



club resource guide

MARKETING AND PROMOTING YOUR CLUB

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The Herts Sports Partnership would like to thank team BEDS&LUTON who have kindly shared this information with us, enabling us to offer useful advice & support to community sports clubs in Hertfordshire.



1. WHAT IS MARKETING?

Running a club is often a full time job done by volunteers and normally coaching, officiating and administrating take centre stage for these volunteers. Yet, for clubs to survive and thrive, marketing and promotion is crucial and should not be looked upon as yet another burden or an optional extra. Clubs face the same challenges as anyone wishing to communicate in the current climate.

The Chartered Institute of Marketing defines marketing as “the process of identifying, anticipating and satisfying your customer requirements profitably.” Put more simply, it’s working towards providing a service your customers actually want and making your club sustainable, because, No customers = No club!

Sports clubs/facilities are facing real challenges in order to survive and grow in an increasingly competitive and demanding market. These challenges include how to:

- Attract new members and retain the existing ones.
- Become a hub of the community.
- Grow sponsorship revenue.
- Increase attendances.
- Improve the social life of the club.
- Increase media coverage.
- Benefit from new technology.
- Introduce new revenue streams.

Whether you are a sports club, leisure club, sports facility, out of school club or holiday play scheme, marketing can help YOU as it creates opportunities to:

- Fill vacant places.
- Put across a specific message and raise awareness about what you can offer.
- Identify with existing and potential customers.
- Deliver the short and long term objectives you have for your club.

It is important that when you do any form of marketing that you understand your audience. People do not like being told what to do and when to do it, and one person’s reasons for being part of a club or wanting to play sport might be quite different from someone else’s. Marketing is about looking from the point of view of the individual and understanding what they want and how those needs can be met. We also have to understand the reasons why people don’t take part and what we can do to help them overcome those barriers.



TOP TIPS

- When promoting sport and active recreation it is important to use images of people that they can relate to so that they feel included from the start.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Chartered Institute of Marketing is the leading international body for marketing and business development. Each year they help over 50,000 people at every stage of their career with training, qualifications and resources as well as enabling leading businesses to get the most from their marketing people. Visit www.cim.co.uk

2. COMMUNICATING WHAT YOUR CLUB IS ABOUT

WHAT KIND OF CLUB ARE YOU?

Are you a club where people feel part of a family, feel they can train and compete to the best of their ability, take part for fun, take the children, or enjoy the social side of membership? Lots of clubs adopt statements that explain their ethos, for example;

'We operate in a friendly but competitive atmosphere and have a wide spectrum of membership, from juniors to veterans, both male and female, and paddlers of all abilities' Norwich Canoe Club.

Knowing what kind of club you are is a crucial starting point to attracting and retaining new members. This knowledge is gained by understanding your 'unique selling points' (USPs) and then addressing these.

Perception is key - how is your club viewed in the local community? It is ok if your club can only accommodate higher performance athletes, but how do you communicate this to the community without appearing elitist and 'cliquey'. Try to identify anything that people outside the club may see as negative and put a positive spin on these aspects.

YOUR BRAND

You are not the only club or facility out there, so how do you persuade potential members to come to you? Developing your business identity, or 'brand', will help your club to stand out from the crowd and reinforce what your club is about.

Your brand is the 'personality' of your organisation and it is ideally associated with a set of 'brand values' that attract customers. For instance Rolls Royce's brand values are *luxury* and *attention to detail*. This is conveyed in the strapline "Trusted to Deliver Excellence". Nike's are *energy* and *spontaneity*, captured in their strapline "Just do it".

The brand values for a sports club might include fun, safe, social, and professional. These values should then be expressed consistently in everything your club does - from writing letters, to how you coach your club members; and from dealing with parents to the equipment you use. It all makes a difference to the way your members and your potential members, see your club.

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TOP TIPS

- If your club doesn't have a brand as such, ask your members to help develop one. Start this process by asking them to come up with a club statement which will set the scene. Then try an exercise whereby you liken your club to something - another brand or a product, an object, an animal or celebrity for example. What are the 'brand values' of these things (i.e. what images do they conjure up) and how will your club reflect this?

3. MARKETING IDEAS

You will need to think about whom you are targeting i.e. who are your potential members, what services you are offering, and how you will market these services to potential members. The 5 Ps of marketing can help you to break this down and think about it in a logical manner.

Product

- Find out what current and potential members want / need. Try to tailor your provision to these requirements.
- What are your 'Unique Selling Points' (USPs)?
- What are you best at doing?
- What can you offer that other sports clubs/facilities in your area may not?

Consider things like achievements, family atmosphere or membership reductions, Clubmark, social events etc. These are the things that make you different from the rest and may appeal to your 'customers'.

Price

- Is your pricing structure realistic and competitive?
- What are others charging and what do they provide?
- Are you charging too little or too much?

Try to achieve value for money, whatever your charging policy (note; you will need to know how many members you need to attend in order for you to at least achieve your break even point).

Promotion

- What type of advertising will reach your target audience?
- What has been successful in the past and what hasn't?

Market the benefits of your club and your USPs in ways that will reach your target audience. Always ask new enquirers how they came across you.

Place

- Do you know where your target audience can be found? And who they are?
- How can you reach your potential members effectively?

People

- Who makes up your organisation and what are their skills, attitude, and knowledge?
- Could they be advocates for your club, giving a member's point of view?
- Are there any issues you need to deal with within your club?
- Your staff/volunteers are one of your major assets, and their skills and attitudes can positively or negatively impact on the image of the club.

TOP TIPS

- New members are silver but existing members are gold! Satisfied members will recommend you and may also have other friends/family members who could use your services in the future. If internal problems occur deal with them quickly. Remember an unsatisfied customer is likely to tell a lot more people about their experience than a satisfied one is!
- Ensure committee members act professionally and with integrity.



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4. KNOWING YOUR MEMBERS AND COMMUNICATING WITH THEM

HOW MUCH DOES YOUR CLUB KNOW ABOUT ITS MEMBERS?

