

IRFU Welcoming Clubs Programme



Info Sheet #1: Developing a Sales Culture within the Club

Grassroots Community Sports Clubs are under increasing pressure to find the funds necessary for them to remain viable. The funds that many of them relied on in the form of grants and sponsorships are disappearing and there is increasing competition for the income streams that remain. To survive they need to “think and act” like a business. They need to have commercial acumen, understand the value of “customer service”, and understand how to communicate efficiently with their customers/ stakeholders as well as work to a strategy which harnesses all of the available resources and uses them to achieve realistic outcomes.

At the heart of any business there are the “sales” that are the making of their products or services. Sports Clubs are no different since they sell memberships, sponsorships; they need to sell their club to new players, their junior rugby sessions to parents and their rugby on the field to supporters. The club volunteers therefore need to have a basic understanding of what selling is and the processes that are involved. These are highlighted in the examples below;

Example One – “Selling” the Club to children who come to the club via the Play Rugby Scheme

- **Who are the customers?** The parents will decide if the children are going to be brought along to Junior Rugby or not. If the parents are already involved with the club it will probably be the father who makes the initial decision to take the children along. If the parents aren’t already involved in the club (and these are the people we need to target) the parent that makes the decision is usually the mother.
- **What does she want from the club?** Parents want their children to be involved for several reasons and these include; they want their children to be challenged, they want their children to have fun, they want their children to develop confidence and self esteem, they want them to learn team work, to be involved in a healthy activity and to make friends.
- **How you let them know that you offer what they want.** In your correspondence with the parents or in meetings you need to emphasize to them that you understand what they want and that you offer it (see sample sales letter below).
- **You need to know how to keep the new customer since every customer is a very valuable commodity.** The parent will expect a great “customer experience” every time. If you don’t fulfil your promises they will move away and you will lose a valuable customer.

Example Two – 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 a database they could use? b) To assist them in retaining their existing customers – do they have events or hospitality at games they could be used 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 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.

Example Three – Social Memberships

- **Who are the customers that would buy a Social Membership?** There is a wide range of people including friends, family and ex players.
- **What do they want from the membership?** They will be looking for something that is value for money (they don’t want to pay more for a beer at the club than in the local pub), links them to the club, provides communication with the club (they want to be kept informed about anything that is happening at the club), has a range of benefits (discount on goods and services from businesses linked to the club) and comfortable surroundings (the ladies will want clean and accessible toilets).
- **How you let them know that you offer what they want.** Memberships have to be actively sold if you are to fulfil the potential sales that are available. The club needs to talk to the members and find out what they want as social members and then communicate with them through email, word of mouth, direct mail and on the web site to let them know that you are offering exactly “what they want”.
- **You need to know how to keep the new member since every one of them is a very valuable commodity.** They need to be offered “customer service” which includes providing them with what they expect, provide good communication channels at all times and following any negative feedback, be prepared to change things.

Basic Sponsorship Document

Section 1 - The Background information about the Club; which league it plays in, where it is based, the facilities it has, the team today, the community approach and the structure of the club

Section 2 - The Ambitions of the Club; what it aims to do on and off the field over the next few years

Section 3 - The Numbers

- Size of database – demographics of numbers etc.
- Website – number of hits.
- Facebook statistics
- Number of mini/juniors playing
- Coverage in local newspapers
- Sign by the road – how many cars drive past each day?

Section Four - The Sponsorship Rights

- Access to all database – how often they can use it
- Advertising – where this will be
- Hospitality/invitations to club events
- Use of the club for an employee's summer schools
- Memberships for sponsor's employees

Section Five - The Package

- Cost
- Payable when
- Term

Basic Sales letter to Parents regarding Play Rugby

Dear Mrs Thompson,

Join us at Brampton Rugby Club to be a part of our healthy, fun and structured rugby sessions where your children will make friends, learn how to play rugby, learn all about sportsmanship, teamwork and really enjoy themselves!

At Brampton Rugby Club we understand the values and benefits that being a part of a sports club can offer our children. We train our coaches so that they are able to develop and deliver programmes that are structured and provide the following outcomes for the children;

- A healthy activity
- A fun activity
- An environment that promotes co-operative play, teamwork and good sportsmanship
- Self esteem in our children
- Friends for all of the family

Our Play Rugby "Welcome to Brampton Rugby Club" evening will be held on Thursday 6th October at 6pm. Whilst the children will be introduced to the coaches and run through an introductory session, the parents will be invited to enjoy a coffee in the club house, have a short tour of the facilities, hear about the plans for the Junior department before watching the remaining part of the children's session on the fields.

To join us on the evening simply call John Brown on 098767 243657 or email John on johnbrown@bramptonRFC.ie to let us know that you are available to come along.

We look forward to seeing you on the 6th October at Brampton RFC.

Yours sincerely,

John Brown
Family liaison Officer