



**CRICKET
SCOTLAND**

How to run a successful Community Launch

How to run a really successful Community Launch for your sports club (How to become a Community Sports Enterprise)

1. Introduction

This note is designed to help sports clubs to develop stronger links with their communities and to organise a really successful Community Launch. This could help the clubs grow their membership, attract new types of people to their clubs, develop new partnerships and generate additional income.



There is no 'Magic Wand' which suddenly will transform your club into a growing Community Sport Enterprise. Like with any other project you have to work *hard and smart* if you are to be successful; however, it can be done!

This note cannot give you all the answers, especially as all this is work in progress, but I hope it will help you make it happen. I have tried to avoid too much boring theory...so hopefully this will provide you with some real support.

If you have any questions or comments, please get in touch - I am here to help.

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2. Background

At a time when there is an increased focus on how we can create a more coherent society, there seems to be considerable scope for sport to play a pivotal role in our communities. At the same time many of our clubs and other providers could benefit greatly from the added benefits of engaging with new audiences in terms of new users, volunteers, sponsors and community partners.

The challenge is that too many sports clubs suffer from 'sporting myopia' where the main success criteria are being associated with sport only: number of users or members, the performance of the first team or the elite athletes and everything else has to support that. So what happens out there in the community and the 'real world' is often regarded as a bit of an irrelevance, even a nuisance, sometimes.

This narrow view then creates a disconnect between sport and society, and both lose out. If your values are just 'to coach sport' or 'provide enjoyment for your members' then you'll probably find that people within the community surrounding you care little for you and your activities unless they are directly involved with your club. If you only have a narrow focus on 'your club', then your scope will be very limited. How can you grow membership and sponsorship if you are only interested in yourself?

Sport does compete for the resources of the community. Community groups, faith, arts, etc. are also vying for volunteers, goodwill and money - if they are better engaged and involved than you and your club they will be more successful in attracting support and resources.

At the same time many of our non-traditional, successful community sport/activity providers from outside the traditional sports world regard the success of their community engagement as just as important as the outcomes of their sporting activities. Often, because their roots are *in* the community they design and deliver the programmes to suit people's real needs, not what the club coach wants to do. The key here for community sports clubs is to open up towards their communities and become that Hub.

3. Why your club should be more than 'just a sports club' and become a hub for your community

The notion of 'sport for sport's sake' which implies that sport sits in glorious isolation from the rest of the communities it is supposed to serve simply is no longer valid.

Great sports clubs/providers work for and with their communities, and as a consequence, both parties benefit. They are in reality Hubs for their Communities. They link up their assets, skills and relationships with people, groups and institutions in their communities.

The benefits of this approach can be considerable in terms of growing membership and volunteer base, increasing income and helping to ensure that the club and the community is sustainable in the long-term.

One of the key aspects of every successful sports club and any other sports provider I have been in contact with is that they see themselves as a key part of their community and see themselves being in a two-way relationship where both parties benefit.

At the same time it saddens me to see so many of our clubs and often even bigger ones, who ignore their communities for ages and live in their own world. But then when they fall on hard times, they suddenly demand support and money from the community they profess to serve, but in reality they have ignored.

If you want your community to support you, you must build up a big surplus in your *Goodwill Account* in the Community Bank. This is also called generating *social capital*.

I would also like to emphasise that Community Relevance is a key aspect of making your club sustainable. In my experience a sports club which exists in splendid isolation from the community it is supposed to serve, will find it virtually impossible to achieve sustainability.

Achieving relevance in the eyes of the community enables a sports club to demonstrate its value on a regular basis.

When times get tough, a sports club with high community relevance is seen as a community asset rather than an isolated, self-interested group with a financial problem.

A question your club has to ask itself: If for some reason your club folded how many people within your community would really miss you?

Myopic clubs which are irrelevant to their community can expect to face certain death. It may be a slow, lingering process as people leave you, facilities and permissions become increasingly hard to come by, funding somehow passes you by, the number of volunteers keep dwindling...the decline is inevitable and few people outside the club's hard core seem to care.

But at the same time on a regular basis I experience clubs and sports enterprises from across most sports, in all types of communities, facility-owners or tenants who have developed into real community hubs for their communities and who are experiencing considerable benefits, in a number of different ways.

So here are some of the benefits your club could gain from being a community hub:

- You can reach out to and engage with potential users, members, supporters and partners

- You can develop new income streams through events, commissioning and partnerships/sponsorships
- By being more relevant, you can attract more members and volunteers
- You can become 'a better club'
- It will help you generate support from within your community which may prove useful 'when times are tough' and you need their support

4. Who are your potential community partners?

I suggest that you should draw up a list of as outlined below of possible partners - a map of the assets in your community. It is very important to emphasise that an 'asset' is much more than a 'physical asset'. As you will see below an asset can be somebody's skills or a network.