Very few clubs hold information about their members and the types of people that play their sport, a fact which often makes internal communications difficult. It also hampers attempts to generate sponsorship and makes attracting new members near impossible.

You can communicate with your members in a number of ways:

- Holding meetings
- Having a notice board
- Letters/Newsletters
- Email
- Ezines (Electronic Newsletters)
- Website
- Text messaging
- Social Networking – Facebook, My Space etc.

However, before choosing which channels of communication to use you need to understand what channel is best for the audience you are trying to communicate with. For example, 73% of 18-21 olds have a profile on a social networking web site. Therefore this approach is best suited for your younger members, but maybe not so applicable for older members.

The Sport England Market Segmentation tool can help you to identify which channels work best with which people.

To find out more about this useful tool you can visit: www.sportengland.org/se_market_segmentation telephone 020 7273 1551 or email info@sportengland.org.uk

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TOP TIPS

- Each year, members will renew their subscription. Use this as an opportunity to check that their contact details are correct. Ensure that you ask for name, address, telephone number, mobile number and email address and ask how they would prefer to be kept informed of club activities/developments and also which aspects of the club they are most interested in.
- Remember, the more you know about your customers (because that is what your members and potential members are), the better you can serve their needs and help them to become more loyal.



5. CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

With marketing and communications, unfortunately one size does not fit all and different people/communities need to be communicated to in different ways.

RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Do not rely on internet or email as less than 5% of rural households have access to a broadband internet service, compared to two thirds typically.
- Take advantage of local newsletters, notice boards and information points which tend to be widely used in rural locations.
- Terms such as 'outdoor recreation' or 'physical activity' can sometimes be more appropriate than 'sport'.
- Include images of traditional and innovative rural activities and avoid the overuse of images that can only take place in urban areas.

YOUNG PEOPLE

- Internet and email are more effective than newspapers.
- 94% of young people have mobiles so consider text messaging.
- Use youth orientated venues, music festivals, magazines, radio and TV.
- Use young people to advocate your organisation and get young people to develop marketing materials.
- Media, incorporating entertainment or fun elements, is important. Factual content is less so.
- Media that works tends to be that which is loud, funny, riské, exciting and multi-layered – with lots going on at one time.
- Use young persons' language and treat them with respect.
- Designs should reflect interests and cultures.
- Use 'ordinary' visuals (e.g. avoid designer sportswear - not all young people can afford these).
- Get permission for photos to be used.

WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Use word of mouth, local women's groups, faith groups, women's magazines, radio, libraries, schools and websites.
- Communicate through organisations such as the Women's Sports Foundation (www.wsf.org.uk) or groups such as the Women's Resource Centre (www.wrc.org.uk) or the Voluntary Sector forums.
- Gauge language around client group (e.g. it may be inappropriate calling an older women's group 'guys', however young girls may not mind so much).
- Consider sensitivities relating to body image and cultural issues.
- Advertise in areas visited regularly by women i.e. shop changing rooms, supermarkets, school gates, the back of toilet doors, visit www.whatworksforwomen.org.uk for more ideas.

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS

- Build a relationship with key people within the community and ask them to help spread the word, or get them involved with your club.
- Advertise via religious buildings and use caution and sensitivity when dealing with faith and gender.
- Communicate through MENTER Minority Ethnic Network (www.mentor.org.uk) or the Equality and Human Rights Commission (www.equalityhumanrights.com). There should be support available from these on a local level.
- Use Community Development Officers and Black and Minority Ethnic forums. Visit www.mentor.org.uk or telephone the Hertfordshire office on 01707 260088 for details.
- Use translators where appropriate.
- Use appropriate role models.

MIDLIFE AND OLDER PEOPLE

- Consider the font and size used (e.g. Age Concern uses Ariel or Helvetica Neue fonts in minimum size 14).
- People over 50 relate most to information on active living, healthy eating and chronic disease.
- Adverts are a good way to reach men in this age range – try local newspapers and parish magazines, whereas women respond better to the use of role models.
- Do not rely on the internet for communication.
- Avoid the words 'old' or 'older' and use language based around level of ability (not all gentle exercise!).
- Emphasise social elements and consider replacing 'sport' and 'exercise' with words like 'active living' and 'physical activity' and relate the benefits of active living to functions in daily life (e.g. playing with grandchildren, maintaining independence).
- Emphasise the positive aspects such as free health checks and/or taster sessions.
- Provide information to alleviate fears such as getting injured.
- Be careful not to reinforce perceptions that sport and exercise is only for younger people and consider images which counteract stereotypes (e.g. older people strength training, cycling, rowing etc.).
- Communicate through and work with organisations such as Fitter Futures (www.fitterfutures.org.uk) and U3A (www.u3a.org.uk).

DISABLED PEOPLE

- Consider the font and size used, especially working with people with visual impairments and people with learning disabilities
- Involve the local 'talking newspaper' in any advertising.
- Use existing credible magazines/websites/school newsletters to garner support.
- Use parent/carer groups as an information sharing network.
- Remember to be age appropriate in any communication.
- Do not assume that a person who is hearing impaired uses British Sign Language, but where appropriate use an interpreter. If in doubt – ask!
- Use positive imagery reflective of the fact that disabled people are involved in all sports.
- For advice on correct terminology and language please contact the English Federation of Disability Sport by email on east@efds.co.uk or visit www.efds.co.uk

FURTHER INFORMATION

Runningsports offer a range of additional resources including, Top Tips, Quick Guides, workbooks and courses to help with the topics listed on these pages. Visit www.runningsport.org

