

## Marketing and promoting your sports club



### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. WHAT IS MARKETING .....</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>ENGAGE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2. WHY USE MARKETING .....</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>ENGAGE LOCAL BUSINESSES .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. WHO DOES MARKETING .....</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>DEVELOP A WELCOMING AND FAMILY FRIENDLY CLUB .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4. HOW TO MARKET SPORT .....</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6. RETAIN AND COMMUNICATE WITH EXISTING MEMBERS.....</b>	<b>13</b>
UNDERSTAND WHAT PEOPLE WANT .....	3	MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR PEOPLE .....	13
MAKE SPORT FUN, EASY AND POPULAR .....	3	EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY TO HELP YOU KEEP IN TOUCH WITH EXISTING MEMBERS.....	14
RECOMMENDED MARKETING TOOLS .....	3	CREATE A DATABASE .....	14
<b>5. HOW TO RAISE THE PROFILE OF YOUR CLUB.....</b>	<b>4</b>	DISTRIBUTE AN ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER.....	14
MARKETING TOOLS .....	6	KEEP YOUR WEBSITE UP-TO-DATE .....	15
HOW TO CREATE AN ADVERT/FLYER .....	6	<b>CHECK LIST .....</b>	<b>15</b>
HOW TO USE DIRECT MAIL.....	6	<b>DEVELOPING YOUR OWN MARKETING STRATEGY .....</b>	<b>16</b>
USING THE MEDIA TO INCREASE PUBLICITY .....	7	<b>USEFUL INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>17</b>
HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF SIGNS AND BANNERS.....	10	LOCAL MEDIA CONTACTS .....	17
IDEAS FOR OPEN DAYS/EVENTS	10		

## 1. What is marketing

When you mention marketing to many people, they instantly think of activities such as advertising, flyers, brochures and direct mail.

However it encompasses much more than this, and many of the things that you're already doing could be classed as marketing. Are you aware of how people are treated when they enquire about joining your club, or whether new members are made to feel welcome? If you are, then you are currently undertaking what is called 'informal marketing' and this is vital for the sustainability of your club.

Formal marketing consists of what is called the marketing mix and is most commonly represented

through elements that relate to product, price, place and promotion. The first three of these focus on whether your product or service fits the needs of your existing and potential customers or members. Promotion relates to how you communicate and publicise what you have to offer.



## 2. Why use marketing

In order to survive and grow in an increasingly competitive market, sports clubs must find ways of attracting new members while retaining existing ones.

Through marketing you can achieve this, while it also helps you:

- Identify opportunities for growth and long term sustainability;
- Clearly communicate and raise awareness of exactly what your club has to offer;
- Become more visible and a hub within the community;
- Increase sponsorship and engage local businesses;
- Recruit volunteers.

### 3. Who does marketing

Everyone in your club should be involved in informal marketing whenever they can. Encourage your members to tell their friends and family about what you do and what your club can offer.

For the formal marketing side of things, it's particularly useful to appoint a marketing and promotions officer, or small team to oversee the development and implementation of your club's marketing strategies.

### 4. How to market sport

#### Understand what people want

People don't like being told what to do and when to do it. Marketing is about looking at sport from the point of view of the individual, and learning to understand what he/she wants from it and how these needs can be met. Think about what barriers there are for people joining clubs. Is it lack of time, the cost of membership or the fact that people consider alternative activities more fun?

#### Make sport fun, easy and popular

Activities that involve spending time with friends and family are very appealing to people. Emphasise the social side of playing and how much fun it can be being part of a team or playing sport with your family. Most people accept that playing sport is a lot more fun when it's sociable, and because of this, more people are likely to take part.



#### Recommended marketing tools

Keep it simple and utilise the full range of tools that are available, from using the media to running events. Select the tools that will best reach the people you want to encourage to join your club. When promoting sport, it is important to use images that people can relate to, so they feel included from the start.

And finally, don't forget to make the most of the technology that is available. Your website and email campaigns are effective, low cost and immediate ways of communicating to existing and potential members.

## 5. How to raise the profile of your club

Before you start selecting the most appropriate marketing tools to use to grow your sports club, you need to think about the following:

### **What are your clubs values?**

Your club's values or 'personality' are the things that will attract people (or put them off) joining your club. A sports club should include values such as fun, safe, social and professional. These values need to be expressed in everything your club does, from writing letters to how a coach interacts with his/her team.