There are four main groups you should link up with:

- I. Associations/groups, other sports clubs and non-sports organisations
- II. Individuals/community connectors
- III. Institutions/public bodies
- IV. Businesses

The next steps 1

1. Draw up a list of relevant groups and associations that are a part of the community around your club. (Remember these groups can be formal and informal.)
2. What are their key drivers and where is there common ground between the two of you?
3. What are your existing relationships with these groups and associations? Do you know somebody there? Are any of your club members, parents and/or volunteers also involved with them? Many people have more than just one interest!

1. Associations/groups, other sports clubs and non-sports organisations

- Chambers of Commerce/business networking groups
- Ethnic groups/clubs
- Faith groups and centres
- Arts and cultural groups
- Other sports clubs
- Neighbourhood associations
- Fitness/physical activity groups
- Hobby and collector groups
- Community Groups

- Groups from wards/parts of your city
- Youth clubs and groups (formal and informal)

II. local residents and individual community connectors

Through your players, parents and volunteers you have a great starting point when it comes to developing stronger relationships with connectors and influential people within your community. However, in every community I've come across there are plenty of people who, if invited and motivated, could play significant roles in the development of the local clubs.

But first we need to find them:

We all have different capabilities and capacities:

Some people are great to have on board when it comes to getting information out to certain groups. Others are better at making things happen, whereas some people are great at making people feel welcome and comfortable (they'd be very useful at your Open Day). There are probably some social media nerds, just around the corner from you, who would be great at helping you to become visible on Facebook, Twitter, etc.

3 groups of people you should look at

- People who know people
- Entrepreneurs (social and business)
- 'Activists' - people on a mission

Your new best friends: Community Connectors



Identify *Connectors* both within and outside your club (Connectors are people who can help your club link up with different groups).

Connectors are people who know lots of people; they are not always leaders. A connector has a different role in the community. A leader is the person at the front of the room who act as a voice for the community. A connector is in the centre of the room, often unrecognised but always creating new relationships often acting in a modest way.

- Connectors see the potential in everyone
- Connectors are well-connected, active in civic life

- Connectors are trusted and create new trusting relationships
- Connectors believe in people in their community

Within your club (members, parents etc.) there will be a number of people who will be able to introduce your club to new groups and institutions. They can do that better because they have access to and the trust of their peers and colleagues. So, if the Chair of the local Allotment Association is the dad of one of your juniors or a member of the new local Health and Wellbeing Board comes to some of your social functions you now have the opportunity for encouraging link-ups between your clubs and those two bodies.

III. Institutions/Public Bodies

Draw up a list/map of public institutions and bodies within your community, such as the ones below.

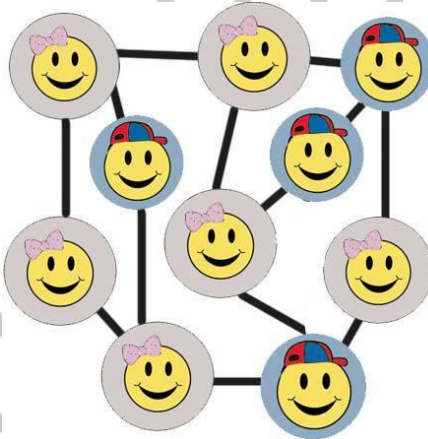
Then assess their personnel/expertise, economic power, space and equipment and constituents and connections

- Your local authority. Each is organised in a different way, but here some departments you should link up with. (Don't assume they talk to each other!)
 - City centre management
 - Planning and building
 - Education
 - Leisure
 - Health
 - Community centres
 - Active Living
 - Crime and anti-social behaviour
 - Housing
- Schools including sports academies - approach both their PE teachers and inclusion officer
- Colleges
- Universities
- Housing associations
- Tenant associations
- Police
- Youth Offending
- Crime prevention
- Community centres
- Community Trusts

- Health Sector (Clinical Commissioning Groups)

You should then be able to work out how best to start working with these, or if you are already in contact, how you could develop a relationship.

all these are networked within your community - make sure you are too...



5. Possible initiatives

Each sports club is different in terms of location, skills, facilities, environment and demographics. It is therefore very difficult to be specific as to which programmes and initiatives you might want to offer.

Can I suggest that we talk about this when you have been developed the map of your local community partners and assets.

6. The launch

1. *Where and when*

Obviously the best place to run the Launch is at the place where your club trains, if at all possible and practical. It may require some moving around with mats and other equipment and twisting of a few arms, but it really is worth the effort to showcase your club.

Start at 4.00pm, so people can attend the launch on their way home from work. With a 35 minute presentation and Questions and Answers and a bit of networking people should be able to leave from around 5pm(ish).