6. UNDERSTANDING YOUR POTENTIAL MEMBERS

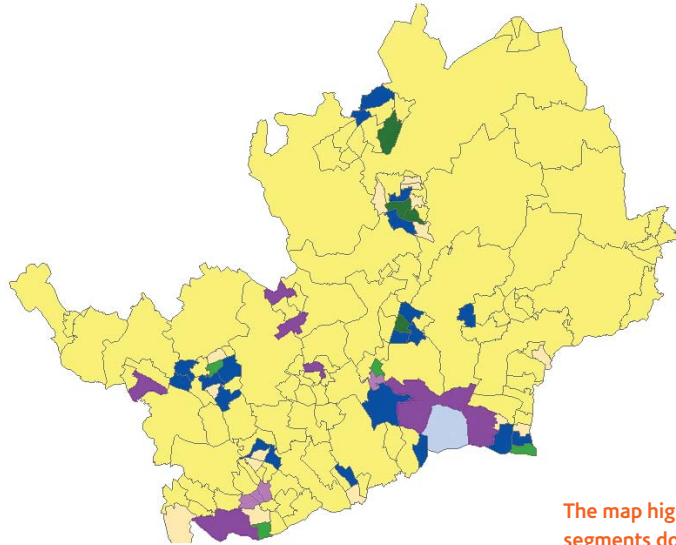
The Active People Survey is the largest piece of research into sport and recreation participation ever undertaken in Europe. In 2005/6 the survey involved 363,724 respondents, with a minimum of 1,000 respondents from each Local Authority area in England. The survey asked questions about sports participation, club membership, coaching, involvement in competition, volunteering and overall satisfaction with local sports provision. Active People can help your club to understand:

- Participation rates in your area and in your sport.
- The number of volunteers involved in different sports and areas.
- The number of people involved in organised sport, including those receiving coaching, involved in competition and club membership.
- Satisfaction in sports provision in your area.

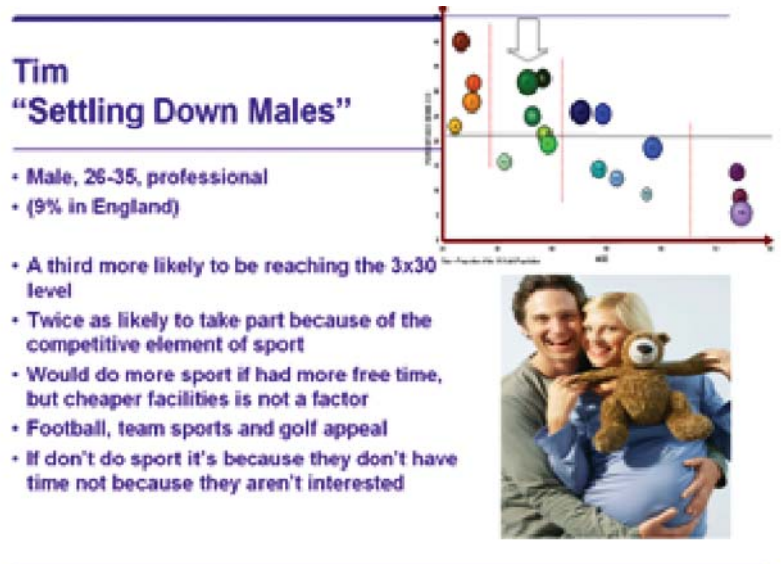
Following on from the Active People Survey, Sport England developed a tool to help us understand the nation's attitudes and motivations - basically, why some people play sport and why others don't. This 'Market Segmentation' tool provides information that can help you to increase the membership of your club by better understanding which people (market segments) are interested in your sport, and the types of people that live in and around your club. It also enables you to identify potential volunteers and can help develop partnerships with the commercial sector and secure sponsorship. Market Segmentation can also help you to understand how to communicate to different segments of the population and what forms of promotion they will best react to.

TOP TIPS

- Clubs should work with the Herts Sports Partnership and their National Governing Body of Sport (NGB) to secure support in understanding and accessing the data. The diagnostic tool is available for all to use, but it can take time to access the specific data that you need.



The map highlights which segments dominate areas across Hertfordshire. This can be repeated for any geographic area in the country.



Above is a summary of the type of information that is available for each of the 19 segments.

7. WRITING A MARKETING STRATEGY FOR YOUR CLUB

By using Sport England's Market Segmentation and Active People data, along with other resources to research and understand who your customers are (i.e. where do they work, live, shop and socialise) you can target specific people with publicity with a marketing strategy. This simply outlines what you are going to do in a chronological order and enables a more structured approach.

When writing your strategy:

- Decide what you want to achieve by this time next year (realistically) and break this down to quarterly "bite size" pieces. Set yourself two or three things each quarter that you will do to try and achieve your targets i.e. leaflet drops, press releases, open days, letters to key people in the community.
- Involve others - It is important to involve other members of the club in this strategy as it should be underpinned by the development plans of your club. This ownership by others will also make them more inclined to think about marketing and follow the plan.
- Make marketing a regular "to do" item, putting into action your strategy to raise the profile of your club, and delegate or get help to achieve your aims.
- Communications - Make a list of useful stakeholders/ key people/groups and the places where the public get information i.e. the library, county sports partnership website, local sports facilities, local newspapers, doctor surgeries, local authorities etc. Contact these stakeholders/ key people/groups on your list by phone or letter to let them know what you do. Ask them to help publicise your service and create a contacts list as an appendix of your strategy for future reference.
- Review and Evaluate - After the first few months of your marketing strategy, review and evaluate it; Did your plan do what you wanted? What worked and what didn't?

FURTHER INFORMATION

Sport England include all the relevant information about Active People and Market Segmentation on their website. Visit www.sportengland.org or log onto the Active People Diagnostic at www.webreport.se/apd. For local statistics visit www.erpho.org.uk or www.statistics.gov.uk

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Sport England's Promoting Sport Toolkit is a collection of simple-to-use tools to help sports clubs promote sport and active recreation more effectively, more easily and cost effectively to the public. It includes a library of community sport photos free for you to use in your posters, leaflets, websites and adverts.

Visit www.sportengland.org/promotingsport

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8. INCREASING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Sports clubs must understand that they compete for people's leisure spend and time with a variety of other providers. There are some clear actions which your club can undertake to increase its membership. However before you do this, you need to ensure that if a potential new member comes to your club that they have an initial experience which would encourage them to come back.

