refurbishment to the club house, it would be good to identify if there was a specific business need within the community For example, if there were a shortage of quality meeting venues, upgrading with appropriate technology would benefit the club, build more business opportunities and help offset those costs against future increased revenue.

- These actions /changes will then need to be put into two lists:
 - The ones that need to take place for the club to become sustainable.
 - Those that could take place for the club to grow.
- The management group will then need to decide which actions/ changes they will include in their plan for the forthcoming seasons.
- It may be that some of the actions/changes they agree may take a year, while others may take two years.
- When deciding on which changes to focus on, it is essential that the club analyses the resources needed to make the changes and that these resources are available.

Too many clubs try to make changes and fail because they have not resourced it and/or thought the project through correctly.

- The club will have to convert the actions/changes into Goals. These goals will need to be:
 - **Specific** – For example, the intention is to “increase the numbers of adult playing members to 80,” rather than having a statement that says we want to “get more people involved with the club.”
 - **Measurable** – For example, “we want to increase the number of adult participants to 80 from 60.”
 - **Attainable** – The club shouldn’t set a goal that it knows isn’t achievable. The goal should stretch them but if it isn’t achievable the personnel charged with delivering it may well give up.
 - **Relevant** – The goal should be pertinent to the clubs progress, and the club should have the resources available to achieve the goal. For example, finding a second XV for next year from the local community will be easier and more relevant to the club’s vision to get another 100 families involved in the club. That is unachievable, especially if there is nobody within the club with the skills and time to make this realistic.
 - **Time Framed** – Finally, it will need to have a time scale with a commitment to achieve the Goals within an agreed period. (could be weeks, months or years) This will be driven by the ambition, and resource of the club.
- At this stage, the management team will all be in agreement about which goals they are going to focus on for the duration of the project timeframe. The goals will, therefore, make up the clubs “vision” for the future.

Examples of ‘goals.’

Sponsorship – The audit has identified that the number of games being sponsored each season has dropped by 50% over the last three seasons.

- The goal for next season is to:
 - Develop attractive matchday package
 - To actively sell the packages into the local businesses
 - To sell sponsorships for 10 games this season.

Data – The audit has highlighted that although it is estimated that there are over 500 people involved with the club there are only 120 contacts on the database.

- The goal over the next 12 months is to:
 - Decide on a database system to use in the club
 - To actively collect information about everyone that is connected to the club so that there are 500 up to date records on the data base.

Women’s Rugby – the club understands the wide range of benefits having a women’s section can bring to it.

- The goal is to have established an adult women’s team at the club with 25 players, 2 coaches and 3 volunteers for the beginning of next season in 9 months’ time.

3 Step Three – Delivering the Vision

Finally, a plan needs to be developed which outlines what the ‘vision’ is (this will be made up of one or more ‘goals’). The Who, what and when.

- Who is going to be responsible for the delivery of each goal?
- What is the strategy in each case?
- A time line of what is going to be achieved and when.

Who should be involved in the planning process?

It is essential that all of the key stakeholders/volunteers involved with the plan should form a management group and then work together to develop and deliver it. This will ensure that they:

- All “buy into” and take ownership of the plan
- Have a role to play in its development
- Know exactly what is expected of them and when.

If all of the information has been collected before the meeting, it may be possible to work through the steps in one or two evenings. Since there will be a certain amount of discussion and debate, it may be worth trying to find an independent facilitator for the process.

When should this meeting take place?

The ideal time would be at the end of the season when there are no other distractions, and the plan can be developed and delivered at the start of the new season.

Actions

The Management group will now need to develop and deliver a plan for each goal that they have agreed upon (it may be that there is only one goal making up the “vision”).

- The individuals responsible for delivering the goal need to be selected.
- This decision will be made based on the required skills necessary and the other responsibilities that the individuals already have.
- This delivery team will then need to develop a strategy and a detailed plan for each goal.
- The strategy will provide an overview of the actions required and how the goal is going to be achieved.
- The plan will provide the detail of:
 - What will be done
 - When it will be done
 - How it will be done
 - Who will do it.
- Within this detailed plan, there will need to be agreed points at which the delivery team will report back to the management team.

Example:

Goal

- The club has decided that to grow its Mini section it needs to have a schools programme from which the young people will be moved along a pathway to the club.
- The club has found the coach and the schools have agreed, but they need to find £4000 to fund the programme. It is now March, and the goal is to have the finances in place by July of next year so that the coaching can begin in September.

Strategy

- The club will create a sales campaign which will target the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) departments of businesses within the region.

Personnel

- The delivery team will be made up of Tom Wright (TW), Brian Jones (BJ) and Jane Thompson (JT) who will be the team leader.



Example of a strategy plan – see below

Activities	Action	Who	When
To create a target list of Companies.	Research using web sites and telephone calls to companies to find out what the business supports through its CSR Policy. Build up a list of companies that support sport or healthy activities in their communities. The relevant individual within the business will also need to be identified	TW and BJ	Completed by April
Create presentation materials.	The club will need a Power Point presentation for any meetings, an e mail presentation for any businesses that ask for further information and an introductory email for businesses.	JT	Completed by April
Create a package of benefits for the business	The club will need a Power Point presentation for any meetings, an e mail presentation for any businesses that ask for further information and an introductory email for businesses.	JT	Completed by April
Contact with the target Businesses	The plan will be to send some initial information to the targeted individuals then to call him/her to try and get a meeting.	TW to send info. BJ to call	June
Arrange a meeting and deliver the presentation	If a meeting is agreed, then the pre-prepared Power Point will need to be delivered. It is important to find out at this meeting exactly what the business is looking to support and what they want for their support. It may well be that you have to go away and re- shape the offering to exactly match their wants and needs	TW and BJ	June/July
When the deal is agreed someone will need to 'service' it.	If the business agrees to support the project, then it is essential that all of the benefits/ actions that have been promised in the agreement actually are actually delivered.	TW	September to August



The Community Sports Club - is it a small business?

If your average bystander visited your local Community Sports Club they would no doubt be amazed by the loyalty which is evidenced by members, volunteers, business partners and supporters within it.

The visitor however, is also likely to view the club as a “small business” A proportion of the people within the club would be offended by this whereas a proportion of them will believe that it is essential to think this way in order to develop the club.

Successful clubs, whether knowingly or not, do adopt Business principles of sales and marketing when they attract new members and business partners; they embrace customer service principles in order to retain their “customers” but they also value, recognise and reward loyalty.

It is even more important in today’s tough environment, when there is such competition for grants, sponsorship, memberships, volunteers, facility hire and supporters, that Community Sports Clubs consider how they are able to compete with other clubs.

Selling the club to the community

Every person and business that is linked to a Community Sports Club was at some point initially connected/introduced to the club, they recognised that the club had something to offer them and they decided to join/support the club.

For example, if parents are looking to buy membership for a sports club for their children, they are customers looking for a specific product. (A junior section of the club) They have specific wants and needs, which could be family friendly, good coaching, and a safe environment.

If the club understands this is what parents (the customers) want, they can promote their club (the product) through their marketing channels such as social media, therefore selling the product to the customer.

A second example could be a business that sponsors the club. We know that businesses use sponsorship to achieve an outcome such as brand awareness and access to new customers (their wants and needs). If the club understands this then when they are looking for new sponsors they can better identify how to fulfil a sponsor’s business need. (Selling the club to potential customers)

Even if a member of the club, who has a business, supports the club philanthropically they will want something in return because they will usually need to justify their involvement to their business colleagues.

Retaining your members and Business partners

It is essential that a Community Sports Club continues to recognise how important it is to retain all of its members and business partners. The fundamental reasons for this are a) every person or business has a huge value to the club if they stay for several years. b) If they like the service they receive they will sell the club to other people and businesses and c) it costs the club much more to find new members than it does to retain existing ones. All this is achieved through the provision of customer service.

What do we mean by customer service in a sporting club? In simple terms it means that if the club understands what the member wants or the business partner wants to achieve, it will need to ensure that they receive what they want or need. If we sell the club to a family on the basis that the coaching is good and it isn’t, they will leave. If the club tells the sponsor that they will receive promotion through the newsletter and they don’t get it, they will leave.

Finally, if the club receives a complaint it needs to be dealt with immediately. Very often if the complaint is dealt with well you will have a very loyal supporter of the club.

Further information

Included in the booklet are further details about

- 1 How you can** best sell memberships or secure Sponsorship
- 2 How you can** communicate your messages about your club to potential customers (members etc.) and
- 3 How you can** build up an identity and a brand for the club.

Section 2

Developing skills and team play

Creating a sustainable and successful club



The Tactics

Communication



How to use Social Media.

Building an effective web site,
- why community sports clubs
need one.

Data management.



How to use Social Media

Social media provides a range of online opportunities for a community sports club by the provision of two way communication and content sharing with a wider audience.

Social Media can be deliberately focussed to target a specific type of people and businesses that your community sports club needs to communicate with. The outcomes of effective social media activity are a) an enhanced online profile b) a strengthening of relationship with the club's members, supporters and business partners c) the successful targeting a new relevant audience who could link to with the club.

Benefits

The numbers of individuals and businesses that use and are involved with social media in the local community of the clubs will be extensive. Therefore there is a huge potential for communicating with an existing and new audience.

The awareness that can be built up for the club and its brand is also an important factor. For this to be achieved there needs to be a long term commitment to being involved with social media.

It can also promote the values and ethos of the club such as being family friendly, diverse, being "professional" in all aspects, providing relevant information to the club's target audience and promotion of the clubs expertise in areas such as coaching.

Sales are also a key outcome from the use of social media. Your products might include summer camps, facility hire, memberships, sponsorships and events.

Challenges

The main challenge is the amount of time that needs to be invested in social media in order to achieve the required outcomes. Community sports club needs to have a strategy, outcomes need to be measured and there needs to be self-discipline around the amount of time spent being involved with social media. Also understanding the way different social media platforms operate and who they attract, is the key to success.

Building a Social Media Plan

There are a range of key considerations you need to make before committing time to social media.

What you need to consider when getting involved with social media.

As mentioned in the previous section Social Media can fulfil a range of needs within Community Sports Club. Any plan needs to outline what is going to be done, by whom, what the outcomes will be and how the results be measured.

Who are you targeting?

As part of the plan you need to know exactly who you are targeting (demographics, geography -where they are, their gender, families, their ethnic group plus if they are businesses why they would be of interest to you.

