

# Growing your Community Sports Club Business



## Linking to Business Background Notes

### Overview

Within every club's community are businesses that could benefit through a link with the sporting club in the areas of Sponsorship, Corporate Social Responsibility and the use of the club's facilities for meetings and parties. As with any other "products" that the club has to identify the businesses it could target, attempt to find out what the business wants and needs are and then to approach them in a professional manner.

### Sponsorship

- **Who are the customers that would buy sponsorship?** Businesses buy sponsorship packages to use them as a "tool" to assist them in growing their business.
- **Why do they want sponsorship?** A business will use sponsorship to achieve one or more of the following a) assist them to find new customers - do you have data bases they could use? b) To assist them in retaining their existing customers – do you have events or hospitality at games they could use to build up a relationship with their customers? c) – Brand Building – can they promote their brand at your ground, on your shirts or on your web site? d) Build up their reputation – can they sponsor your community activity and be seen to be supporting the community in which they are based? E) Motivating their workforce – Can they bring their employees for a day out at one of your games?
- **How you let them know that you offer what they want.** The club would need to carry out some research before it contacted any business to find out which of the above five outcomes was needed by the business and which ones they could offer the business. They would then have to contact the business by telephone or through a "sales letter" to try and arrange a meeting. This correspondence would have to say to the business "we know what your needs are and we have a way of fulfilling those needs".
- **You need to know how to keep the new customer since every customer is a very valuable commodity.** Once you have the sponsor "on board" you will need to work hard using customer service to retain them. For example you will need to understand what they want to achieve from the relationship and work hard to ensure that they do achieve their outcomes. E.g. if they want to find more customers in the region you will need to work with them to introduce them to your players, members, families etc.

### The Sponsorship Campaign–Example Outline

#### Step One – Club Audit

The first step is to understand what it is the club has to offer a potential sponsor. With an understanding of the potential needs of a sponsor (to find more customers, to retain its customers, to motivate its work force, to build its brand and to build its reputation) the club will need to decide which of these needs it can fulfil and how it can fulfil them. Examples are given below;

- To find more customers – databases, members, supporters
- To retain customers – hospitality and games and events when the business can interact with its clients
- Brand awareness – shirt advertising, web site, pitch side hoarding, programme, roadside advertising
- Build their reputation – involvement in community and mini rugby activity
- Motivate workforce – be seen to support sport, activity in their community. Employee involvement, Tag rugby etc.

The club will then need to analyse the number of members, data bases, cars driving past the gate, times it is in the local newspaper etc. since this will be what the potential sponsor will be interested in.

[http://www.irishrugby.ie/club/welcomingclubs/welcoming\\_clubs\\_index.php](http://www.irishrugby.ie/club/welcomingclubs/welcoming_clubs_index.php)

*IRFU Welcoming Clubs Programme; An IRFU initiative which provides clubs with a road map and training for the "team off the field" to assist them in running their sports club as efficiently as possible.*

### **Step Two – The Value of your inventory**

The club will then need to decide what value this has. This can be achieved through an analysis of other clubs sponsorship documents, through analysis equivalent sponsorships and advertising rates and if possible if a member of your club works at one of your target businesses ask them what they think the value is.

### **Step Three – Building up a target list**

The club will need to carry out research to build up a target list of companies. This can be achieved a) via business or council web sites b) work of mouth c) reading the business pages of the local newspaper d) reading any local business magazines. Once the target list has been established then the club will need to isolate the person responsible for sponsorship. The easiest way to achieve this is to call up the business and ask for the name of the person. If they won't give out the name then try to find a person who works at that business to ask or look at the recent press cuttings from the business since often the sponsorship person is photographed handing out a cheque!

### **Step Four – What does the business want?**

The key to your success is to try and have some idea of the "wants and needs" of the business before you approach it. Very often there will be information on their web site, failing this simply call up the business making a "research" call – "I am working with a local club and wanted to find out how you get involved in the local community and what sort of projects do you sponsor"?

### **Step Five – Contacting the Business**

If one of your members is working at the target business then sending them in with an overview of the project you want to get sponsored and them asking the sponsorship person if they will meet you is your strongest approach. If this isn't the case then if you have a person within the club that it used to making sales calls, the initial contact should be through the telephone. The aim is to get a meeting with the relevant person where you can a) find out more about the businesses wants and needs b) let them know that the club can fulfil these needs. If you didn't have a person who can make a sales telephone call then you will need to send in information via e mail and through the post.

### **Step Six – the Presentation**

If you do manage to get a meeting then you will need to a) before you present try to find out more details about the "wants and needs" of the business b) have a short professional presentation about the project you want sponsoring c) use the information they give you at the start of the meeting in the presentation to highlight the fact that this project can fulfil their business needs.

### **The Sponsorship Document**

#### **Example of an Outline**

#### **Section One**

Build up a section on the background on the club covering areas such as ethos, structure, history, Geographic location, activities, teams and achievements.

#### **Section Two**

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

#### **Section Three**

The numbers section;

- Size of data bases – demographics and post code analysis if possible
- Numbers of users on the web site, social media sites etc.
- Number of participants in each section of the club
- Number of members
- Coverage in local press – press cuttings if possible
- Number of cars driving past the end of the road
- Number of businesses using the club house

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#### **Section Four**

##### The Sponsorship Rights

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

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

#### **Section Five**

The Investment – how much, when it is payable and how long the term of the sponsorship is.

#### **Club Facilities**

Club Facilities vary greatly and the individual club will need to decide if there is an opportunity to hire them out to businesses. The club will again need to understand the “wants and needs” of the business, if they believe they can fulfil these then the marketing communication will need to show this understanding.

What does a business usually want from a venue for meetings?

- Plenty of parking
- Comfortable surroundings
- Food
- Quiet environment
- Easy to deal with

What do people usually want for a party venue?

- Easy to find
- Plenty of parking – if it is central and they can walk to it even better
- Comfortable surroundings
- Good Food
- Easy to deal with

What do parents want for a Children’s Parties?

- Easy to find venue with plenty of parking
- Space for children to run around
- Food – a kitchen
- Sports Coaching
- Easy to deal with

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