- Undertake a 'Mystery Shopper' exercise: How easily could someone become a member of your club? What reception would they get?
- Appoint one person with a remit to implement improvements after the mystery shopper exercise. Train him/her well so they can motivate the rest of the club. Put up posters, develop a website and ensure new members have the telephone number of this person.
- Introduce a policy where all committee members and other regulars automatically say hello to everybody they meet at the club whom they haven't met before.
- Operate a buddy system where established members foster new members to help familiarise themselves with the club and other members.

In order to be able to sell your club to new members current members must understand your club's mission and vision to ensure that your club is a welcoming one.

Consider the following questions:

- What is your club there for and what does it aim to do? To find this out, develop a club statement outlining the club's aspirations e.g. "Kimpton Rugby Club - at the heart of the community". You can also ask club members to suggest one without conferring and see what people think.
- Seek the views of ALL members and use their skills and enthusiasm to help the club develop in its chosen direction.

- Does your club add value to its members' lives? It is really important that you understand what benefits your members feel and get from belonging to your club.

Remember that maintaining the status quo generally only satisfies existing members. If clubs wish to increase their membership they must cater for 'tomorrow's member' as well as today's and recognise that tomorrow's members probably have a different perspective and different demands. If you want to expand, you may need to try and accommodate these.

Analyse what your club currently offers and try to identify whether the type of opportunities are what your community wants? If not, you may need to spread your marketing a little further a field, or make your club more attractive to non-users. You don't have to change the whole ethos of your club, but if your membership numbers are low and you wish to attract more people, then maybe your club needs to branch out in different directions, offering a variety of new opportunities.

COMMUNICATING WITH POTENTIAL MEMBERS

- Get some human interest stories (e.g. a feature story that discusses a person or persons in an interactive and/or emotional way. It presents people and their problems, concerns, or achievements in a way that brings about interest or sympathy in the reader or viewer) into the local media about players and the club.
- In all communication, emphasise the social aspects of the club.
- Organise events aimed at companies or families so that there is a link between work, family and playing.
- Pool resources with your partners in the local community, it can be a really effective way to promote your club and increase membership.

TOP TIPS

You can use the Sport England Market Segmentation tool to help you with this.

To find out more about this useful tool you can visit www.sportengland.org/se_market_segmentation telephone 020 7273 1551 or email info@sportengland.org.uk.

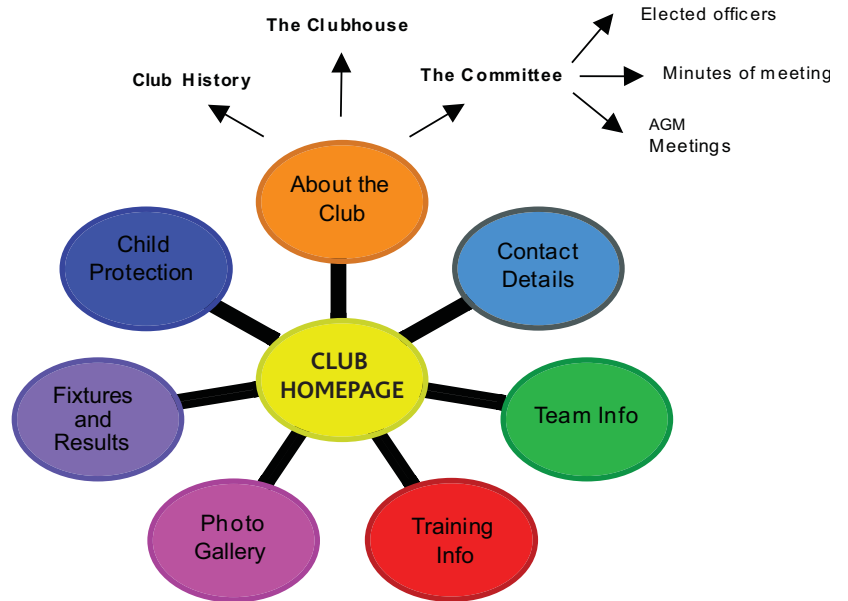


9. DEVELOPING A WEBSITE FOR YOUR CLUB

Websites can be used for many different reasons and can perform many different roles for an organisation, but it is possible to categorise these under the following four headings:

- Information sites provide details about the club, the sport, fixtures, results, key personnel.
- Promotional sites attract new members to the club or the sport, for the first time.
- Networking sites create a greater club atmosphere and link people in the club together, in the same way that sites like Facebook and Bebo do.
- Commercial sites help to raise revenue for a club through attracting sponsorship and selling merchandise.

Thinking about your club's website, of the four headings listed above which does it do and what is it trying to achieve?



PLANNING AND STRUCTURING YOUR WEBSITE

It is important to have an objective for your website. With limited resources it might not be possible to achieve everything that you want to, so be clear from the outset about what your primary objective is.

Website users are notoriously lazy, if they can't find the information they are looking for easily then they will go somewhere else to try and find it. Therefore it is vital your website is structured in such a way that important information can be found quickly. In order to get an easily navigable structure, the website needs to be thoroughly planned in advance of creating it and content needs to be thought through and categorised. A technique used for doing this is storyboarding or mind mapping which helps you to graphically plan the layout of your site and visualise its navigation. The example shows the planning of a simple site for a club.

The first task is to determine what information needs to be included on the site. This then needs to be assigned to various menu headings - try to keep this to no more than 10. Think about what your visitor will want to find and tailor the headings accordingly. The example shows; about the club, contact details, team info, training info, photo gallery, fixtures and results, child protection.

The diagram demonstrates that at the next level down, when 'About the club' is selected, there is another sub menu that includes the headings; Club History, The Clubhouse, The Committee. The storyboard then demonstrates when 'The Committee' is selected there are further sub menus and so on.

This exercise can then be undertaken for the other main menu headings and will result in the whole of the site being clearly mapped out. PowerPoint is a useful tool for this. Likewise you can download some free software at www.freemind.sourceforge.net to help you.

