

How to run a great Open Day at your cricket club



An Open Day can be a fantastic opportunity to build relationships with your community, attract new people to your club and provide existing members with another, great experience.

An unwelcoming open day

Not far from where I live there is a waterskiing club which had put up a big board advertising their Open Day. So one Saturday afternoon my wife, the Golden Retriever, Mozart, and I went down to the lake and enjoyed watching the 40-50 people having a great time on the water. Everybody, apart from us were in waterskiing gear, so we were quite visible, especially as Mozart was loudly demonstrating his keenness to join the water skiers. (Non dog-owners: Golden Retrievers are water dogs!)

Wearing our 'smart casual' and not waterskiing gear for 20 minutes we stood there and no one came to say hello or welcome and we then went home. Surely, that would not happen at your open day? Some possible new members and volunteers being lost.

You would make sure that newcomers were made to feel welcome and that you got their contact details and then sent a follow up email or letter, wouldn't you?

You may say that you are far too busy on your match days or at your events to say a personal welcome to everybody, but there are many other ways you can make people feel welcome.



The three 2s

2 seconds (first impressions count)

2 minutes (welcome)



2 hours (the whole experience)



Take a look at the guy on the bench above. He may have told his wife that he is taking the dog for a walk, while he really wanted to go watch some cricket. At your club would somebody go over and say 'hello' and have a chat with him? Chances are that he might want to come and play some social cricket – but unless you welcome him, you will never know!

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A really open Open Day

Firstly, why do you want to run an Open Day? If you think it's just about putting up a few posters around town and then preparing some tea/coffee and some biscuits, then don't bother! Sorry - but the example above speaks for itself.

There has to be a genuine, widespread desire throughout the club to:

1. engage with the community
2. share the great experiences you provide with as many people as possible
3. attract new people and returners to the club

(and it's a great opportunity to tidy up and give the club a good clean). Commitment and enthusiasm are prerequisites to have a great open day. Don't try without it.

Got that? Then, let's get going:

Write down and get agreement from everyone from within the club what you want to achieve on the day. Max 3 points. More and the whole event gets confused.

Choosing the date

When deciding upon a date for your event check that it doesn't coincide with a major sporting or local event, half term or Bank Holiday weekends.

What's your story? What are you for?

Develop a format and a really good story as to why people within your community should want to join your club.

Plan ahead and get people involved

What do you want to achieve? Is that realistic? What can you learn from previous open days?

Be clear about who you want to attend. Are you targeting families, school children, students, singles or community partners? Whatever groups you decide to target make sure you can a) reach them b) give them great experiences on the day - experiences that are right for them and not just what you think is a good idea.



Kids bring parents = more potential players

Your open day could also be a great way of engaging with your potential and current community partners from schools, housing, health, community groups, youth services etc. These non-sport organisations can become great partners, funders and commissioners if you know how to work with them. But firstly, they must get to know you, so invite them to your open day and show and tell them about how you are making a difference to the community!

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Make it FUN! The number of incredibly boring so-called *Family Fun Days* or *Open Days* I have been to is far too high. Whatever your sport, make sure you have areas where people can try it, or parts of it (remember 'Dip a TOE - Try, Observe, Experience).

Celebrity, politicians and local sports people from other sports are obvious potential players in a charity game. Everybody loves celebs who make a fool of themselves and it makes the rest of us feel less stupid the first time we try a new sport and fail miserably!

Remember, just because you want to include a specific activity in the open day because you like it, does not mean it's a good idea. A great experience for 12 year old kids, 'back to cricket' 45-year olds or decent players wanting to play in a supportive club environment are somewhat different.

When considering what activities to include or external organisations to invite to your event, have in mind your target audience. Don't forget that by involving local schools, scout groups/girl guides they will bring with them parents, friends and therefore prospective members.

Be a good neighbour

Do let your neighbours know that you will be holding an event, when it will be and the time it is taking place. If you are situated near a school/community centre they may even be happy to allow you to use their facilities such as the kitchen or parking area or they may want to come along and join in the fun!

Deployment of volunteers

During the planning stage you will have identified what tasks need to be allocated to staff. Make sure that on the day they are all well prepared and understand their duties. It is always a good idea to have a few extra staff on hand acting as floaters so that they can quickly be deployed to help where they are needed.

First Aiders

It is a good idea to have trained First Aiders on site just in case they are required. If you are having a bouncy castle don't forget that you may need to make your insurance company aware of this.

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 it's difficult to find.

VIPs

If you are having a local dignitary attend the event you will need to follow any protocols, be ready to meet and greet and generally have someone look after them for the whole of their visit. If they are opening the event or carrying out a ribbon cutting ceremony you will need to think carefully about timing and location. Who, for example, will introduce your dignitary and say a few welcoming words before inviting them to cut the ribbon?

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How to promote your open day

Start with getting all existing members behind the event - both to support on the day and with spreading the word to all their contacts including on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter etc.