Tidy up your club

Make sure that everything and everywhere within your club is clean and tidy. From cleaning your toilets (plenty of toilet paper, please)! Nothing is more revealing about a club's priorities than its lavatories) to notice boards (get rid of those month-old handwritten notes) to getting rid of those two broken chairs in the corner

II. On the day

Parking and directions

This is extremely important because if your visitors are unable to find you or have to drive around for half an hour to find a parking space they may well decide to give up. Have a designated member of staff in charge of your parking area – don't forget to identify overflow parking!

You may want to consider including a simple map of how to find your setting on any invitations you send out, particularly if your club is difficult to find.

Set up a welcome and registration desk. Ensure you take down name and contact details, enabling you to follow up enquiries.

Format/Programme

III. The presentation

Length - approximately 35 minutes

If at all possible produce a PowerPoint presentation which is informative and engaging. And tell stories: As they say:

"If you can't tell your story, you can't sell your story." -

1. Introduction and Welcome
2. A brief introduction to your sport with a little demonstration
3. A brief introduction to your club
4. Explain that you are more than 'just a sports club'
5. Explain your club's mission
6. Tell about the impact your club and your sport can have beyond just the sport itself - give examples of the initiatives you are considering, provided you have the right support and partners
7. Conclusion: Our club is a great place and a great partner for local people and our community
8. Question and Answer

IV. Who to invite

Assuming you have now produced a breakdown of your potential community partners you should invite representatives from everybody on that list.

One question then remains: Whom at the different bodies and organisations should you invite?

The answer: It depends! Sorry. If you know somebody who works there, ask that person.

Invite everybody with the either the word 'communication' or 'community' in their job title.

Also, search your local media (use Google) for stories on 'community engagement', 'healthy lives', 'crime prevention' and 'fun sport' and similar categories. That can unearth stories and people who may have an interest.

V. How to invite

You can either send an email, if you have that person's email address or a letter. A template for that invite can be found in Appendix 1. Of course, you should chop and change to suit your exact situation and needs.

VI. When to send out invites?

Send the first batch of invites around one month prior to the launch and then a reminder to those who have not responded.

VII. Informing local media

This event and the initiative is likely to interest the general news team as much as the sports editor, because of the spirit of community engagement that your club is displaying.

1. Call the newspaper, website and radio to get the right contact and forewarn him/her that you are sending the press release about the event.
2. Send the press release (contact Svend Elkjaer on svend@smnuk.com for advice) as an email, so the print and online journalists can 'copy and paste' straight onto their pages.
3. A couple of days later call the journalist to ask whether they have received the press release

VIII. Using social media

Even if you have not developed a good website, a vibrant Facebook page, a buzzing Twitter account and a comprehensive email database you should use the tools you have as well as possible.

Use the templates for the invite and press release with your information added as a base for your various postings - there is no point re-inventing the wheel.

IX. Hand-outs

When people leave the event hand them a folder which could contain

- A print-out of the presentation
- Description of the programmes that you are proposing to run
- Information sheet about your club

X. Follow-up

Now that you have done all the hard work and run a successful Community Launch it can be tempting to relax. However, don't stop now! You have created a higher profile of your club within your local community and made many new friends. Now is the time to follow up with potential partners, while the great experience from the launch presentation is still fresh in their memory.

Make sure you fulfil all your promises to your new contacts and partners and send those follow-up emails and texts; assign a buddy to each of them.

Take photos and record videos and put them on your Facebook page and website and send them out via Twitter - tell the world about your great event.

Good luck

Appendix 1

Invite to Community Launch

Dear xx,

Learn more about xx Sports Club and how we can work together to create a more active and cohesive community

Your invitation to a Community Launch 4pm on xx October

For a number of years xx Sports Club, based in yy Street has been coaching hundreds of young people in the great sport of yyyyyyy. Some have moved

onto great achievements within our sport, whereas others have simply just enjoyed the sport and the benefits it brings.

At the club here we are proud of the work we do here, but we do feel that many more people and organisations could benefit from learning more about xxx Sports Club and how we could work together.

This is why we are inviting you to attend a Community Launch on 4pm on xx October here at xx Sports Club in yy Street.

At this event we will like to tell you about our sport, our club and the great impact the sport can have on young people and their lives.

We will also like to present some initiatives on how the club could work with community partners like you and help you achieve some of your objectives.

There will also be the opportunity of seeing a brief demonstration of our sport and for networking with community-spirited people and organisations similar to you.

Light refreshments will be served and the 'official' part of the event finishes around 5pm, but, of course, you are welcome to stay and network.

The postcode for the club is bbbbb and there is some car parking at the club.
Public transport:

We do really hope you can make it on xx October and would appreciate if you could let us know if you will be attending. Of course, please bring a colleague and pass this invitation on to colleagues.

We look forward to meeting you.

Kind regards



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