The use and involvement of social media can bring many benefits but it is not without its challenges.

Which platforms should you use?

Community sports clubs will need to consider the resources it has available and then focus on what can be achieved. The popular main stream platforms are Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn but you can perhaps only commit to one or two if your resources are limited.

Linking social media to the values of the club/association or Governing Body

Your social media content and approach needs to reflect the values of the club and the image it is trying to create in its market place. Areas such as being family orientated, quality coaching and providing a professional approach may be relevant.

In summary, social media provides a huge opportunity but it needs to be planned carefully and outcomes need to be measured. It may be that the measurement shows that you aren't achieving your outcomes and there may need to be a change in your approach.

Key Points when using Social Media



Facebook

What are the outcomes you should aim to achieve when using Facebook?

Building Brand Awareness for the Club – by having a Facebook presence the club will be able to promote the existence of the club and the values that it has, to a wide target audience.

Providing Information – Facebook can provide a direct channel to members, supporters and business partners for news, changes of fixtures, results and training times. It can also provide awareness for a sponsors target audience through branding and advertising. It can also entertain its audience through videos and audible clips as well as promoting forthcoming events to potential supporters.

Interaction with its target market – Facebook is easy to use and it allows two way communications between the club and its audience, therefore making it an extremely interactive forum. By creating a Facebook group you could make your junior section a private group for child safeguarding reasons.

Promoting the club, its products or services to a new targeted audience - Facebook ads are a relatively cheap way of targeting a new and targeted audience for your events, facility hire, memberships, sponsorships and rugby camps. If you understand the different customers you would be searching for, Facebook ads could target them.



Twitter

Building Brand Awareness for the Club – as above, by having a presence on Twitter the club will be able to promote the existence of the club and the values that it has, to a different audience.

Whilst some millennials for example, use Facebook, many do not. Twitter is a much faster moving platform and is less intrusive than Facebook so it enables active dialogue in real time. As such, its usage should differ to that of Facebook

Twitter can be used to drive traffic to the club web site and to make club announcements about training, match information etc.

In order to grow the club's Twitter following the club should 1) plan the content it is going to use 2) engage with fellow users and 3) ensure that the profile is interesting and well written

Hashtags should be used since they will make the posts more searchable and will enable posts to be picked up more easily if the subject is trending.



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is an ideal channel to generate business interest and to build a business network.

Ensure that all of your member's link with the club's LinkedIn page, invite all target individuals from the Council, potential funders, local businesses, head teachers and anyone else who is in the local Community and could support the club, to link with you.

Keep the club's profile updated and professional.

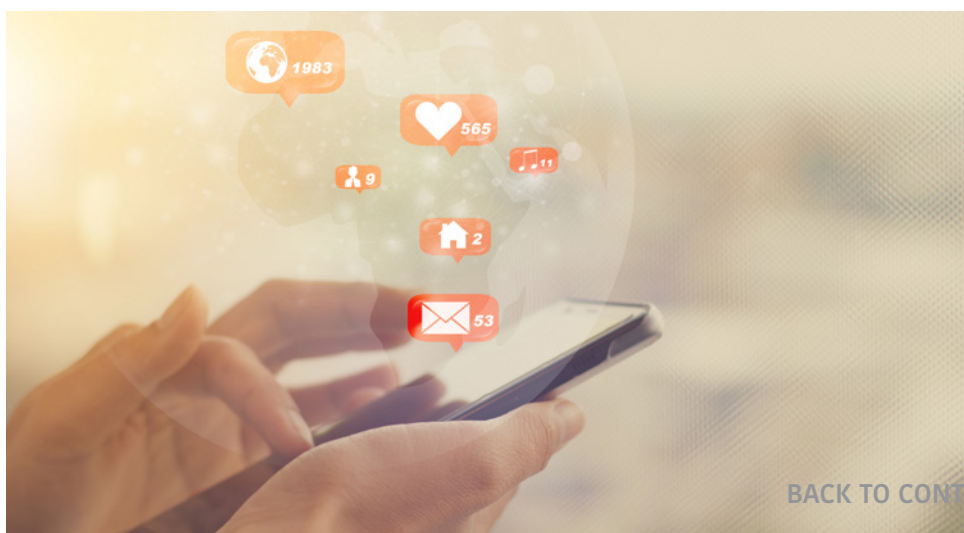
Search for any groups that could be of benefit to the club e.g. community groups or relevant sports groups.



Instagram

Whilst Instagram may seem a less likely choice, it has its uses particularly when highlighting club successes.

Match Day photos and event photos can be posted quickly and easily. Posting a picture on Instagram with a brand in the background is a simple way of generating brand awareness for the sponsor.





Building an effective web site

- why community sports clubs need one

In today's world it is expected that all reputable clubs would have an online presence. Without it the club's viability could be questioned by members, supporters and business partners. This lack of credibility could also lose the club access to new customers.

They also need to have an online presence because it is a communication channel that can be accessed by anyone, at any time and from anywhere. This will provide existing and potential members, supporters and business partners with an immediate source of information about the club and its latest news.

What does the club need to consider before it begins to develop a web site?

The club should understand that all visitors to the website will be going there for a reason. The club should also understand what they want to find there and who they are. Members for instance may want to find out about fixtures, training and news. A potential family member will want to understand how the club views families, what they have to offer families and how it can fit with their needs.

The club should also understand how its web site can be integrated with Social Media channels, as it should be thought of as the communication centre for the club. The club may decide to use Facebook to encourage families to the web site so they can find out more information about family memberships. It could be that the club targets LinkedIn's business audience to share with them how other sponsors are finding success with the club and drive them to the web site where they can find out more information.

Another point to consider is that the website creates an image about the club in the minds of the visitors. It will reflect the brand and the values of the club. This could certainly attract or inadvertently repel potential members, supporters or business partners.

From a sponsor's point of view they are often promised exposure of their products, services and brand on the web site. They need to receive this and will often ask to see the numbers of visitors to the web site. This highlights the importance of the club to focus on growing the numbers of unique visitors to the web site, the more visitors they have, the more exposure the sponsor gets and the more valuable web site exposure is.



The more the club understands about the visitors to its web site and what they really want to see, the more value and relevance the web site will have. Google analytics will show the club how their members behave and the areas they spend most time looking at.

Which Content should the club include?

We mentioned earlier that the content should reflect the wants and needs of the specific groups of customers visiting the web site.

Members and supporters will want to see information about;

- Fixtures and competitions
- Training nights and changes
- news, results, photos and videos
- Covid updates.
- Merchandise

Visitors to the club will want to see;

- Directions on how to find the club
- Parking information
- Opening times
- Contact details
- Information about the club house or local facilities

Sponsors and Business partners will want to see;

- Exposure for their brand
- A link to their web site
- If they are potential business partners they will need to see how the club can assist them to achieve their business outcomes.
- Testimonials from other Business partners
- The types of sponsorship packages that are available and what they can assist the business to achieve

Generating an income from the web site

New members, new supporters and new business partners will potentially visit the web site having been attracted by social media posts or simply by web research.

The temptation is to immediately try to encourage new visitors to buy memberships, to buy tickets for events or to buy sponsorships from the site but with the only information available, being the prices. This rarely works, what they need to see is information telling them that you understand what they want and **“what’s in it for them”** if they do buy.

As an example, a potential business supporter would like to see that you a) understand that they would consider using a sponsorship to build their brand, to find new customers, to enhance their reputation b) would help to build relationships with their customers at events or to motivate their staff. c) can achieve these outcomes by being involved with the club. If they want to build their brand awareness, for example, you would show them your social media numbers, your web site numbers and your data base numbers to show your market reach.

A family would want to read about how the club fulfils the needs of the children and the parents (see Attracting and Retaining Families), what it has to offer families and even a couple of testimonials from satisfied customers.

Key Points for planning the web site

- Understand who will visit the web site and what they want to find there.
- Make it easy for the visitors to find what they are looking for
- Integrate social media with the site for information and sales campaigns
- Present a strong image of the club
- Keep the content “ fresh” , use video and audio whenever possible





Data management

Introduction

An established and flourishing database (which adheres to GDPR) is an extremely valuable asset for the sports club. It is a record of everyone who is linked to the club, from the member to the event attendee. They are all customers and if their data is collected in accordance with GDPR, they can be invited to events, fixtures and be sent newsletters.

Collected data can be used as many times as required, as long as the GDPR is adhered to, and it must be used responsibly. It cannot be given to a third party without consent, and it would be unwise to use it too often as customers may ask for the communications to stop or just ignore them.

The Value of Data

It costs six times less to retain a “customer” as it does to find a new one. Therefore, for instance, if all of the names of the people who came to the summer school last year are on a database (and they agreed to be contacted about future courses) they can be informed about this year’s summer school.

Collected data could increase the value of sponsorship packages. For example, a local butcher might want to use sponsorship at the club to promote his business. The club can’t give him their data bases but they could include information about his business in their newsletters. e.g., “one of our main sponsors, WD Thompson, the butcher, is offering 5% discount to anyone who takes this newsletter into his shop this Saturday.”