Also, produce and print a flyer promoting the event - sell the benefits of attending and not just list the activities you are running. Produce both a printed leaflet/poster and email version advertising your open day and distribute locally and also through your members.

Give people a reason to come along. It's not enough just to announce that you want to have more members - what's in it for people to come along? You are asking them to give up time, effort and money!

Kwik Cricket, Street20 (Cricket with a tennis ball), Family Cricket, Doggy Cricket etc.

Invite the neighbours - make a special point of inviting people living literally next door. They are probably more likely to join and also by inviting them you could mitigate any potential problems over your visitors' car parking!

If you do not already have a good relationship with local media, such as newspapers and radio, use your open day as a great opportunity. Meet up with them, tell them about what you do and your aspirations. Offer prizes, free membership to their listeners and readers - there has to be something in there for the media and their listeners/readers.

Use your Website and Facebook page

Put all information about your open day on your Website and Facebook page - avoid using lots of text. Short, sharp and simple.

Make sure your information includes 'phone numbers and email addresses of a couple of friendly, well-briefed members whom people can contact for further information.

Local Press and Photographers

Leaving aside the above paragraph, they will have been invited prior to the event but it is worth remembering that just because you have invited the local press it does not mean that they will attend. It is a good idea to arrange for a photographer to attend so that you can submit pictures to the local press for publication after the event. You can also use the photos for future marketing material.

The more exciting your open day is, the more likely you are to attract media coverage.

Link up with a dynamic, local charity and raise money for them in connection with the open day. It demonstrates your community spirit, adds engagement through them and provides you with the opportunity of linking up with their supporters and perhaps even a local celebrity who is supporting the charity. A picture of a local celebrity trying out tennis raising money for a local charity is much appreciated by local newspapers.

Engage with potential and current community partners such as housing associations, resident and community groups, local council, health services or chambers of commerce.





laugh. dance. welcome.

Make sure you make everybody feel welcome

Make sure that you place 'your friendliest members' at the entrance to welcome people when they arrive and wish them a 'safe journey homey' when they leave

Plan your day in line with your target audience. If you are inviting children/families to come along organise games, face painting etc.

Let people get a feel of the club. Offer tours of the clubhouse and facilities so that they can see what facilities you can provide.

Create a social atmosphere: Try to use your open day to introduce new food and drink options into your club and see what works. You may have culinary skilled people within your club, people from other cultures or local restaurants who want to promote themselves. You could also try and involve local farm shops and/or catering colleges. Sometimes it's good to try something different from chicken drumsticks or sausage rolls at these events!

Promotional materials

Before you start spending lots of money on printing posters and leaflets decide where will you display these and how many will you need? Consider all places within the community where parents will be going, e.g. shops, doctor's surgery, community centres, libraries, dentists, church or local parish notice boards.

Get parents involved, e.g. ask them to display a poster at their place of work.

Send an invitation to all past enquirers and lapsed members and remember to invite all those parents who have registered their children, but have not yet started at your club.

If your club is facing a busy road, produce a big sign promoting your open day. To save money for the future, design it in such a way that it can re-used in future years simply by changing the date.

Logistics on the day

Allocate roles for the day. Ask club members to talk to visitors or give a tour of the club, etc. Give all volunteers a briefing including the emergency action plan.

Set up a registration desk. Ensure you take down name and contact details, enabling you to follow up enquiries and offer them a taster session.

Make sure that everything and everywhere is clean and tidy. From 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).

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Give visitors membership forms to complete or take away or even better: give people an incentive to join there and then.

Make sure you have a contingency plan in the event of bad weather!

Follow-up

Now that you have done all the hard work and run a successful open day 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 recruit those new members and volunteers and follow up with potential partners, while the great experiences from the open day is still fresh in their memory.

Make sure you fulfil all your promises to your new members 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, including the local media.

Clearing Up

Do remember that you will need your staff and volunteers to help clear away at the end of the day.



YOUR OPEN DAY CHECKLIST:

BEFORE THE DAY

- Have we agreed the reason we're doing it?
- Have we chosen the date and time?
- Have we produced Invitation list?
- Have we planned the activities that will take place on the day?
- Do we have a bad weather plan?
- Have we allocated roles amongst the club volunteers?
- Have we informed and invited the neighbours?
- Have we informed all our club members?
- Have we produced promotional material?
- Have we sent out the invitations?
- Have we updated our website and Facebook page?
- Have we contacted the local media?
- Do we have a registration form ready for the day to capture visitor information?
- Have we got a photographer or volunteer to take photos?

ON THE DAY

- Is the club clean and tidy?
- Have all the volunteers been briefed?
- Have we set up a registration desk or data capture point?
- Are our friendliest people on the door to welcome people in?
- Are we ready for our VIPs and do we know who is in charge of looking after them?

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AFTER THE DAY

- Have we cleaned up the club?
- Have we written up the story for our website and facebook?
- Have we sent photos and a story to the local media and rugby league papers?
- Have we contacted everyone that came on the day to invite them to join?
- Have we thanked everyone who helped make the day possible?

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