There are a number of options for getting a website up and running:

- DIY – If you or someone else in the club has the technical skills to produce the site this is obviously the cheapest option. This approach is great if the developer is good and is closely affiliated to the club, but make sure the club has control over updating content and there is a contingency plan if the individual moves on.
- Web Design Agency - They will produce a website that really works for you but this can be costly.
- Template Package - Buy into a web template. This gives you a shell that you can work around and build up the site from without needing any specialist web programme skills. These packages set the structure of the site and you are able to upload images and content. They can restrict how well the sites fits to your exact needs however, as you have to compromise to some degree to fit to the structure. This can also be very cost effective and sometimes almost cost-free e.g. <http://smallbusiness.officelive.com>.

MANAGING AND MAINTAINING YOUR WEBSITE

Only publish a website you can manage. If you don't have the resources to check and update each piece of content at least once every three months, you need to reduce the size of your website. For a small club this can be quite a task that can be made easier or harder depending on how the site was set up in the first place.

Most good websites now have Content Management Systems (CMS) as part of them. These enable people to update and change a website without having to know any complicated programme languages. You need to think about who has the responsibility for updating and managing the site. It is probably safest to have a few people who know how to do it so if the main administrator is unavailable; there is always a back up plan.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Sport England's Promoting Sport Toolkit is a collection of simple-to-use tools to help sports clubs promote sport and active recreation more effectively, more easily and more cheaply to the public. The website has a number of useful resources relating to the topics on these pages. Visit www.sportengland.org/promotingsport

TOP TIPS

- The general rule for websites is that the user should be able to find the information with no more than three clicks.
- The ECB has developed a template package for Cricket Clubs called www.play-cricket.com. Although a template package, it is designed with cricket clubs in mind so offers the structure and functions that most cricket clubs are looking for.
- Invest time into planning out your website's navigation. Although you can add new pages and change things around once the site is built, it can be very time consuming.



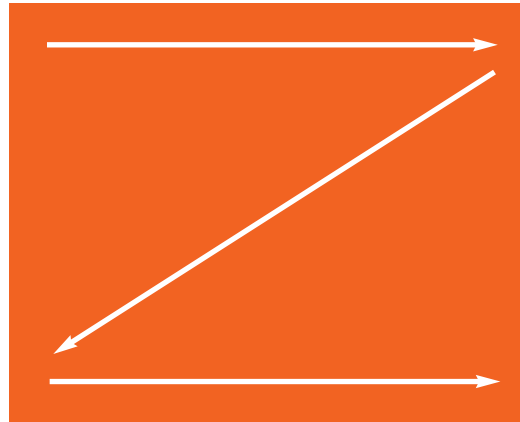
10. WRITING FOR THE WEB

Writing for the web is not the same as writing a report or any other paper based form of literature. Information needs to be easily accessible and to the point.

Research has shown that a typical web user scans a web page in a Z as demonstrated by the diagram.

Therefore put the most important information, from left to right across the top of the web page as this is where the eyes of the user will be directed to first of all.

Wherever possible, keep the information to the screen size too. Website users are lazy and they may not bother to scroll down the page to look for information.



- **Put important information at the top of the page**
The reader needs to know at a glance what the page is about and whether it will interest them. Make sure your first heading and paragraph make this clear.
- **Write for your audience**
Always bear in mind who you are providing your web page for. Are you giving them what they are looking for? Use your readers' language, not yours. Try to use the words people are searching for. It is very important to remember that the thing you care about most may not be at all interesting to your user.
- **Include context**
Any web page can be accessed out of context as a user may come directly to a web page through a search engine rather than from the home page of a site. Therefore ensure that each page carries enough information to let the user know where they are and what the topic is. Don't worry about repeating yourself from one page to another. You can never assume that a user has seen any of the other pages on the site.
- **Write objectively**
According to Jakob Nielsen the usability of a site can be improved by 27% by using neutral language —simply stating facts and drawing a conclusion —rather than boasting or using exaggerated language. Sometimes writing in the second person and a more informal approach may be appropriate. Consider your target audience and avoid using the passive tense where possible - users will engage more readily with content written in the active tense i.e. 'It was decided' is less engaging, and inspires less confidence, than 'We decided'.
- **Use simple language**
Don't use long words where short ones will do. The purpose of your website is to provide people with information - make it easy for them. Avoid specialist vocabulary and over-use of acronyms.

- **Be relevant**
Is there any content on your page that might make someone say, 'so what?' If so, get rid of it. Don't provide information they already know, such as 'these are the training pages of the website' when the title already makes that clear.
- **Be consistent**
The written style should be consistent on every page, as should formatting - use the same font and colour throughout and use bold and italics sparingly. Ensure that spelling and grammar is correct. Never underline because most default browser settings underline links on the page therefore underlining text that is not a link causes confusion. This will help people navigate your site and make the site look more professional. Remember too, that large amounts of text in bold, italics or capitals are difficult to read on screen.
- **Provide a call to action**
All useful web content drives an action and should end with a call to action, such as a link, a phone number, a form, etc. After reading a good piece of web content the reader should either know something they didn't know before, or be able to do something they couldn't do before.
- **Use images & video footage**
Images and video footage bring websites to life, but only if they're of good quality. Make sure that images and videos are uploaded in the right format. If you use large files this can affect the speed which it takes for a page to load and could deter people from using your site. You can download some sporty images free of charge from: www.promotingsport.sportengland.org.

MAKE YOUR PAGES SCANNABLE

According to research carried out by Jakob Nielsen, people rarely read web pages word by word. Instead, they scan the page, picking out individual words and sentences. In one study carried out by Nielsen's company, it was found that 79% of users always scanned any new page they came across, with only 16% reading word by word. Modifying text to use bullet points improves usability by 47%. Therefore, start with clear information on what the page is about. Once a user has established that the page contains information that interests them, they are more likely to read the text properly.

Headings, subheadings and bulleted lists are useful for structuring information for scan-ability. Use two or three levels of headings so that your reader can navigate the information easily. Headings must be meaningful and a good heading should convey clearly what the following text is about. Use bulleted lists and other such elements to relieve the user's eye.