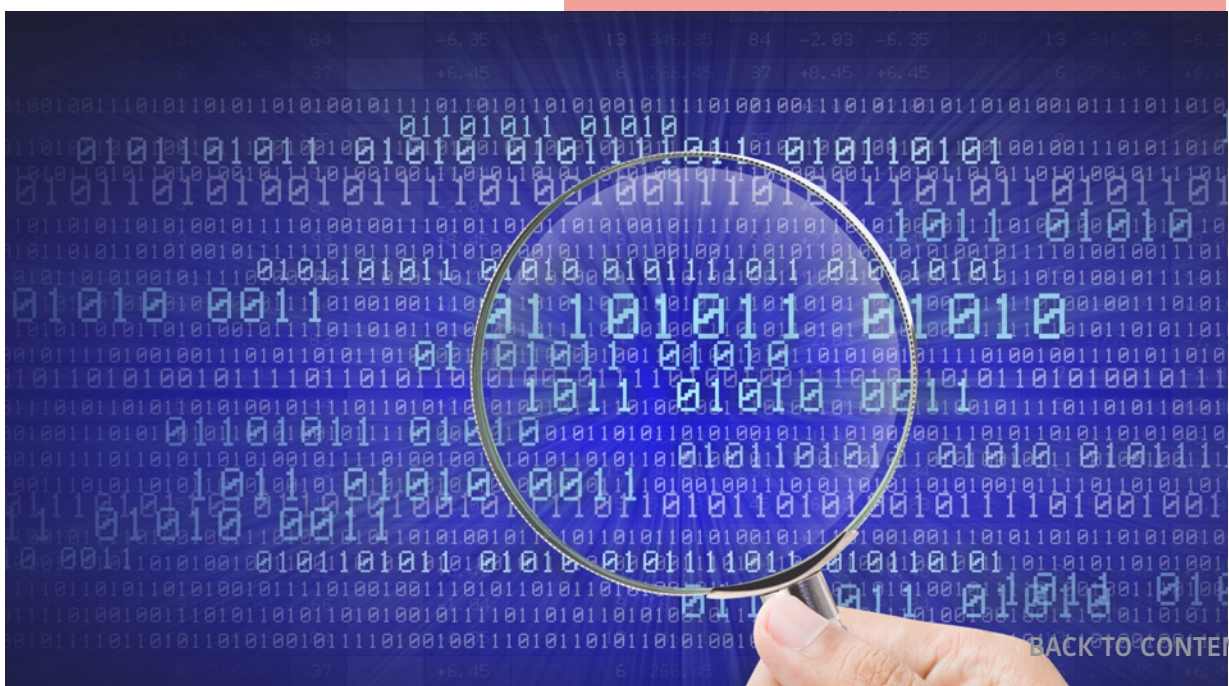
The greater the number of people who are sent the newsletter, the greater the value of the sponsorship. (If the newsletter is sent by e mail

there must be an option to opt-out of future correspondence at any time).

Memberships – the club will have the data of all of its members so that when it comes to promoting the following year’s memberships they have a readymade audience. The newsletter also has a value because many people who have opted into receiving it won’t be members and they may be influenced to become members.

Events – if your club runs events there will be an opportunity to collect the data from the attendees (with their permission) to send them information about future events. The same applies for summer schools and coaching events.

Collected data could increase the value of sponsorship packages.



Segmenting the data/ e-mail marketing

The real “power” in e-mail marketing is through the ability to segment the club’s database to send out e-mails to groups with a common interest, want or need. This can be achieved through simple excel documents or if the club can afford it a CRM system.

Examples of segments could be

- Customers who attend events
- Customers who buy the summer schools
- All playing members or all social members
- Businesses who buy advertising or sponsorships

NB If you send out your e mails using a marketing tool such as Mailchimp you will be able to track who opened the emails and who didn’t. Also don’t forget that all e mails need an opt out clause on the e mail.

Which data should you collect?

Obviously, the more data you can collect the better it is for marketing purposes but, the more you ask for, the more reluctant individuals are to give it to you! The basic information which is useful for your club is outlined below:

- Name and address
- E-mail address
- Mobile Number

If you have any questions on GDPR, the Information Commisssioners Office has a telephone helpline on 0303 123 1113 ext4



The Tactics

Sales and Marketing



Grow your sponsorship income.

How to attract and retain families.

Growing your club memberships.

E mail marketing.



Grow your Sponsorship income

An easy to follow, step by step guide.

Introduction

Sponsorship is undoubtedly one of the key sources of income for all clubs, irrespective of their size. Without a successful sponsorship programme, the clubs will struggle to reach their income targets.

What is Sponsorship?

Sponsorship is when a person or business supports a person, group of people or sporting club (this could be financially or in kind) in an activity which provides a profit for the recipient. In return, the sponsor usually receives some business benefit, although philanthropic sponsorship does exist.

What is the situation today?

In the past, many businesses have supported clubs through sponsorship without wanting anything back from it. This situation has changed dramatically during the last few years as the economic climate has changed, with many sponsors now needing to justify their investment in the club.

To build a successful sponsorship programme clubs need to understand the following:

- What does the business want from their sponsorship?
- How can the club assist them in achieving their outcomes?
- How does the club put a sponsorship package together and which skills do they need to sell it, especially in the face of competition?
- Once they have a sponsor how do they service the sponsorship and retain it?
- Companies use sponsorship to fulfil their business needs

How to build a Sponsorship Campaign Background Information

What does the Sponsor want from the deal?

As we have mentioned there are some sponsors who will provide funds for philanthropic reasons. For this purpose, we are going to assume that all sponsorships exist to fulfil business needs for the sponsor.

There are five main reasons why a business might buy sponsorship;

- To find more customers
- To help retain existing customers
- To build brand awareness
- To build a reputation in the local community and wider world – this is sometimes called CSR.
- To motivate and reward its workforce

What does the club have that can fulfil these needs?

- To find more customers – databases, members, supporters
- To retain customers – hospitality, matches and events where the business can interact with its clients

- Brand awareness – shirt advertising, website, pitch side hoarding, programme, roadside advertising
- Build their reputation – involvement in community and your junior section
- Motivate workforce – be seen to support sport, activity in their community. Employee involvement, TAG/Touch Tournaments, etc.

Key Points

- The greater the numbers that the club has for the following - databases, members, Facebook likes, hits on the website, spectators, etc. - the greater the likely value the sponsorship will have.
- Not all sponsors will want the same thing. Some may want to find new customers and to motivate their staff; others may want to build their reputation
- The key to selling sponsorship is to find out what the business is looking for and to offer it to them!
- Once you have a sponsor in place, you need to retain them by ensuring that you speak with them on a regular basis and check that they are getting the outcomes they expect.

What does a club need to build a winning sponsorship proposition?

1 Step One – What do you have to offer a potential sponsor?

Using the points outlined in the background information, a club should establish what it has available to fulfil a potential sponsor's needs.

Examples of this could be:

- A database of 1,000 that could connect them to 1,000 potential customers.
- A schools programme that they could use to build their reputation.
- International Tickets that they could use to build relationships with their existing customers

2 Step Two – The Value of your inventory

The club will then need to apply a value to this.

How do I do that?

It could be through checking what other clubs do, through analysing equivalent sponsorships and advertising rates and a member of your club works at one of your target businesses, ask them their opinion.

3 Step Three – Building up a target list

The club will need to carry out research to build up a target list of companies. This can be achieved in a few ways:

- Via business or council websites
- Word of mouth
- Reading the business pages of the local newspaper
- Reading any local business magazines.

Once the target list has been established then the club will need to identify the person responsible for sponsorship. The easiest way to achieve this is to call up the business and ask for the name of the person. If they won't give out the name then try to find a person who works at that business to ask or look at the recent press cuttings from the business since often the sponsorship person is photographed handing out a cheque!

4 Step Four – What does the business want?

The key to your success is to try and have some idea of the "wants and needs" of the business before you approach it.

Very often there will be information on their website, failing this, simply phone them, making a "research" call – "I am working with a local club and wanted to find out how you get involved in the local community and what sort of projects do you sponsor?"

5 Step Five – Contacting the Business

If one of your members is working at the target business send them in with an overview of the sponsorship project and ask them to make an introduction for a follow up meeting.

If this isn't the case, maybe you have a person within the club that it is used to making sales calls, the initial contact should be through the telephone.

Setting up the meeting with the relevant contact is all important. Your aim then is to:

- Find out more about the businesses wants and needs.
- Match the appropriate business to what you have to offer.
- Let them know that the club can fulfil these needs.

If you don't have a person who can make a sales telephone call you will need to send information via e mail and through the post, then follow up with a call to see if they have received it and gauge interest.

6 Step Six – the Presentation

Once you understand what's important to the potential sponsor prepare a short presentation outlining the project you want sponsoring.

If you do manage to get a meeting then you will need to:

- Understand the business that you're meeting. Do your research.
- Prepare a short professional presentation about the project you want sponsoring
- Use the information they give you at the start of the meeting in the presentation to demonstrate that sponsorship can fulfil their business needs.

Writing the Sponsorship document/ presentation

I have outlined below one suggestion for the structure of the sponsorship document or PowerPoint

1 Section One

Background on the club covering areas such as ethos, structure, history, geographic location, activities, teams and achievements

2 Section Two

The ambitions of the club – what is the clubs "vision" and what will it look like in three years' time.

3 Section Three

The numbers section:

- Size of databases – demographics and postcode analysis if possible
- Number of users on the website, social media sites, etc.
- Number of participants in each section of the club
- Number of members
- Coverage in local press – press cuttings if possible
- Number of cars driving past the end of the road
- Number of businesses using the club house

4 Section Four

The Sponsorship Rights

This is a summary of what the business gets for its money and will depend on what it is hoping to achieve through the relationship. It may include:

- Product sponsorship
- Venue sponsorship
- Access to the clubs data – in line with data protection laws
- Advertising sites – website, e-mail, posters, at the ground, etc.
- Summer school for employees
- Table at the end of season dinner

5 Section Five

The Investment

- The cost of sponsorship
- When it is payable
- Duration of sponsorship

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Understand that sponsorship has to be "sold" and that the potential sponsor has business "needs" that he has to fulfil.
- Preparation is vital.
- Understand the value of what you have to sell.
- Build up a target list and prepare sponsorship/marketing collateral.
- Find out through research how you could help a business fulfil its needs
- Be professional at all times; your competition will be!
- If you don't have the necessary marketing skills to make a sales call or write a sales letter, maybe there is someone find a local course that will teach you
- If you sign a sponsorship deal, don't forget to service it!



How to attract and retain families

Overview

The family unit is vital, driving income and resource, providing participants, revenue, volunteers and networks for the club.

Research shows that a family is worth between £200 and £1000 a year through the purchase of membership, events, merchandise, food and drink over the bar, etc.

It is crucial that the club:

- Attracts and retains families.
- It is essential to engage the whole family and that the children aren't simply "dropped off" before training and picked up afterwards with only a junior membership being purchased.
- Recognises that their community is diverse and understands that all groups need to be considered.

Key Points

- Engaging with the parents is vital to the children and family joining as club members.
- In any promotional collateral. Their opinion of the club will have a huge bearing on whether their child/children will join and subsequently how involved the rest of the family will become.
- If one of the parents is involved with a sport it is likely that they will introduce their children to this sport.
- If the family doesn't have any involvement with a specific sport, then it is usually the mother who decides which sport their children will try.
- The club's aim is to get the whole family involved, such as parents staying during the training and not simply dropping off their child. If one or both is already involved with sport, this is straightforward. If not then it is essential that the club communicates with the parents (especially the Mother) and tells them "what's in it for them" if they get involved. This might be simply a coffee and bacon sandwich in the clubhouse or a fitness session for parents.
- Once the club has involved the family, it must work to retain them.

