

IRFU Welcoming Clubs Programme



Info sheet #6: The importance of data to your Sports Club Business

The Sporting Club should be viewed in exactly the same way as any other business is. It has a range of products to sell, it needs customers to buy its products, it definitely has competitors and customer service is a vital ingredient for their success. Like any other business it is essential that they retain their customers since it is estimated that it will cost them six times as much to find a new customer as it does to retain one. Therefore having the name and address of the people that they sell to is essential if they want to save costs and increase income.

An example of this could be demonstrated by the club that runs a golf event or even runs a jazz night at the club. If they take the name and address of the people who attend the first event when it comes around again they will have a ready audience which they can invite. They will not need to find a complete new audience.

Data therefore plays an essential part in the commercial and marketing operations of the club. The club strategy is to find new customers for its “products” (events, Mini Rugby, retail, match day activities, the teams it produces and summer schools), retain them and increase the amount of products that all customers buy from the club. Data is one of the vital ingredients for retaining and up selling/cross selling to customers.

The points made above could be highlighted by analysing the Play Rugby activity. A rugby club has a community programme which meets over 100 children (this is equivalent to 100 families) during the programme. Using their knowledge of sales culture the club creates a marketing campaign which attracts a majority of the families to the club at the end of the Play Rugby Programme.

The club collects the data from all of the families that attend (The families can be encouraged to provide this information for a variety of reasons such as registration, to ensure that they receive a newsletter about family activities at the club or via a competition).

The club will have the data for all of the families that visited the club and will be able to encourage them to return to join the Mini Rugby Programme. However, they will also be able to communicate with the families that don't return for Mini Rugby and invite them to future club activities such as summer schools, Christmas parties, birthday parties BBQ's, merchandise etc.

Eventually they will have an understanding of what the families want to buy (some will regularly come to holiday courses, others will always book their birthday party at the club) and they will be able to build up target lists for their products.

Finally it needs to be recognised that every family has a value. By being able to communicate with them the club will be able to increase the value of the family. Without the data the club will be unable to drive sales of family events at the club, especially to local families who don't come to the Mini Rugby activities

The Value of Data

There are certain things therefore that we need to consider;

- Each individual who is connected to the club, from the person who comes to the jazz night to player to the social member, has a value to the club. They are all customers and the club needs to collect (with their permission) the individual's data.
- Once the club has their data, as long as the club adheres to the data protection act they can use it as many times as they like. The Club needs to understand firstly that they can't give it to other people to use and secondly, it would be unwise to use it on a regular basis because the customer would either ask for the communications to stop or just ignore them.
- It the club up to six times as much to retain a customer as it does to find a new one.
- If the club collects data it could increase the value of their sponsorship packages. An example of this might be the local butcher who wants to increase his business through sponsorship at the local club. The club has 2,000 local people on their data base; they can't give the data to the butcher unless everyone on the list has agreed to allow their data to be used by associate businesses to the club. However, club can send a letter saying "one of our main sponsors, WD Thompson the butcher is offering 5% discount to anyone who takes this letter into the shop this Saturday. (Even then the customer has the ability to opt out of receiving a similar correspondence in the future).The fact that 2000 individuals can receive this letter increases the value of our sponsorship.
- If the club collects E mail addresses and mobile phone numbers (text messaging) then it could dramatically reduce the postage costs throughout the year.

Collecting Data

The club will must aim to collect data and basic profile information at every opportunity. For some individuals this will be straight forward (player registration, membership applications or signing up for a holiday course). To collect the information from casual supporters at the club may be more difficult but you can a) run competitions in which the participant must give their contact information so that they can be informed if the win or they can be offered the opportunity to be send an e mail newsletter which provides information about club events, fixtures and activities

Data Protection

We have touched on one or two data protection issues earlier in the article. However the main points to remember are;

Direct mail - If you obtain a customer's detail in the course of a sale or through negotiations of a sale you may contact them about your own similar product or services. You must however give them the opportunity to opt out of receiving further marketing details each time.

E mail marketing - This is the same as above but the difference is that they must opt into receiving E mails from you.

If you want to send information about your sponsor's products to your mailing lists you can't give the sponsor the data base but you may send it on behalf of the sponsor. I.e. we have a sponsor who sells these products that you may be interested in. You must again give the individual the ability to opt out each time they are contacted.

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.