Make your sentences short and to the point because people read slower on-screen. Avoid unnecessary content. If you have some complex detail to get across adopt the 'inverted pyramid' style of writing - Start with a broad view: an overview, or even an abstract. Narrow your subject as you go on, giving more and more detail towards the bottom of your page. Very detailed background information, or information of interest only to a minority of readers, can be presented on secondary pages, linked from your main page.



11. WORKING WITH YOUR LOCAL PRESS

HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

A press release must contain the following information:

- Name of your club/organisation/event organiser.
- Address of club/event.
- Date you want the press to publish e.g. for immediate release/not for release until 12.00 hours on 28 October.
- Contact details of your press officer or who to contact for further information.

Layout

- Layout is also important.
- Its usually better to use 1.5 or double line spacing.
- Only use one side of the page. If you need to go on to a second page, use a new sheet of paper.
- Font size should be 11 or 12, and avoid fancy fonts, stick to something simple, such as Arial.
- Style is key too. Don't start sentences with numerals (i.e. "Twenty-three members will . . .") and always spell out numbers below 10 (one, two, three). Also spell words such as 'degrees' and 'percent', which are sometimes written as symbols, and use capital letters sparingly.
- At the foot of each full page put "More" and at the end of the article put "Ends".
- After the article has ended, make sure you include your name, address and e-mail address so that the journalist can get in contact. Include any relevant background information after the article too and be sure to include information on your organisation and sources for additional information (e.g. websites, governing bodies, etc.).

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PRESS RELEASE?

• Something that will grab the readers attention

Use bold typography in the headline; make it eye-catching; use your best line in the intro and draw the reader in to the story. Every press release you write should have a strong title and interesting angle e.g. 'firsts' (is one of your club members first to qualify for a national event?), receipt of large sums of money to support the club, celebrity visitors etc. Avoid the use of jargon, acronyms and abbreviations.

• Make it relevant

It is vital that you get the local angle across in the headline or intro; tap in to your local knowledge and relate it to the local community.

• Keep it simple & brief

DON'T.... clutter the intro; start with 'The'; or start with an inverted sentence.

DO.... Keep each paragraph to a maximum of 30 words; try to keep the entire press release to a maximum of 300 words; and use fact-files often known as 'Notes to Editors' at the end to include additional information which is not essential but may be useful to the journalist adding further context to the story.

• Story Construction

An attention grabbing headline; your best line in the intro; back up the intro in the second paragraph; use an emotive quote in the third paragraph; then go back and tell the story. Do this in no more than 10 short paragraphs. It is best if the main press release is limited to one A4 page.

Follow up the first paragraph by filling in the details. The main things are to make sure you give the journalists all they need and to make it as interesting as you can;

1. Keep the sentence structure simple, explain complicated terms and don't use jargon.
2. Avoid hype and self-congratulation, and never make a claim you can't back up.
3. Remember too, that the local media want a local angle. So how does the story affect local people?
4. Give interesting quotes from the people involved. Always provide full names and job titles, and explain what the person quoted does, if it is not clear.

• Photos

Well-taken and interesting photographs which tell the story will give you a better chance of coverage as they breathe life into a story. It's essential that pictures submitted with press releases; (a) stand out from the crowd and (b) conform to the publication's own style. For maximum impact, consider spending some money on a photographer with media experience.



TOP TIPS

Do:

- Email press releases to journalists within the body of your email AND as an attachment.
- Put the press headline (or a summary of it) in the subject box of your email.
- Follow up press releases with a telephone call to the individual emailed.
- Observe journalists' busy times of the day/deadlines.

Don't:

- Phone a journalist before you have fully thought through the idea or story.
- Use email to 'sell-in' a story; use the phone and follow up with an email.
- Assume journalists will read your email. Always follow up by telephone.

Although it can be daunting at first, the more dealings you have with journalists the better you will understand how the media works, and how you can use newspapers, TV and radio to get your message out there. REMEMBER local journalists rely on local people to provide them with local stories! Don't be afraid to phone a journalist if you have an idea for a story.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Sport England's Promoting Sport Toolkit is a collection of simple-to-use tools to help sports clubs promote sport and active recreation more effectively, more easily and more cheaply to the public. The website has a number of useful resources relating to the topics on these pages. Visit www.sportengland.org/promotingsport

12. WRITING A GREAT ADVERT, LEAFLET OR POSTER

When you're preparing your advert, think carefully about what you want it to achieve.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Target audience - who are you trying to reach? Does your advert speak directly and clearly to these people?
- Focus - does it offer a single, central idea?
- Visibility - will your advert stand out on the page or on screen? If it's a newspaper ad for instance, cut it out and place it in position. Does it stand out from everything around it?
- Branding - does your ad follow your clubs branding and brand values and is it distinct from your competitors? Many people make the mistake of seeing similarity as a benefit. Don't be one of them! Instead, do all you can to make your ads different, while retaining your brand identity.
- Layout - is the layout clean, logical and easy to read? Does the headline draw the reader into the copy?
- Reproduction - will the advertisement reproduce well (think about the colours, particularly if it's going onto news-paper), or translate well on to the screen? If you are printing posters or flyers how are you producing these? - A cheaply produced advert may reflect badly on your business. Is it worth investing a bit more into this?

And remember...

- Give the date, times, location and contact number plus any other vital information.
- Try to convey to the customer how they will benefit from your offer.
- Always include a "call to action" which makes the reader "do" something. For example, 'call us for a full list of prices and opening hours.'
- Avoid too much text, as less is more!



TOP TIPS

- When producing large volumes of printed material, unless absolutely necessary try to avoid including dates, prices or information that will render it quickly out of date.
- Proof Reading - when you proofread any document, as well as checking spelling and grammar, you need to ensure that contact details (telephone, email and website) are correct, that days and dates correspond, and times and locations are correct.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Sport England's Promoting Sport Toolkit is a collection of simple-to-use tools to help sports clubs promote sport and active recreation more effectively, more easily and more cheaply to the public. The website has a number of useful resources relating to the topics on these pages. Visit www.sportengland.org/promotingsport

13. USING DIRECT MARKETING SUCCESSFULLY

Whether you're promoting an event or simply maintaining strong relationships with your members, direct marketing is a great way to make a more personal approach to potential and/or existing customers.