What are the "wants and needs" of the parents for their children?

We know from research carried out by Kellogg's in Ireland that the 'wants and needs' the parents have for their children are;

- Challenge for the children
- Experience success and failure
- Develop confidence and self-esteem
- Learn about teamwork
- Make friends
- Have fun
- Safe environment
- Coaches who understand child development

These points need to be emphasised in any sent to parents, highlighting the value of their children playing sport. We know that rugby does develop positive attitudes in children, but we don't always tell people this when encouraging them to become involved.

What are the "wants" and "needs" of the parents?

As was mentioned previously, it is essential to consider these elements to get the whole family included.

As a basic starting point, she will need to be told "what's in it for her" to come into the clubhouse and to become involved.

The main areas to focus on are:

- **Social** – is it possible to create a "social gathering" "at the clubhouse during training? Can you run events just for parents?
- **Communication and organisation** – does the Mother know what is happening and when?
- **Welcoming and informed** - Is the Mother welcomed into the clubhouse and are the people she meets informed and have an understanding about her "wants and needs"?

It is essential to engage the whole family and that the children aren't simply 'dropped off' before training and picked up afterwards...



Evaluate your service through questionnaires

- Listen to your customers and if you have the resources, send out a basic questionnaire to find out what they do and don't like about the club.

Retaining the Family

It is all about offering good “customer service.” The family are customers since they have chosen to spend their time/money with the club. The points that need to be focused upon are:

Understanding the customer's wants and needs - Does the club understand what the Family wants and does it strive to deliver it?

Fulfilling their expectations - If the club offers the customer one thing, then delivers another, it will lose them to the competition. Does the training start on time and finish on time? Is it fun, challenging, etc. as was promised in the “sales letter.”

Make service personal - When the new family arrives at the club, they need to be welcomed. It needs to be recognised that they are new and any follow-up needs to be personalised, not just a general letter to “Dear New Parent.”

Establish an excellent customer experience - If the “customer experience” is good then not only will they stay with the club, they will tell others about it.

Develop staff understanding of the importance of customer service and commitment to customer service

- The volunteers aren't expected to be customer service experts but if they understand
- How important the service is

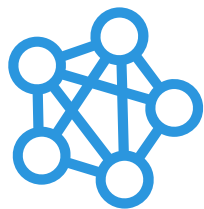
- Make sure that the areas in which they are involved embrace customer service, then it will make a massive difference. The point made above emphasises this; if a player or family is new to the club, welcome them and spend time understanding what it is they want from the club.

Strengthen the bond with your customer through communication

Resources will dictate how often you will be able to communicate with your customers and through which channels.

However, the basics are:

- Collect data whenever you can and build up some basic profile information (what events do they come to, did they book the room for a birthday party, etc.)
- Use the relevant channels – Social Media is the relevant channel for young adults whereas e-mail is probably more relevant for older people.
- Keep your customers informed generally but if you have some basic profile information about them, target them with specific messages e.g. “*we know that your children came to the summer school last year, would you be interested again this year? Here is some information for you.*”



Growing your club's membership

Overview

Having a thriving and expanding membership is the key to having a successful club. The club will need to spend time and effort achieving this, it just doesn't happen!

The first point to consider is that there are a range of memberships available to sell at the club. The majority of the members will be participants, but there will also be parents and individuals who are interested in the social aspects of the club, students, Vice Presidents, (members who have moved away from the area, but who still have an interest in "belonging") and associate members.

Membership income is one of the main sources of revenue and therefore it is important that the club focusses on this area. The club will need to understand:

- Who the potential members are
 - The range of membership categories they can offer
 - What their individual "wants and needs" are
 - How to build an active sales strategy to sell the memberships over a period of time
- 1) For each category you must first identify why individuals would want to pay for membership. Some research may be required beforehand to properly understand who the target groups are and their individual "wants" and "needs." For example a social member may only want regular information about the club, access to events and a discount at the business who is the main club sponsor.
 - 2) Once completed, tailor a membership package to fulfil the needs of each category.
 - 3) Use the website, social media, word of mouth and e-mail to sell the memberships, clearly informing target groups what they get and why they should consider buying a membership. This isn't a one off communication; it needs to run over a few weeks.
 - 4) Actively sell memberships and collect data from all members. (In line with GDPR)
 - 5) Customer Service. In order to retain all members next year ensure you deliver all aspects of the membership package.
 - 6) Try to get feedback from your members as to how you could improve their experience.

The Target Group - examples

Participants - what you offer this target group will vary and therefore it is important that the club recognises the different types of "customer". The performance sportsperson will want to have good coaches, good facilities, and a competitive team. The social sportsperson will also require good coaching and facilities but will also want to have fun and a good social life through the club.

Families - The parents may simply take out a junior membership for their child/children if you don't tell them about the benefits of being family members. These benefits could include discounts at events, access to certain social events, newsletters, fitness classes for mothers, etc.

Social Members - You will need to understand why a nonparticipant should join the club. What's in it for him/her if They do? The package needs to be developed and promoted.

Country Members - All clubs have individuals and families who have moved away but who would still like to be linked to the club. The Country Membership should be cheap but offer benefits such as newsletters, discounts on club merchandise.

Associate members - some clubs who have club houses have brought in other sports to use the facilities and their members have become associate members. Examples are cycling clubs linking to rugby clubs or darts and snooker teams playing out of club facilities.

On the following page is an example of the membership categories and benefits from a rugby club in Ireland.

IMPORTANT - It costs more to find a new member as it does to keep one. Spending time on developing and retaining members reaps long-term loyalty and rewards for the club.





Club example Membership opportunities

Benefits	Full - Playing and /or Voting Categories						Associate/Pavilion/Social Categories					
	Member	Family	Student	Youth	Mini		Member	Family	Over 65/ OAP	Student	Youth	Mini
Voting Rights	✓	✓	✓									
Player Insurance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Use of Club Gym/Weights Room	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				
Members Bar & Food Prices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Member bring Guest	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
International Ticket Preferences	✓	✓										
Free Use of Club Function Room	✓	✓										
Copy of MRFC Yearbook	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discounted Rate of Club Function Room							✓	✓	✓			
Discount at Club Shop	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
MRFC club Gift Card value €60	✓	✓										
Special MRFC Discounts in local Shops	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Free Coaching Courses	✓	✓										
Club Membership Card & car park badge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Special member rates to all classes held in club	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓			
Inclusion on club mailing list	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to Club Discos & get friend admitted				✓	✓						✓	✓
Members Disco Reduced Rates				✓	✓						✓	✓
Wright Venue VIP Card	✓											
Tamango Nite Club Special Concessions			✓									
MRFC Golf Society	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		
MRFC Tag / Touch Rugby Group	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	
MRFC Wheelers	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Club Physiotherapist- 20% Discount	✓	✓	✓	✓								
Club Physiotherapist- 10% Discount							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
MRFC Running Club	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Annual Cost	€300	€360	€120	€90	€90		€80	€120	€50	€50	€20	€20
Less Gift Card value of €60	€60	€60										
Annual Net Cost	€240	€300	€120	€90	€90							
Equal to a Cost Per Month of	€25	€30	€10	€7.50	€7.50		€7.00	€10	€5	€5	n/a	n/a
Can be paid by Monthly Standing Order	€25	€30	€10				€7.00	€10				

[HOME](#)
[FUNDRAISING DRAWS](#)
[NEWS](#)
[TELL FRIENDS](#)
[CONTACT](#)

Supporter

John Melvin

[My Lotto Entries](#)
[My Registrations](#)
[My Ticket Events](#)
[Account Details](#)
[My Cards](#)
[Update Expiry Date](#)
[Replace Card](#)
[Logout](#)

Registrations

Step-by-Step

1 Choose your Registration Plan
2 Enter your Registration Plan Details
3 Payment Options
4 Payment Submitted / Confirmed

Club example

MyClubFinances.com

MANAGING YOUR CLUB FINANCES

Club/Society Registrations

Registration Plan

Coach Membership €80.00

Step 2 of 4

Please enter your Registration Plan Details into the form below, all fields marked with an asterisk (*) must be completed, and click on the Next Step button to proceed to the Payment Options screen.

Adult

Name Prefix *
First Name *
Surname *
Address *

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
Player: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Coaching Info: Age grade of Squad Coached:
Email *
Mobile Phone *
Home Phone *
Date of Birth * (dd/mm/yyyy)

First Aid? Have you completed a First Aid Course? If YES please choose "Other Please Specify", and let us know what year, e.g. "Yes, 2009"
Please select...

Diffrillator? Have you completed a Diffrillator Course Course? If YES please choose "Other Please Specify", and let us know what year, e.g. "Yes, 2009"
Please select...

Coaching Course? Have you completed a coaching course? If YES please choose "Other Please Specify", and let us know what year, e.g. "Yes, 2009"
Please select...

Coaching Course? Please specify

Medical Conditions? Please provide details below. If none type "NONE"

[MAKE CHANGES](#)
[NEXT STEP](#)

Key points

- Developing an effective membership campaign takes time.
- Research the categories of membership that are viable for you to sell and build up benefits for each category that are relevant to the customer.
- Actively sell memberships over a period of time and target customers for each category.



E-mail marketing

Overview

Email marketing is one of the most affordable and effective ways to consistently engage with your members, supporters, stakeholders, parents and other prospects within the community.

It is an essential aspect of your communication mix since a vast majority of your target audience will have an email address and can be targeted to sell the club, to provide general information and to build brand awareness. You will also need to consider GDPR when collecting data.

The club's challenge is to ensure that it has collected up to date email addresses from everyone and that they read the emails that you send them. We have discussed data collection in the Data Management "How to guide", below we have outlined the key points you will need to consider when sending out e mails.

Key Points

Always use an email marketing provider such as Mailchimp or Mailrelay because they offer a few services (up to a point) in which you are able to:

- Track who opens the e mail and who doesn't. This will provide you with vital information since if 60% of the emails you send out aren't opened you are only communicating with 40% of your audience.
- Track who clicks through to any links you may include in your e mail. If you have click through to an application form for an email you can see who is really interested.
- Get an immediate feedback on any emails that bounce back.
- Templates that you can use for promotions, newsletters etc.