### **What are your clubs unique selling points?**

Think about the quality of your service and ways that you can improve it. What feedback have you received from members? Make sure to promote any quality assurance schemes you have achieved such as Clubmark.



### **What sort of people do you want joining your club?**

Think about the people who live in your local area. Is there a large number of a certain age group or are there are lot of young families? Do you want to increase the number of junior or senior teams?

If you have time, you might want to check out [Sport England's segmentation](#) work to help you define your target market.

### **What key message do you want to include in your promotional material?**

What one thing would you want to get across to the public? What aspect of your club do you feel is particularly strong? Is it the number of teams you have, or maybe the social aspects and the friendly atmosphere within the club?

### **Are your membership fees realistic and competitive?**

Can people realistically afford your membership? Is this proving a barrier for some people joining your club? Are you competitive with clubs who offer a similar service?

**How do people find you?**

Ensure that you are listed within local directories including the white and yellow pages, and any online club databases. Check with your Local Authority and County Sports Partnership to make sure your club's details are included on their online directories.

**What do you want to achieve from marketing?**

Outline the specific goals that you want to achieve from marketing. For example - "I want 20 new members to join our club as a result of the open day we are running. Because it's likely that only 25 percent of those attending the open day will join, we need 80 people to attend".

Going into this much detail will help you decide how many people you will need to target and the marketing tools to use to achieve this.



## Marketing Tools

### How to create an advert/flyer

Advertising is an effective way of communicating to large number of people in your community. When you are preparing your advert or flyer, think carefully about what you want it to say.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Target audience – does your advert/flyer speak directly and clearly to the people you want to reach?
- Focus – does it offer a single, central idea?
- Visibility – will your advert stand out on a page or a screen?
- Branding – 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 adverts/flyers 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? Does the copy stop the reader from moving on?

### And remember:

- Give the date, time, location and contact number plus any other vital information.
- Remember to always sell the benefits in their best light – 'selling the sizzle, not the sausage'.
- Tell your customers what becoming involved with your club will do for them!
- An advert/flyer should always answer the customer's question – "But what does that mean to me".
- Include a 'call to action' that makes the reader 'do' something.
- Try to avoid including dates, prices etc when you are producing large volumes of marketing material as they quickly become out of date.
- Avoid too much text; less is more!

### How to use direct mail

Whether you're promoting an event or maintaining strong relationships with your existing members, direct mail is a great way to make a more personal approach.

Start by **building and maintaining a database**. This will enable you to use personalised mailings to let members know of new committee members, new equipment, events and other important updates. You could also target 'lapsed' or infrequent members to encourage them to return. There is more information on how to build a database later on in this guide. Follow the template on the next page to create your very own piece of direct mail.

## Direct mail template

Name and address – accuracy is everything, as there's nothing more irritating than receiving a letter with your name or salutation incorrect.

Headline – use the headline 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 and use active sentences rather than passive ones whenever possible e.g. 'You will see...' **not** 'You will be shown...'.

If you produce your document in Microsoft Word, carry out a spelling and grammar check.

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 manned. If you want a coupon or reply slip returned, keep it simple and enclose a pre-paid envelope. 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.

## Using the media to increase publicity



Through the production of press releases, the media offers you a cost effective method of promoting your club or an event you are running. If you have a story that is newsworthy and relevant to the local community, the media will allow you to promote this free to a large audience.

Follow the template on the next page to create your own press release.

## Press release template

### Attention grabbing title

Every press release you write should have a strong title. Focus on 'firsts' e.g. one of your club members is the first to qualify for a national event. As always avoid jargon.

### First paragraph

Don't waffle or try to set the scene, but get straight into your story.

- Summarise who's involved;
- What's happened or is about to happen;
- Where and when the news took place or will take place;
- How events have unfolded so far, and why this is important.

### The details

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. Keep the sentence structure simple, explain complicated terms, and don't use jargon. Avoid hype and self-congratulation and never make a claim you can't back up. Remember that local media want a local angle. So think about how the story affects local people.

### Quotes

Give interesting quotes from the people involved. When quoting someone, use the style - he/she said: "This is great news for the whole community".