To have the option of using this approach you must have a database of contacts! Maintaining an up-to-date database will enable you to use personalised mailings. This can help you to communicate with current members as well as targeting 'lapsed' or infrequent members, to encourage them to return.

Building a database is straightforward, using inexpensive software such as Microsoft Access or Excel. Think about the sort of information you'll need to know over time. It will probably be a simple list of details such as:

Names

Addresses

Telephone numbers

E-mail addresses

Children's D.O.B etc

DIRECT MAIL

As in every type of writing, there are do's and don'ts when it comes to sending direct mail. Follow the guidance below, for what should be included;

- Name and address – accuracy is everything. It can be extremely irritating to receive a letter with your name or salutation incorrect.
- Headline/Subject – use the headline/subject to grab the recipient's attention and to encourage them to read on.
- Content - remain focused on one key message and avoid jargon. Steer clear of long sentences too, and use active sentences rather than passive ones whenever possible (for example, 'You will see . . .', not 'You will be shown'). Ensure spelling and grammar are checked.
- Call to action – be clear what you want the reader to do next. If you want them to call, print the number clearly, in bold perhaps, with times when the phone is going to be answered. If you want them to return a coupon or reply slip, keep it simple and enclose a pre-paid envelope if you can. Also, give a deadline by which people should respond.
- Envelope – an anonymous envelope might sit unopened, or even be thrown straight in the bin, so it's often worthwhile to put a message on the outside of the envelope to entice the recipient to open it.



TOP TIPS

- Setting up a database will enable you to do a 'mail merge' allowing individual personal details to be dropped into a generic letter, or the printing of address labels.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Sport England's Promoting Sport Toolkit is a collection of simple-to-use tools to help sports clubs promote sport and active recreation more effectively, more easily and more cheaply to the public. The website has a number of useful resources relating to the topics on these pages. Visit www.sportengland.org/promotingsport

14. ORGANISING AND ADVERTISING EXCITING, SUCCESSFUL EVENTS

An event is the only form of marketing where your customers/potential customers come to you! This means that they are already interested in what you are offering, so make the most of it!

Events are an excellent tool for your club to;

- Raise its profile.
- Attract new people.
- Generate funds.
- Reward existing members and make them feel proud of their club.

Remember however, whilst events can be very exciting to organise, whether small or large, they can also be a time consuming task with a lot of things to plan and take in to consideration!

When organising an event:

- Ensure that the creativity, planning, organisation, communication and co-ordination for the event are in place and that you do not just organise events in a haphazard way.

- Really use your skills and contacts from within and outside the club.
- Use a variety of methods to promote your event.

Most clubs organise events at some time or another; sporting, social or otherwise and many do it well. However, there are also clubs that run the same old tired events year after year because of tradition, with no one really considering whether it is worth it or not. So, how do you generate the improvements and innovation that keeps the momentum going?

Insight + Ideas + Impact + Implementation = Innovation/Improvement

This equation recognises that unless creative ideas are based on real insight they don't benefit the club. At the same time, the people with the insight must listen to people with ideas and encourage them and share their insight and experience. How often have you heard comments along the lines of 'we tried that 17 years ago' or 'it may have worked at... but it would never work here.'

There must be mutual respect between the people with the insight and the people with the ideas.

TOP TIPS

- Many clubs also run open days/events to try and increase their membership. These should draw people's attention to something new you want to tell or show them. If you have space, you could ask other organisations such as other local sports clubs, your local Community Sport Network or the Herts Sports Partnership to come along and run a stall or do a display at your event.
- Run competitions and involve the local schools and other groups. Put an article about it in the local press and draw the winner at the open day.
- Data Capture at your events - It is vital that everybody who comes in contact with your club is asked for their name, mobile number and email address (remember to comply with the Data Protection Act) so that you can follow up with them.



Segments	Social Events	Sporting Events
Players	Awards Event	'Fun' Tournament
VIPs	Lunch/Dinner	'Vets' Tournament
Businesses	Lunches Network meetings	Corporate Tournaments i.e. Rugby sevens / Six-a-side cricket
Minis/Juniors	Halloween Party	Festivals
Parents	Mother's Day Lunch	'Try It' Day
Community	Festival/Summer Ball	Fun Run

DEVELOPING EVENTS

Look at the people within and outside your club and you can probably divide them, broadly speaking into the segments listed below. Then split your events into two types: a) social and b) sporting and think of some events that might appeal to these people;

Players: Whatever level your teams are at, run an annual awards event for them. This not only brings everyone in your club together but offers a really nice platform to thank and celebrate members. You could also run a fun tournament at the end of season where players play out of position and wind down from the stresses of the season.

VIPs: Particularly within 'legacy' sports such as rugby union and cricket, this segment often forms the backbone of the club. Whilst your club cannot survive based on this segment alone, they certainly must be looked after. Re-union lunches/dinners are important as are 'vets' tournaments.

Businesses: The corporate sector is often overlooked by clubs in terms of attracting players, members and volunteers. Most sports could set up corporate days through organising their own corporate tournament at their club facility for either their sponsors or for local businesses. Clubs could get their local paper or charity involved. Almost any sport would be appropriate and can be sold to businesses and their staff as a good day out raising staff morale; the club makes a bit of money from registration fees and the bar, and get some media profile and maybe some donations for charity.

A Family Affair

Children/Juniors: Hold a Halloween Party where the children of adult members or juniors in the club can have some fun, whilst parents enjoy themselves somewhere else within your centre/club, knowing their children are safe and having a good time.