Create strong content

- Focus on creating and sending high-quality emails versus many general emails that don't provide value.
- Deliver one clear message. Avoid ambiguity in your email content and share one clear reason why subscribers should open your link.
- Keep your text to a minimum. Keep your message short and succinct.
- Have a strong subject line heading, a "Call to Action" message.
 - This is critical because it needs to say to the recipient "there is something in it for you if you open this email". If possible make the subject line short and snappy, around 30 characters.
 - Test the effectiveness of the subject line – you could create two subject lines and send half of the data base one subject line and the other the second subject line. If one works better than the other (using Mailchimp tracking) then resend the e mail out to everyone who hasn't opened it.

Personalisation

- Creating personalised emails does take time but the results speak for themselves. Personalised email messages improve click-through rates by an average of 14 percent and conversions by 10 percent. This is because:

- It shows a relationship with the recipient
- The more detail you can include (phrases such as "because you are a member" because we know you have supported the club in the past") the more trust you can have between the recipient and yourself.

Segment your audience where possible

- In order to improve personalisation of emails you should first segment your audience into relevant groups. Examples of this could be - coaches, parents, businesses etc. Rather than send a general email to all your data list, this a way you can send relevant content to the group that requires it.



If you can use an email marketing provider such as Mailchimp or Mailrelay because they offer a few services

How to make your email content go further

- Extend the offer to the recipient's network
- Include custom social media links so that your recipients can share them and forward them to their network.
- Hyperlinks to your social media pages to help manage email content volume. Provide part content with a link to read more for example. This will also encourage them to pick up on other stories and information they may have missed out on.

Email Frequency

- As mentioned, segmentation of your data will make sure that your audience only receives emails that are of interest to them thus avoiding pointless emails being sent
- Determine which emails are most important while suppressing those of less significance
- Plan your campaigns in advance
- This is not a one size fits all. Email engagement and frequency will vary from group to group, but it is important to monitor open rates to judge what that optimum level is. If response rates drop it may well be because the frequency is more than required.

Types of emails

Newsletters –

Make your newsletters interesting and informative

Sales letters –

aimed at memberships, sponsorships, advertising etc.

Promotions –

events, fixtures can be easily promoted to their target audience



The Tactics

Community integration



Being visible and integrated within your community.

How to run events.

Retaining all of your customers.



Being visible and integrated within your community

Overview

Each club sits within a unique community which is typically made up of several thousand people who are diverse and from different ethnic groups. Within these communities are the potential customers for all of the clubs “products” including participants, businesses who might hire the facilities or sponsor the club, individuals for events, families, members and spectators. However, there are also many other sports clubs within the same community who are competing for these customers. Therefore the club needs to ensure that it is visible within the community and, in order to optimise the potential of that community, it needs to focus on the following;

The identity and reputation of the club (the brand)

Every Sports Club Business needs to develop its own identity or brand, which sets it apart from the other clubs and which is recognisable within its community. A strong brand commands customer loyalty and becomes a valuable asset that drives club revenue and growth. Brand perception (identity and values of the club) is central to sports business transactions, especially sponsorship deals and merchandising. A strong brand increases the perception of value, making the club more desirable by association and belonging.

Developing the identity and reputation (brand)

- The name, design/logo needs to be distinct from the competition so that customers and potential customers (participants, members, families, businesses, schools, etc.) recognise it. Ideally the logo should draw its inspiration from something that is well known within the community.
- Once you have a logo it is important that its appearance is consistent across all media, advertising and promotions. It should be used at every possible opportunity so that it becomes recognised within the community.
- The Brand is what gives the club its “personality”, particularly its “brand values” by which it becomes known. As an example the Brand Values of rugby are sportsmanship, teamwork, discipline, enjoyment and respect. The Brand values of Adidas are performance, passion, integrity and diversity. As a club you may decide that your brand values reflect the game or you might include values such as welcoming to all groups from across the community regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, reliable, professional, community orientated or family orientated.

NB Read Section One, session two – Developing the club's brand, the image of how we would like our club to be seen and thought of by its community

Visibility on line

The Club's website

The club needs to have an online presence because it is a communication channel that can be accessed by anyone within the community, at any time. This will provide existing and potential members, supporters and business partners with an immediate source of information about the club and its latest news. It will also provide information for anyone within the community who wants to find out more about the club.

Community websites

There will be a range of community websites that the club will be able to have a presence on. These will include;

- Council websites
- Tourist Board web site
- County Sports Partnership web site

Social Media

Social media provides a range of online opportunities for a sports club to link to its community and to build its profile within the community.

It can be deliberately focussed to target a specific type of people and/or businesses that your community sports club needs to communicate with. The outcomes of effective social media activity are:

- a) an enhanced online profile
- b) a strengthening of relationship with the club's members, supporters and business partners
- c) the successful targeting a new relevant audience who could link to with the club.

NB – read Section Two, Communication – How to use Social Media

Signage

- If the club is on a road, then it is an ideal opportunity to have a sign (planning permitting) which can create awareness for the club and build its brand. The local authority highways department will be able to detail the number of cars that use the road each day. This information will be important in possible sponsorship negotiations. Many towns have designated banner sites that could be used to promote fixtures, open days or other events.

Supporting the local Community

Showing support for the local community often leads to the community supporting the club. Consider being stewards at the Christmas procession, taking a table at the local Charity dinner, or providing the club's facilities for a charitable event. This visible support will build the club's reputation and contact with potential new customers.

“A brand is the set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a customers decision to choose one product or service over another”



Showing support for the local community often leads to the community supporting the club.

Partnerships within the local community

The club should investigate its local community and find out if there are any potential partners. For example;

- Schools – are there local schools that need sports coaching but can't find the relevant coaches?
- Councils – does the Council have similar health, sport and activity aims and could a partnership be formed to deliver these?
- Community networks – are there any community networks that could be worked with in partnership to promote the club?

Running Events within the Community

Overview – Events are beneficial activities as they attract:

- Individuals, friends, couples and families to take part who are involved with the club or
- who are not involved but who live in the community.

A variety of events can be organised with the aim of achieving a range of outcomes, including:

- Building the club's brand in the community.
- Building the club's reputation within the community.
- Attracting new "customers."
- Generating income.
- Having a social occasion for club members and participants.

NB – read Section Two, community integration, how to run events





How to run events

Overview

The reasons for holding events can vary, it is therefore important to understand why a particular type of event is being organised and what the outcomes are you want to achieve. What are the outcomes you want to achieve? Once this is understood, you are better able to group your audience and target them with the correct message.

OVERVIEW

Events are important activities for clubs as they attract.

- individuals, friends, couples and families who are involved with the club to take part
- Those who are not involved but who live in the community.

Holding events at the club is important for:

- Building the club's brand in the community.
- Building a reputation within the community.
- Attracting new customers.
- Generating income.
- Having a social occasion for club members and participants.

PLANNING AN EVENT

Planning and commitment are essential to running a successful event. It is better to run fewer events and prepare them well, than lots of events that will not attract an audience or provide a poor experience which means that audience is less likely to come to your next one.

There are four phases of planning an event:

- Define the event
 - Who is the audience?
 - How big is that potential audience?
 - What is the objective?
 - What is the vision that the stakeholders have?
 - What are the budget and the pricing structure of event?
- It may be that the audience can be segmented, which allows for a variety of pricing options, discounts for families etc
- Marketing the event
 - Who wants the tickets and why?
 - How to contact these individuals?
 - Which marketing material to use and how this links into the media plan.

This is where the importance of having gathered data will help. Using emails and free social media options such as Mail Chimp will significantly reduce your costs against other forms of promotional collateral. (See the 'Managing Data' for more information.)

- Operational plan
 - Preparation of the venue and the staff
 - Development of a customer experience and delivery on the day.
 - Review
 - What went well and what didn't.

While all aspects of the event are important, perhaps the most significant is the selling of the tickets.

- Firstly, you need to know who you are attracting to the event and why they would come.
 - Is it for entertainment, and if so, what are they expecting to see/take part in?
- Once you know the type of person that you are going to attract you need to create marketing material that:
 - Tells them why they should come
 - How it fulfils their "wants and needs" and influences them to buy a ticket.
- You will also need to know which marketing channel (email, social media, posters, website, etc.) you can use to contact them.
- The selling needs to be "active" with all club members playing a role in promoting the event. It goes without saying that the experience needs to be good if you expect people to come back again!
- Finally, don't forget to collect the data from the individuals who buy tickets. This will make the selling of the event next year much easier.

SIMPLE FUND RAISING EVENTS

Sports Clubs run a range of events, many of them well-established. Here is an example of the type they run:

- Pre-match Lunch
- Annual Table Quiz
- Club draw
- Race NIGHTS
- Murder, mystery events
- Burns evenings
- Open Mike nights
- Duck races in the river
- Family fun day with BBQ



RUGBY CLUBS RUN A RANGE OF EVENTS

Some of the examples are shown below.

Strictly Come Dancing

- One club ran a “Strictly Come Dancing” in a local venue and with the support from a local business that runs events.
- They had interest from the whole community and promoted it through social media, posters, the website and the local press.
- The event attracted sponsorship, and income generated was £22K.
- The problems they had were:
 - Finding the right venue
 - Getting the volunteers to take part.

Sponsored Walk

I came across a club whose most successful event was the ‘family sponsored walk’ which attracted families and individuals from across the community. It was run at Christmas time and raised 26k

- It is a great opportunity for all the ladies involved with the club to get together for a social event, but it can be more.
- It can be a fundraiser but can also be used to promote the club and to attract new people to the club.



Oktoberfest

- The Oktoberfest event attracted individuals from across the community. At one club attracted individuals used an outside business to supply the beer, Stein glasses and the food. They also hired tables.
- The cost was £15 per person which included two beers, food and the glass.
- The event was promoted via social media, posters, word of mouth and the website.
- The result was a 2.5k profit on the tickets and a large bar income.



LARGER FUND RAISING EVENTS

A broad example of events are outlined below;

Who wants to be a Thousandaire?

- This is very common in Ireland at the moment. A company will come with all the templates and stage etc. for you to run it.
- The event can attract a diverse range of participants from across the community.

White Collar Boxing

- There are companies that organise this type of event for the clubs including the training for the participants. Where it attracts a big audience is when participants from different clubs take part.

Scrap metal collection weekend

- This will need to be run in partnership with a reputable dealer. The idea is that the club asks for the community to donate any waste metal it has lying around and the club also volunteers to pick it up. The activity takes place over a weekend.