Avoid lofty terms like "he commented". Always provide full names and job titles, and if it's not clear, explain what the person does.



### Photography

Photography breathes life into a story. Publications however receive a lot of photographs, so it's essential that any photographs you supply:

- 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.

## Layout

Then there's the layout of the release itself. Many people opt for line spacing of 1.5 to 2, but single is also fine. Releases should also be typed on one side only and should be between one and two pages long. Anything longer than this is probably full of 'waffle' and unnecessary information. Use 11 or 12 font size, and avoid fancy fonts.

In terms of style, don't start sentences with numerals e.g. "Twenty-three member will...". Always spell out numbers below 10 e.g. one, two, three etc. Also spell words that are sometimes written as symbols such as 'degrees' and 'percent'. Use capital letters sparingly.

Finally, at the foot of each full page put 'More' and at the end of the press release put 'Ends'.

## Press release essentials

The following information must be included on all press releases:

- Name and address of your club and your contact details including name, phone number and email address.
- The date when you want the press to publish the release.
- Background information on your club.

## Top tips when dealing with journalists

### Do:

- Do email press releases to journalists within the body of your email and not as an attachment.
- Do put the press release headline (or a summary of it) in the subject box of your email.
- Do follow up press releases with a telephone call to the individual emailed.
- Do observe journalists' busy times of the day and deadlines.

### Don't:

- Don't phone a journalist before you have fully thought through the idea or story you want to discuss.
- Don't use email to 'sell' the story. Use the phone and follow up with an email.
- Don't assume journalists will read your email. Always follow up with a phone call.
- Don't talk to daily morning newspaper journalists after lunch unless it is absolutely critical e.g. informing them of a significant change in detail to your story.
- Don't talk to daily afternoon newspaper journalists in the morning. They are likely to be on deadline from first thing until lunchtime.

## How to make the most of signs and banners

A sign can be used for a lot more than just a way for people to find your clubrooms. Although this is important, signs can also be an effective way for you to communicate important information about your club. Whether it's an upcoming event, tournament, or the key dates for registration, signs are an undeniably important way of promoting your club and communicating to the public.

- For your sign to be effective it needs to be visible either for people walking or driving.
- Include a header, which will grab the reader's attention and draw them to the sign.
- Below the header, use the space to communicate essential information accurately and in full.
- The reader should be able to easily read and interpret the wording while answering all their likely questions.
- To ensure not too much information is crammed onto the sign, provide a website address for the reader to find out more information about what you're communicating.
- It is vital that you tell the reader what they need to do to contact you such as a phone number or email address.

## Ideas for Open Days/Events

Open days and events draw people's attention to something new you want to tell or show them.

- Check the date. Make sure any open day or event you organise doesn't clash with anything else big happening near to you at the same time.
- If you have space, you could ask along other organisations such as other local sports clubs, your community sports network, County Sports Partnership or your local sports development team.
- Invite your Councillor, MP or a sports personality to open the 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.
- Have a theme for your open day such as a summer disco, BBQ or maybe a tournament.
- Produce posters and flyers and effectively distribute them! Speak to your local Authority's sports development team and County Sports Partnership to register your event on their websites. You could also ask shops, post offices, supermarkets, estate agents, dentists and doctors to display the information.
- Produce a press release a couple of weeks before the event.

For step-by-step instructions on how to produce and use various promotional tools, check out the [How to guides](#) on the [Promoting Sport Toolkit](#).

### **Engage the local community**

It is important that your club becomes the hub of your local community. What would be the effect of your club not existing? If there is no effect, then you need to make your club more relevant to locals.

The first step is to develop a community engagement program. Link your club to other parts of the community such as medical centres, colleges and housing estates. Make the most of your facilities and share them with your partners during quiet times.

Utilise the expertise in your community such as legal and financial professionals. They will also benefit if there is a successful club in the local area.

### **Engage local businesses**

Look at your club as a large network of people which local businesses can promote its products and services to. Sell your club and illustrate how a business can be more visible in the community by being linked to your club.



## Develop a welcoming and family friendly club

### Be welcoming to new members

How are new members treated when they join your club? Are they made to feel welcome and shown around your facilities? This is where the people within your club come to the fore. No amount of promotional material can disguise an unfriendly club.