Parents: Most sports clubs based around a mini/junior section are familiar with what is often known as 'drop-off' parents, who tend to use club training times as a convenient time to do the shopping etc. without interruptions. 'Come and try it' events can be used to introduce non-playing parents into the sport and the club. Or a Mother's Day lunch could be held e.g. hold a Mother's Day lunch every year, where mums of the minis/juniors are invited to Sunday Lunch (charged at cost). They enjoy their lunch with fellow mums. After lunch, each boy gives a flower (donated by local florist in return for branding) to his mum to say thank you for taking them to their sports club.

The wider community: Increasingly, sports clubs and leisure centres have a desire to become 'hubs for their communities' and therefore organise sport/social events designed to engage the wider community.

Here are some ideas of events that have been organised in the past by community sports clubs...Summer Ball (Black tie/live music), Quiz Night, Ladies Lunch, Auction of promises, Food and Wine Festival, Casino Fun Night, Lottery for local residents, 100/200 Club, Christmas Calendar, Bonfire night, Byrns night, Racing Night, Doggy Walk, Stars in Your Eyes, Local PE teachers' match...

TOP TIPS

- Seek sponsorship for your events. Some local businesses do not necessarily want to sponsor your first team, but would prefer to support community events. Make sure you keep record of any companies that express an interest. Develop strong relationships with local businesses because the more you know about them the better you can tailor-make your proposition to suit them.
- A small, but absolutely vital point: If you have secured a major event sponsor, you MUST invite them as VIP guests to the event and provide them with photos and other memorabilia from the day.

PLANNING YOUR EVENT - CHECKLIST

Each event MUST have an individual who is responsible for overseeing the event and who makes final decisions. They should follow the checklist below, delegating the duties to ensure nothing gets forgotten:

Competition

- Send out entry forms and details to relevant people, i.e. schools, clubs, colleges and companies and put on the club's website.
- Organise the structure of the event i.e. fixtures, breaks, presentations etc.
- Organise officials i.e. referees, scorers etc.
- Ensure issues such as insurance have been organised and you have relevant first aid cover etc.

Promotion

- Produce promotional material such as emails, leaflets, posters etc.
- Generate interest via local radio, websites and newspapers.
- Make friends with as many printers/designers locally as possible who may be willing to negotiate big discounts on producing/printing your material.
- Link with local businesses to try and access prizes as part of sponsorship deals. If you don't ask you won't get.
- Organise trophies, medals, goodie bags etc.

Venue

- Is the venue available on the time/date required?
- How much does it cost?
- How far in advance do you need to book the venue? Is there a cancellation fee?
- Can the venue help with equipment?

Site management

- Equipment – cones, bibs, whistles etc
- Sports specific equipment
- Facilities
- First Aid
- Refreshments
- Public Address System/two-way radio

Volunteer Management

- Plan how many volunteers you will need and for what.
- Do you have enough people within your club to help? If not, contact your local Volunteer Centre. See www.hertscvs.org.uk for details.
- Welcome new volunteers and keep them up to date.
- Are you going to provide uniforms/badges for the volunteers?
- Will they need CRB checks?
- Assign someone to co-ordinate the volunteers on the day of the event.

General Points:

- Suitable time/date.
- Suitable venue.
- Does it clash with any other major sporting or other local event?
- How long will it take to organise? Be practical and allow yourself plenty of time.
- How much will it cost?

Budgeting:

How much will the following elements cost:

- Venue
- Promotional material
- 'Freebies' for volunteers
- Food and drink
- PA system
- Additional equipment
- Insurance
- Travel expenses
- Decorations

Marketing/Publicity:

- Produce a regular newsletter both as a hard copy and electronically with details of events and booking details.
- Produce A4 posters electronically and email them to everybody on your database for them to put up.
- Sit down with your local media partners and work out how best they can help you promote your events (of course, invite journalists and other media staff as your guests). Do this in plenty of time prior to the event.
- Invite your Councillor, MP or a sports personality to open the event.

Risk assessments, licences, permissions etc.

There are many health and safety considerations to take into account when organising events and many risk assessments to be undertaken. In addition to this, in some instances licenses or permissions may need to be sought from your Local Authority or the National Governing Body. Additional insurance may need to be taken out too. Suffice to say that you must check that you have all the paperwork in place prior to the event. Speak to the Herts Sports Partnership for some advice.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Runningsports offer a range of additional resources including, Top Tips, Quick Guides, workbooks and courses to help with the topics listed on these pages. Visit www.runningsport.org

15. RAISING THE PROFILE OF YOUR CLUB

Some ideas for your club:

- Make sure your details are registered with the Herts Sports Partnership and are up to date. Visit their website or call the office to do this.
- Work on making strong links with key people in the community. Each Local Authority should have Sports Development Officer and a Community Sports Network. You should also contact your local volunteer centre.
- Produce a quality brochure or leaflet about your club to give to the public. Ask if the local schools will give it out when parents ask for a school prospectus or at parent's evenings and other school events.
- Consider putting together a newsletter for club members or press articles to raise your profile. Send articles in to the local newspapers and parish/community news, look at our tips on press releases and flyers. Why not try to get a regular article into the parish/community newsletter with news and updates. Remember to put your contact details at the end of the article.
- Contact the local directories. Make sure your club is listed in your local phone book, Yellow Pages or Thomson's directory.
- Have taster days, two for the price of one or put existing members on commission! For example, if they bring a friend who registers with you, then at the end of the month they could get a discount rate.
- Piggy back on other events in the community and offer to have a stand or do an active display.
- Make sure your website is up to date.



TOP TIPS

- Whenever you get an enquiry or a new member joins, always ask where they saw your details.
- Look at what's happening around you - could you respond to gaps, trends and opportunities to improve and develop your club further?
- The more often you change the content on your home page, the higher up the list it will appear on search engine sites such as google!

FURTHER INFORMATION

Sporting Champions brings World Class Athletes into schools and local communities to inspire and motivate young people to take part in sport. Visit www.sportingchampions.org.uk

For contact details of your local authority Sports Development Unit or your Community Sports Network, visit the Herts Sports Partnership website - www.sportinherts.org.uk



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