Furniture Auction

- The community is asked to donate any furniture and household goods that they have finished with. They are collected by the club on a certain day, and the auction date is promoted across the community.
- This is a fundraising event. Some clubs are doing the same with clothes and are working in partnerships with local Charity shops. This provides the club with a reputation outcome as well as income.

Disco for under 14/15's

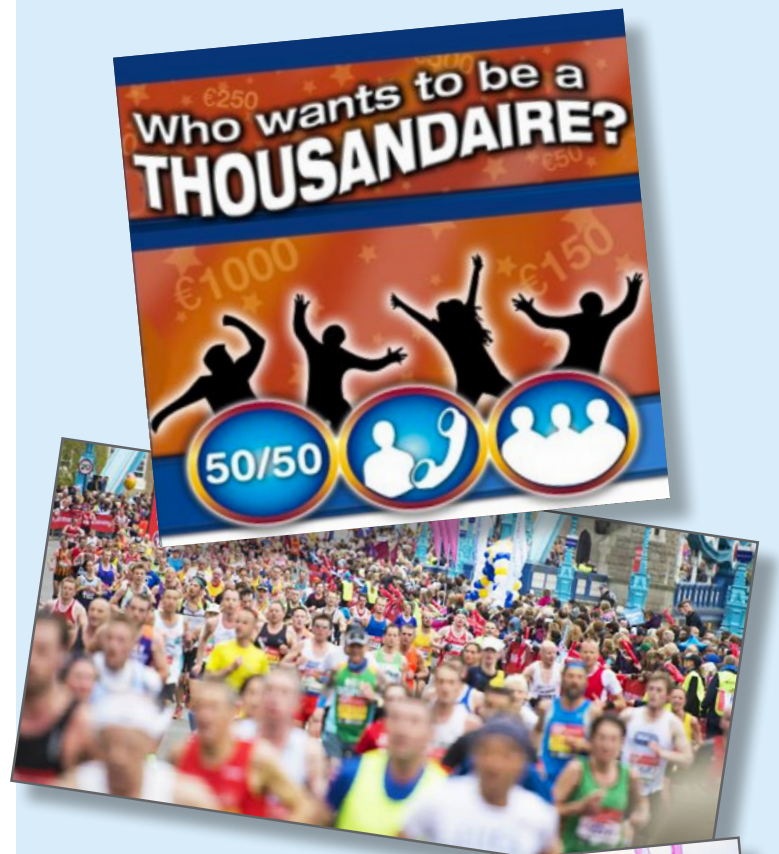
- There are very few discos run for this age group. If you do decide to run one of these then the stewarding needs to be well regulated.

Wine and Art Evening

- The "wine and art" evening is usually run in one of the local hotels.
- Regional artists are invited to exhibit their paintings, and if any are sold, they give a percentage to the fund.
- The wine is donated and therefore once the entry fee of £15 is paid, the wine is free to all present.
- There is also an auction of donated paintings from well-known regional artists with the proceeds going to a local Charity.
- Because they benefit from it, the Charity promotes the event through their database.

Christmas Fair

- Before you decide to run a Christmas fair check that the date you have chosen doesn't already have a Christmas event on it.
- You will be able to charge for the stalls to be there and/or take a percentage of their takings. The marketing needs to cover all the community, and you can generate further income through food, visits to Santa and Christmas raffles.



Finally, don't forget to collect the data from the individuals who buy tickets. This will make the selling of the event next year much easier.



Retaining all of your customers

“Every business’ greatest assets are its customers because without customers there is no business”

- Edwin Frand – Customer Service News.

Every club has a variety of “Customers” from a wide range of backgrounds to which it provides a whole raft of activities, such as coaching sessions, events, a sponsorship or a match/event day experience etc. These people have chosen to spend their time and money with the club. These customers are parents, sponsors, members, players, supporters, business partners and coaches. They will have been influenced to become involved with one specific club because they believe that it will offer them **“what they want.”**

Sports Clubs must recognise that they need to operate and act like a business. Clubs need to focus on providing the best possible customer service and to understand how vital the retention of these customers are to the future and prosperity of the club.

Providing good customer service is key to this.

Why does a club need to retain customers?

The club needs to recognise that the customer has a choice and that they have chosen their club against the **“competition”**.

- Every customer has a huge potential value because, if the club manages to retain them for several years, they will spend money with the club every year.
- A family may spend on memberships, retail, social events and summer schools. A sponsor may visit the club and spend money on items over and above their basic sponsorship, and a player may spend money on memberships, beer, retail, events for his family and even hire of the club house, if the club has one, for his business meeting.
- It will cost the business six times as much to find a new customer as it will to retain them.
- Every customer has a value, and the longer you keep that customer, the more valuable they will be. If you retain your shirt sponsor for three years, then the value could run into thousands of pounds. If they decide not to be the shirt sponsor after one year, you will have to spend time and resources finding a new one.
- If a customer is pleased with the “service” you give them, then they will refer you to other potential customers. If they are not satisfied, then they will tell on average ten others of their poor experience. Statistically, 82% of customers change suppliers/brand because they haven’t been pleased with the product or the service they have received.

- If the club loses a customer then not only does it lose the spending potential of that customer, it will also cost it time/money and effort to find a new one. The club therefore needs to recognise the role that basic customer service can play in making the club sustainable while optimising its limited resources

It will cost the business six times as much to find a new customer as it will to retain them.

What is Customer Service?

To provide Customer Service, the club will need to provide the **“steps of Customer Service.”**

The club will need to understand the **“wants and needs”** of the customer.

Why does the sponsor spend that money with you?

- Some of them want to find new customers through the sponsorship.
- Some of them want to build their brand.
- Some of them want both!

What does the Family want from junior coaching events?

As we know the parents will want their children to achieve the following from the coaching sessions:

- Experience success and failure
- Develop confidence and self-esteem
- Learn about teamwork
- Make friends
- Have fun
- Safe environment
- Coaches who understand child development

They have to enjoy the experience and want to repeat it.

- The family who comes for a day need to have a great experience from the first time that they called to buy a ticket, to the friendly person at the gate, to the fantastic pre-match entertainment and to the match itself. The whole family needs to have enjoyed the experience. The whole of the “team off the field” needs to understand the importance of providing Customer Service and why it can make or break a “business”.

The Outcomes

- If the sponsor and the family receive the product and outcomes that they have been promised, they will stay with the club. If they don't, they will probably leave for another club.

Wherever possible the employees of the club need to recognise their returning customers and to build a personal bond with the customer.

- This is a simple “step” which is achieved by communicating with the customer whenever possible through email, a telephone call, or simply talking to them.
- The service needs to be personal. The difference between someone being recognised or not is huge.
- If you appear sincere, then it will strengthen the bond between the customer and yourself.

Understanding your customers.

Every club has a range of different customers which include members, participants, volunteers, business partners and supporters. It is important for the club to find out what is influencing each different customer to be involved, what they like about the club, what they don't like, where they come from and what the competition offer.

This will then allow the club to ensure that it retains all of its customers by offering what they want and need as well as shaping the marketing/sales when attracting potential customers to become involved.

The feedback can be collected through informal conversations, by bring a group of members together to discuss their thoughts or by sending out a questionnaire. One popular free questionnaire that many clubs use is Survey Monkey – www.surveymonkey.co.uk.

Strengthening the Bond with your customers.

There are four actions that you can take to strengthen the bond with your customers:

- If they are a long-standing customer, then recognise this and reward them.
- Ensure that you communicate with your customers on a regular basis, through email, letter or a telephone call.
- Provide loyal customers with an exclusive offer; make them feel special.
- Remember to say **“thank you.”**



Section 3

The Team Talk

Useful tips to enhance performance

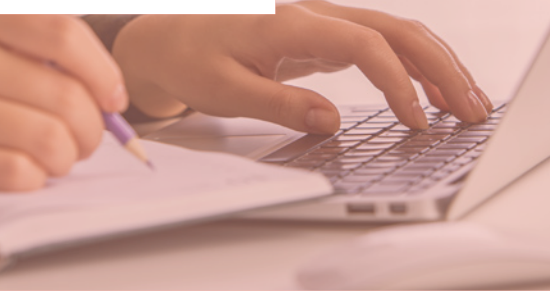


How to write an effective sales letter

How to run a meeting

How to make a sales telephone call

How to design a poster



How to write an effective sales letter

In many instances the only way of contacting our potential “customers” such as families, is through a letter sent to them through the post or via a child from school. The letter could be promoting an after school activity, a holiday programme or club training. A second example could be potential members who we are trying to influence to become members.

This letter we send is in effect a “sales letter” and is similar to the ones we get through the post every day promoting utilities or mobile telephones. Since sales letters have been used as an effective way of selling products for many years we now know how to structure a letter in order to be effective. In this guide we are going to highlight to you one tried and tested formula that you could use.

What do we need to consider before we write the letter?

We need to consider why 90% of letters we receive that are trying to sell us something get binned within 5 seconds? The answer is that they aren't relevant to the person who receives them, they look boring, they are sent to the wrong person and they don't shout out “what's in it for me”.

So, before we start writing the letter we need to decide:

- 1 **what do we want to achieve from this letter?**
- 2 **Who are we sending it to and why should they read it?**
- 3 **What's in it for them?**

We need to provide the recipient with a reason to take action and a reason to respond to us instead of the competition.

Example - you are about to write a letter to the parents of key stage two children about a summer school you are running in their school this summer.

- We hope that the outcome will be that they sign up their children for the summer school
- We will address the letter to the mother because in a majority of cases it is the mother who decides if the activity fulfils hers and the children's wants or needs
- The letter therefore needs to show that we understand what she wants from a summer school for her children (organise, good coaching, friends for her children, the children will learn something and the times are good to fit in with her day)
- There will be competition for the children and therefore the letter needs to be “professional” and try to offer something different to the competition (price, reduction for two children on price, a early start and late finish for Mothers that work etc.)