Think about a buddy system, where each new member is paired up with an experienced one.

### Develop a family friendly club

How do your clubrooms and facilities look from a new member, parent or child's point of view? Is it a place where you would take your family too? Are there things for children to do such as a play area?

Think about what music you have playing and what you put on TV within your clubrooms. Are they what most members would want to listen to and watch?

Is the entrance to the clubrooms easily found and well lit. Are there clear signs that tell people they are at your club?



## 6. Retain and communicate with existing members

If your new members are silver, then your existing members are gold. It's amazing to think that if you retain 90 percent of your members per year, you will have lost more than a third in four years.

Happy members will tell their friends and family how great your club is. This is the most effective type of promotion, and best of all it's free! Try to show each existing member how you value them and get them involved.

### **Make the most of your people**

Your current members, and their skills and knowledge, are probably the most valuable asset your club has. They act as ambassadors and have a great influence on the atmosphere and peoples first impression of your club.

Don't focus just on who can help, but also what they can they do. Learn about the specific skills of your members. Have they got skills in IT or carpentry, or can they work behind the bar.

Don't ask people to do too much. Unless they ask to do more, limit the amount of time they spend each week to two hours.

Finally, don't forget that your volunteers need managing. Volunteers, like any employees, will respond better if they feel what they are doing is being valued.



## Embrace technology to help you keep in touch with existing members.

### Create a database

Building and updating a database will enable you to personally communicate important club information to your members. You could also target 'lapsed' or infrequent members with special offers to encourage them to return.

Creating such a database is straightforward, using inexpensive software such as Microsoft Access or Excel. If you create a database, think about the sort of information you'll need to know over time. It will probably be a simple list of details such as members' names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, children's ages, type of activity/session required, and willingness to be contacted by you from time to time.

There is [step-by-step guide](#) on how to create and maintain a list using excel within the Promoting Sport Toolkit.

Another option is to use [Fixtures Live](#), who have free online tools to help you manage a membership database and communicate to your members.

### Distribute an electronic newsletter

Distributing a newsletter by email is an effective, low cost and immediate method of staying in touch with your members. The key successful ingredient is to have an up to date list of all your members and their email addresses.

Microsoft offers a free [email template download](#), which you can customise for your club.

Some points to remember:

- Send the newsletter from a legitimate email address which your members can reply to;
- Make the subject line clear;
- Use no more than two fonts otherwise your newsletter may start to look less professional;
- Keep the amount of content to 1000 words or less, otherwise it may become tiresome to read in an online format;
- Include stories that will be useful and of interest to a large proportion, if not all of your members;
- Add graphics that relate to the stories to help break up the text;
- And don't forget to add contact details, in more than one place if possible.

### Keep your website up-to-date

Websites in recent years have become a lot more than just a method to electronically display information about your club. An interactive website will allow the public to register for courses or pay their membership fees online, thus saving you time and money with administration. This also allows you to capture valuable information about the people who are visiting your site.

Websites are at the heart of most successful marketing campaigns. By promoting website addresses on marketing material, you are able to direct people to find out more information, while encouraging them to register for events or courses. [Click here](#) for details on how to create a website.

### Check list

Are you currently listed in local directories including online?	
List your club values	
List your clubs unique selling points	
Who do you want to join your club?	
What are the barriers to people joining your club?	
What one key message do you want to include in your marketing?	



## Useful information

### **Sport England's Promoting Sport Toolkit**

The 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. It includes a library of community sport photos free for you to use in your posters, leaflets, websites and adverts.

<http://www.sportengland.org/promotingsport>

### **Chartered Institute of Marketing**

The CIM are 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.

<http://www.cim.co.uk>

### **Fixtures Live**

FixturesLive is an online fixtures and results service that saves amateur sport time and money through online management and communication tools. Clubs, leagues and Governing Bodies can set up fixtures, competitions and events, manage venues, member databases and send e-newsletters, emails and texts. Players can find out the very latest league tables, match and player stats, photos and reports.

<http://www.fixtureslive.com/>

### **Local media contacts**

#### **The Newspaper Society**

This site offers a searchable database of local and regional newspapers. A good resource for seeking out editorial contacts to assist you with any stories you may have.

<http://www.newspapersoc.org.uk>