The Sales Letter Formula

- 1 Use the name for the person you are writing to whenever possible.
- 2 Have a headline that informs the person you are writing to “what's in it for them” e.g. The Blackrock School Summer School provides your children with a fun packed learning experience to share with their friends
- 3 Continue the “what's in it for you” information into the first paragraph giving more details; The Blackrock Summer School not only provides your children with a fun packed learning experience they can enjoy with their friends but our experienced coaches provide challenging and rewarding activities from 10 am until 3pm
- 4 In the next paragraph tell the reader of the letter the details of the day; The three day summer school is run on the 17th, 18th and 19th August with the activities running from 10 am until 3pm utilising all of the modern sporting facilities at Blackrock. Our highly professional and qualified coaches provide a safe environment in which all of the activities are designed to provide fun, a challenge and a learning experience.
- 5 If you can you should include endorsements from previous customers; Jane Thomas wrote about our Winter Course – “I sent both of my children on the Blackrock holiday camp and they had a wonderful time. The coaches were knowledgeable, friendly and they really worked to get the best out of the children”
- 6 Rephrase your key phrase at the end; don't forget that if you join the Blackrock Summer School your children will be guaranteed a great fun and learning experience.
- 7 The call to action! If you sign up before the 30th April you will qualify for our early bird offer which will provide you with a 5% discount.

We need to consider why 90% of letters we receive that are trying to sell us something get binned within 5 seconds?

Example 1 – the Cricket Club is trying to recruit members for its Junior Section

Branfield Cricket Club

Bounder Lane
Branfield
DB 53 6 RT
16th May 2016

Dear Mrs Thompson,

Join us on the 26th May and let us share with you how our junior section provides enjoyment, coaching, friendship, promotion of the values of the game such as respect and much more for children of all ages.

At Branfield Cricket Club we are proud of the reputation that our junior section has in the community. As well as providing a safe environment for the children with activities being delivered by highly qualified coaches, we strive to provide more outcomes for the children. We focus on enjoyment, on the promotion of the values of the game, on the promotion of healthy lifestyles and on providing opportunities for the children to build friendships.

We also recognise the importance of you, the parents and guardians and therefore not only is the clubhouse open for you to relax in during the children's activity but for those more active parents, we have a fitness class running at the same time on the outfield!

If you would like to hear more, please join us on the 26th May at 8pm in the club house. All of the family are welcome, and the bar will be providing tea, coffee and a light supper for all. If you are unable to come but would like to learn more, please contact Adrian Brindley on 07898345271.

Yours sincerely,

Example Two – the club or sports coaching business wants to try and get

Branfield Cricket Club

Bounder Lane
Branfield
DB 53 6 RT
16th May 2016

Dear 'Head teacher',

Re – Aspire Sports who provide experience, professional and reliable coaches for the delivery of PE lessons and extended schools programmes.

Aspire Sports are an established business who have been providing safe, structured and fun sports programmes for schools and community groups in South West London for over 6 years, currently operating contracts with Highgrove Junior School, Thompson Street Junior School and Paviour Junior School.

We offer a range of sports coaching options for schools. Our aim is to provide schemes of work which fulfil key teaching objectives, delivering designated learning outcomes. All of our schemes of work provide progression, assessment and evaluation to ensure high quality and feedback.

Our coaches are professional and enthusiastic, and we only employ staff with experience of working in schools. They can also facilitate a variety of extended school programmes including breakfast clubs, lunch time clubs and after school activity.

I would like the opportunity to discuss any requirements you may have and to provide further information about the exacting standards we operate in our business.

I will call you during the next few days to find out if there is a convenient date/time for a meeting.

Yours sincerely,



How to run a meeting

Meetings are an essential part of the life of every club, and your ability to run productive meetings with your colleagues is a critical part of managing the time that volunteers spend on particular tasks.

There are some key points to remember:

- Create a written agenda in advance.
- Email the agenda to all attendees
- Make sure that a meeting agenda is written relating to the meeting subject, by listing a series of topics to be discussed.
- Make sure that material is provided to attendees at least one day before the meeting.
- Try to provide as much background information on the agenda so that everyone attending has the same information.
- For frequent meetings such as status meetings on projects etc., an agenda template with action points etc. should be created. This can be updated and reviewed at subsequent meetings and should form the framework checking progress.



Location			
Date			
Time			
Attendees			
Apologies			
Topic	Action required	By Whom	By When

Here is an example of a basic template for meeting

Review the Attendee List

- Ask all attendees to confirm their attendance in advance.
- If a key person is not present or able to make the meeting, no significant decisions can be made. Consider rescheduling.
- Try to limit the number of people to those that are necessary.
- The purpose of meetings is to make decisions and get work done.
- Read the attendee list. Is there anyone you are not familiar with? If you're having a meeting with a sponsor and they are sending someone you are not familiar with, you need to find out about that person and what authority they carry. This can be done on the company's website or possibly finding them via LinkedIn.

Manage the Meeting

- Take charge of time management. It is easy for meetings to "drift" and for the group to lose track or focus. Make the time count.
- One of the most important tasks you need to do to improve the effectiveness of meetings is, to begin with an outline of the purpose. When everyone sits down, you say, "We are holding this meeting today to accomplish these goals and objectives." Then list what they are.
- Start the meeting on time and try to end on time as well. If certain attendees are running late, then they can be brought "up to speed," later, unless of course, it is an outside business or sponsor.
- Encourage people to arrive early.
- Summarise the main points at the end of the meeting and get everyone to agree on what has been decided.
- Have people agree to act – People who agree to do something in front of their peers are more likely to follow through when they promise to do it.

How to keep to time – The role of the appointed Chairperson.

- At the beginning of the meeting, explain the agenda and encourage attendees to focus on the topic at hand.
- Keep the meeting document in front of you.
- Go through each item on the agenda in order.
- Monitor and contribute to the meeting.
- Encourage open discussion but stress that it must be relevant to the subject.
- When someone raises an interesting point that is not related to the topic, agree to make a note of this in the meeting notes to be explored at a later date.

Pre-send important points relevant to the meeting

- Serious decisions such as funding problems or other major issues that may affect a project should be communicated pre-meeting so that a decision can be made as to whether the meeting is worthwhile.

Taking Notes

- To maintain accuracy with regards project discussions, it is essential that someone efficient is appointed to take notes at the meeting.
- Minutes of the meeting should then be sent out to all attendees and other relevant members of the club where required. This should be accompanied by the meeting summary.
- Bring copies to the next meeting and use this to guide the agenda.
- Focus on the decisions made, review and look at items that require further investigation, planning, action by the group.

Follow up Meeting

All meetings should be followed up with emails within 24 hours with copies of the agenda notes; this allows plenty of time for people to respond if another meeting is scheduled for a week later.





Making a sales telephone call - the basics

Overview

The sports club management team will often need to make telephone calls in which they are trying to influence -

- A business to buy sponsorship
- A school to allow the club to coach after lessons,
- A family to join the club
- An individual to become a volunteer.

In essence, by trying to influence them, we are trying to sell to them.

To make a successful "sales" call is a skilled activity that needs training. It also isn't something that everyone feels comfortable doing.

In this section we are going to provide the volunteer with the very basics of making the call, it will include:

- The preparation that needs to take place
- The structure of the call
- And provide some confidence in the volunteer that they could achieve their outcomes from the call.

In summary, you have 15 seconds at the beginning of the call when the person you are calling will decide if it's worth listening to you or not. You need to have done your preparation before the call and have your introductory sentences ready to influence the listener that there is "something in it for them" to hear more!

THE PREPARATION

Check List:

- Make sure that you know who to call
- Do they have the authority to make a decision?
- Are they the most relevant person to speak with?
- Do we have a direct telephone number?
- If the person has a complicated name, you will need to find out before you call them how to pronounce their name.
- This can be easily achieved by calling their business/school before your sales call and simply asking the person on the telephone for the correct pronunciation.
- Have a clear idea what you want to achieve from the call.
- Do you know what you want to achieve from the call? If it is simply to arrange a meeting, then the structure of the call will change from one in which you are trying to "sell/influence" on the telephone.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CALL

If you were working in a call centre, you would have been training over several days about the seven steps involved in making a call. These would include building trust with the person you are calling, listening to their objections/problems and solving them through to making a sale.

In this guide, we're simply going to focus on "how to build up trust" and what you have to offer the person you are calling.

Before you call you need to understand:

- Potential Customer – is in a castle with the drawbridge down. We need to be in the castle to tell him what we have.
- Within 15 seconds he will decide whether to pull up the drawbridge or not. Within this time we have to:
- Make a statement which interests him/her which suggests to him/her they could benefit from listening more
- Show him that we aren't a sleazy salesman

This where your preparation work will have helped you frame your questions

The First 15 seconds

Good Morning, Mr DeGette (can we pronounce it properly).
My name is Bryan Talbot from Monk Town Community Football Club (slowly and deliberately) and the reason I am calling you today

You will now tell them why you are calling and what's in it for them to listen further.

In summary, you have 15 seconds at the beginning of the call when the person you are calling will decide if it's worth listening to you or not.

The Benefit Statement

The next sentence (or two) make up the benefit statement which is telling the person you have called that there is something “in it for them,” if they listen a little more, instead of saying no thank you.

Example one (Business)

“I have seen on your website how you as a business support the development of junior sporting activity in our community through your CSR policy. I would like to share with you how we at Monk Town Football Club are promoting participation in young people in Football, whatever their ability, ethnic background or gender is”.

Developing the Benefit Statement

If you can add any examples or implied endorsements into the statement, then it will strengthen it.

Example Two (School)

“I have seen on the school's website that you as a school are committed to involving your pupils in a sporting activity and in promoting healthy activity. At Monk Town Football Club our focus is involving all young people, whatever their gender, ability or ethnic background is, in sporting activity while promoting healthy lifestyles. We are already working with 5 schools in the community, and I would like to arrange a meeting with you to discuss how we work with schools. Our focus is on after school clubs and within the curriculum as well as encouraging the pupils to join local sports clubs to increase their activity”.

Example Three (Parent)

“I understand from our secretary that you would like some further information regarding our junior coaching? Could I begin by saying that we already have a thriving junior section at the club with over 100 young people involved. Our coaches are fully qualified and as well as developing skills within the young people we encourage friendship, respect, healthy lifestyles and the development of a positive attitude”.

The Call to Action

This where the skill of the telesales executive starts when they attempt to sell to the listener through a process of six steps from, listening and solving objections to making the sale.

In this instance, we will only be able to look at it in a very simple way.

At the beginning it was decided what we wanted to get out of the telephone call, perhaps simply to arrange a meeting or perhaps to get an agreement to sponsor/join the club/come to an event.

Arrange a Meeting

In this instance, we would simply follow up the benefit statement with a sentence.

The purpose of my call is to find out if it might be possible to arrange a meeting to discuss with you how we could work with you to assist you in fulfilling your needs.

Influence on the telephone call

Before you ask them to buy/join the club you will need to confirm that you have what they are looking for.

Business

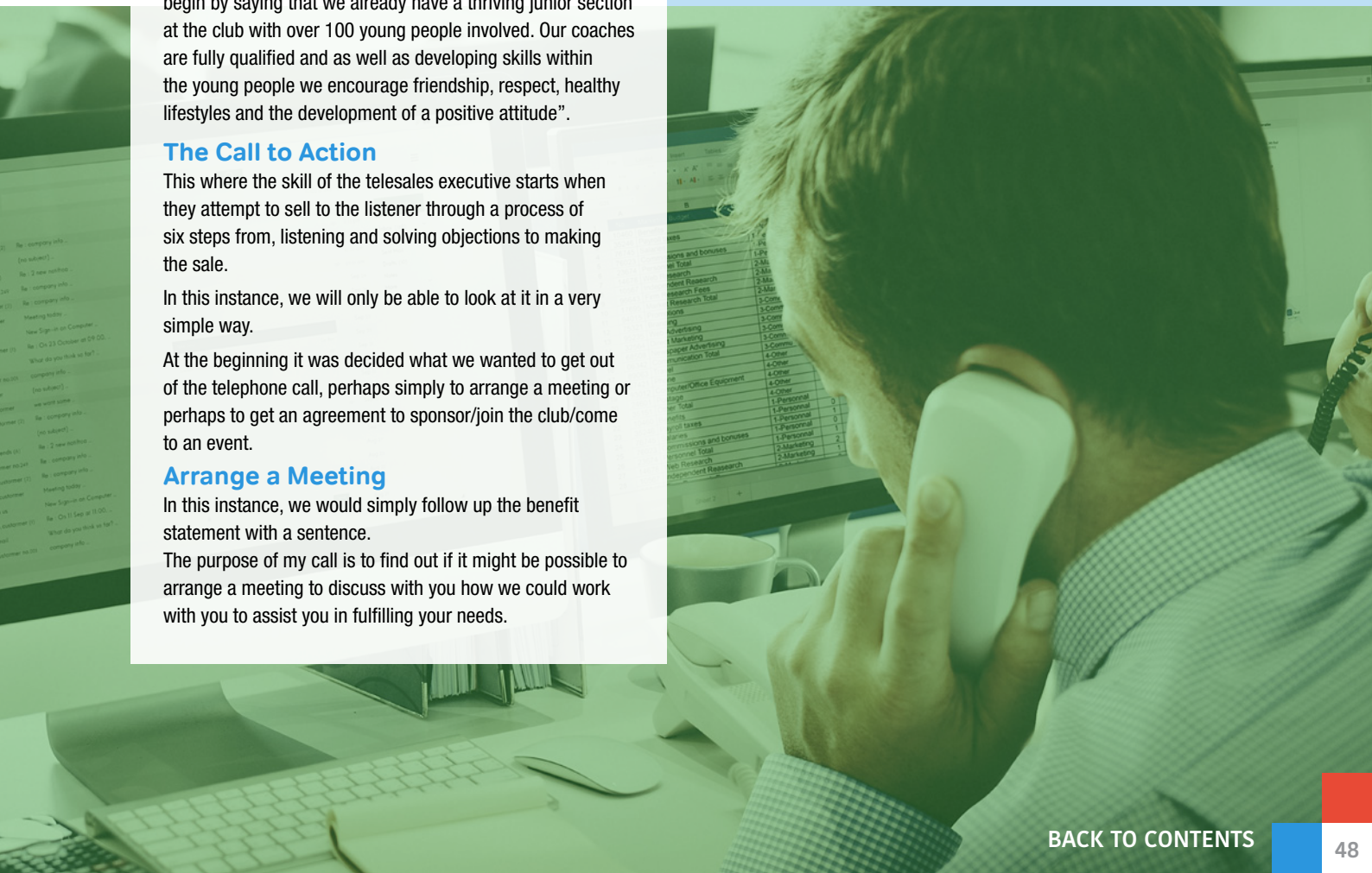
The purpose of my call is to understand what it is you want to achieve by working with a Community Sports Club. Could you tell me what outcomes you are looking for?

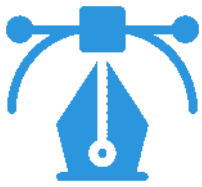
You will then listen to what he has to say then in simple terms tell him what you can do to fulfil his needs at the club and ask him if he is interested in becoming involved.

Summary

This approach is a very simple approach to making a telephone call, but the key points are:

- Ensure that the person making the calls is confident on the telephone
- Prepare your opening statements well
- Decide what it is you want to achieve
- Research the correct person to call, and fully understand their “wants” and “needs,” so that you can best frame your discussion with them.





How to design an engaging poster

In many circumstances, the most efficient and cost effective way of communicating your product or event to a target audience. Good design and strong, clear messaging are very important and effective in luring would be customers.

The positive aspect is that they are a relatively cheap way of selling your event or product, the negative is that you may put up hundreds of them and nobody reads them.

A potential customer will, on average, spend around 3 seconds looking at the poster or flyer before they decide to read further or disregard it.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS IN ENGAGING WITH YOUR CUSTOMER

- Eye catching design to attract the customer. Having a professionally designed poster will help attract interest and give value to your promotion.
- Decide on the key messages that must be included.
- Call to action messages are good ways to get customers to engage early. For example, "Buy your tickets before (date) and enter our free draw for....."
- Less is more. Make sure that all key messages are included, but it is important not to overcrowd the poster. Keep your main message short and to the point.
- Prioritise your message. Make sure the most important messages are big and bold to attract interest.
- Poster placement – Find places where there is a high footfall.

Planning the Content

The first consideration is "what is the aim of this poster. It could be to generate sales from parents for a summer school or it could be to attract children to an after school club. You need to know who the audience is that you are trying to influence.

The Key messages – if it's a summer school the key messages will be aimed at the parents saying why they should send their children to the summer school. The key messages need to be clear and easy to read from a distance.

The sequence of the information – the key messages on the poster should all link together. E.g. The after school dance class is aimed at 14 to 16-year-old children; you will want to attract them to have fun, to learn and to keep fit. They need to be told when it is on and how they sign up and finally how much it will be.





Example One

Promoting a summer school for 8 to 11-year-old children.

- The summer school will be run between 10am to 3 pm over a 3 day period (there is also a wraparound service between 9 and 10am and between 3 and 4.30pm).
- The Summer school isn't aimed at developing the talented children, but the focus is on participation.

What is the aim of the poster/flyer?

- The aim of the poster is to influence mothers to send their children to the summer school.

What are the key messages?

- Understanding what the Parents expect and want from this.
 - Send your children to a summer school that has a safe environment
 - It uses experienced coaches
 - It provides children with fun yet challenging activities
 - Opportunity to meet new friends
 - A learning environment. Pick up new skills
- Value for Money
 - Demonstrate in your promotion what good value your event is.
 - Added value messaging e.g. Free T shirt or a water bottle.
- The Facilities
 - That they clean and modern.
- Wrap around service that could attract working mothers.

The sequence of the information – the Mother will be told:

- What's in it for her
- How it fulfils her wants and needs
- When it is taking place and some details about the content
- How she can book
- How much it will cost

Planning the Poster or Flyer

The poster or flyer will probably have to be designed by an experienced graphic designer. However, you would create a basic plan for him as outlined below which he would use as a starting point.

Box One

the name of the product or service you are trying to sell

Box Two

your brand logo. This is important because if you have built up a reputation in the community people will recognise your logo and associate it with quality.

Box Three

the key messages that you want to tell the Mother.

Box Four

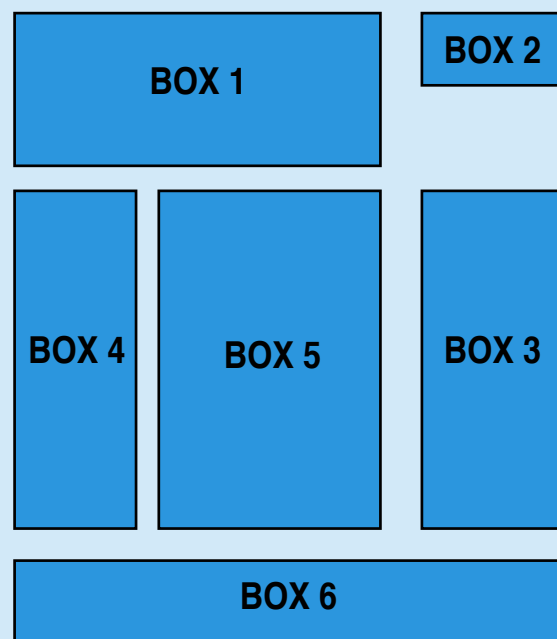
the details, when it is on, times and course content

Box Five

Photographs that reinforce the key messages in Box Three -children having fun, learning with a coach, socialising with other children

Box Six

How to book, discounts for early booking or if you send two or more children. It might also include information about the "wrap around service". Contact details need to be bold and easy to see.



Summary

- The message, photographs and graphics on the poster need to connect with the target audience.
- There needs to be a "call to action."
- Main message needs to be highly visible, short and to the point
- All fonts on the poster need to be consistent
- It needs to be easy to read from a distance
- It needs to be able to "sell" the event or product you have to a target audience or at the very least influence them to find out more.
- Contact details eg - telephone, web address need to stand out.

John Oates has a passion for sport business. He has spent over 20 years working with Governing Bodies and sports clubs from around the world, sharing his expertise/best practice which has resulted in the successful development and growth of multiple clubs.

He combines his commercial knowledge/expertise with his extensive teaching and coaching experience, resulting in a unique outlook on how to develop sports clubs into vibrant and profitable businesses.

This wide ranging background in sport has enable him to understand the challenges that clubs are facing, from top tier professional clubs through to community clubs, and the knowledge they require to evolve.

John's methods of "best practice" have been used to provide effective training and consultancy to Governing Bodies and clubs in a range of sports not only in the UK and Ireland but also in Qatar, Hong Kong, Norway and France.

Rob Andrew — CEO Sussex Cricket, ex RFU Professional Rugby Director

During the last two decades, John Oates has worked with rugby clubs from across the UK and Ireland, from the professional clubs to community clubs, assisting them in development of their "club business." His unique knowledge and experience will provide Governing Bodies with "tried and tested" training and consultancy for their central operation or in supporting the development of their community club game.

If you would like further information about the webinars, training programmes, consultancy or advice that John Oates provides for community sports clubs, please use the contact details below:



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