3. Communications

3.1 Unit 1

Introduction

When you look at the world of sports and entertainment, some of the biggest brands are football club. Clubs like Barcelona, Manchester United, Bayern Munich, PSG, Liverpool and Juventus sit comfortably alongside the biggest brands in the world.

Their revenue numbers back this up putting them on par with the Apple's and Samsung's of this world. How have they built their brand? Their success on the field has played a huge part in that; however, the communication of that success has been just as crucial.

So, what is communication? Per the Oxford Dictionary, communications, is described as "The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium" ("Communication", n. d.).

Communication is the art of spreading, through different means and channels, the message of the club. Humans have a long history in storytelling, from early caveman days, when we communicated with drawings, through to the modern life and the impact social media has had. Clubs have embraced communication; it is at the core of everything the sports organization does.

New signings, new partnerships, new sponsors and new managers are part of the day-to-day life of a club. When these events take place, clubs will issue communications.

These will include quotes from the parties involved in the process, the background on the event and, in some instances, details for follow-up. The growth of social media and its mass adoption has increased the importance of communications and has made clubs think like media companies.

The public relations side of communication is about managing the flow of information between the club and its audience. This is especially important online.

Why do We Need It?

Communication is important for sports organizations because it helps inform and educate fans and the wider community about their successes and stories. Communication is modern day storytelling. You have something good happen (or bad) and you share that story with the wider fanbase, so they have all the information they need.

Getting into the Detail

Communication Objectives

Before you start to run a communication campaign for your sports organization, one key aspect you need to have clear is your overall objective. What are you looking to achieve with the campaign and what channels do you plan on using?

There are many different objectives that can be achieved, and the message is different for each of them; therefore, it is very important to be clear and to understand your goals. It is important to ensure your communication goals link into the goals of your digital and marketing plan.

Questions to consider	Answers for you to provide
What are you existing communications objectives?	1. 2. 3. (Make sure they link into your overall marketing and strategic plans.)

Awareness

The most common communication campaign run by clubs focuses on awareness. Awareness spreads the message and values of your brands and partners. If done right, it can be a very effective tool.

They key to running campaigns on awareness is understanding the target audience and the channels you interact with them on. A player signing is a consumer first communication with a different message across the various social channels. Twitter and Instagram are very different, and so too are Facebook, Snapchat and TikTok users.

The message must be tailored to each audience and generally playful in tone. Likewise, sports journalists, especially those close to the club, need to be included in the communication process. This process is very different to the communication around a new partner; this is a more formal process, and while there is some consumer interaction, the aim here is to inform the wider sporting and business world about the partnership. Two very different messages across multi-channels with very different tones makes understanding the audience key when running an awareness campaign.

Educational

Communication and online PR can be used to educate a target audience on a topical subject or on your club. Storytelling is a very effective tool to influence and inspire

people. Good stories build connections with people, who in turn remember them and share them. Stakeholders also build trust and create a sense of familiarity with the brand.

> Storytelling is useful in far more situations than most leaders realize. The five most commonly used are probably these: inspiring the organization, setting a vision, teaching important lessons, defining culture and values, and explaining who you are and what you believe. (Schawbel, 2012)

Stories are easier for people to remember, as they contain that magic ingredient all public relations professional craves: stickiness. Use storytelling to communicate and educate your target audience.

Creating Demand and Sales

Even though there is a blurred line between marketing and communication, there is one main difference: marketing is seen as the bridge between the consumer and a transaction, while communication plays an interactive and storytelling role.

The reality is that when you communicate good news stories, you are building awareness of your brand, which will over time lead to sales. Do it well and the impact will be instant.

A good example of this is Nike. The sports apparel brand released a PR campaign in 2018 with the former National Football League (NFL) quarter-back Colin Kaepernick. The aim was to promote their partnership with the former NFL star while announcing their focus on doing social good. The video content's main topic was having big ambitions: "Dream Crazy".

The campaign had a social aspect and it went viral quickly. The story behind the story and their focus on using their status to do social good was just as viral in the sports marketing world. Overall, the campaign worked. According to Edison Trends, the campaign worked with an increase in sales (Pengelly, 2018).

It also inspired other brands to focus on using their status and platform for social good, something we are seeing more and more in sport these days.

Getting your Message across

Communicating your message in the right 'tone of voice' to the right audience is vitally important. You need to understand where your target audience is and what type of content they want to digest. Webpage content, a mix of text and visuals, is very different from an Instagram story. Both serve a purpose, but the audience's interaction is very different.

Regardless of the story that is being shared, the message needs to be clear and simple, as well as consistent and easy to understand. Sports organizations need to understand their voice and make sure there is a strong communications plan.

Avoiding jargon is also vitally important, as is focusing on the business objectives you want to achieve.

Tip: Before you implement a communication plan or strategy, talk to the various stakeholders in the sports organization and get their insights on what they think the voice of the organization is. Then get all the stakeholders in a room together and discuss the results. You and they will get surprised: people often have different understandings of the voice of a club.

There are many channels sports organizations can communicate to.

Online PR

Online PR: The Basics

PR —or public relations— means getting people to talk and think about your sports organization in a positive way. It can be a vital weapon in your armoury.

It is a way to get good publicity without advertising. In addition, if there is ever a problem facing your sports organization, PR helps you deal with it effectively.

Image 1. How is PR different from advertising?

Advertising	Public Relations
Paid	Earned
Builds exposure	Builds trust
Audience is skeptical	Media gives third-party validation
Guaranteed placement	No guarantee, must persuade media
Complete creative control	Media controls final version
Ads are mostly visual	PR uses language
More expensive	Less expensive
"Buy this product"	"This is important"

(Wynne, 2016)

You can use PR to attract and impress people such as fans, potential fans, suppliers, sponsors, employees and other stakeholders such as Government.

PR is not just for big sports organizations that use national newspapers or television: even the smallest Federation/club can use publicity opportunities to catch the eye of its local audience and promote itself online to reach a wider fanbase.

Sports organizations need to consider how they manage public relations online. Many Federations/clubs mistakenly feel they should target internet media, communities and

audiences in the same way as traditional print media, by pitching carefully crafted press releases to sports journalists. However, with online PR, you communicate not only with targeted sports media channels and online journalists but also with the wider public who are talking about your sports organization.

Online PR is no longer driven by the few but rather by the many. The challenge is identifying the key influencers talking about your Federation/club online and the way you can engage with them to communicate your message.

There are a number of key differences as regards how you should approach online PR compared to traditional routes:

- Online communities tend to form around interests or 'passion points'. You need to identify the online communities that are most relevant to your key stakeholders and provide the stories and messages that will get them talking about your sports organization.
- Create 'a buzz' around your brand by using different types of content such as video, images, articles, infographics and blog posts. These can quickly gain social currency and be spread virally over the Internet.
- Apart from using third party sites, think about publishing content to your own website, social media channels or blog. This will give you a little more control over the way your message is delivered. Think about the tone of your content and what interests your fans about your brand.
- Online audiences value authenticity, transparency and interaction over 'spin' and obvious sales messages. If your fans feel that you are trying to hide something, it will do your sports organizations reputation more harm than good.
- It is well worth befriending people with an influential online presence in your field, such as bloggers, to act as brand advocates. Advocates can also help you manage reputational risk.

Reputation Management

Online reputation management is the business of monitoring what online communities are saying about your sports organization. Monitoring what fans say can provide early warning signs for issues concerning your Federation/club, and allow you to 'catch' potential disasters before they escalate. Tools such as Google Alerts and Twitter Search can help you to track key industry words and phrases.

- Communities you should monitor include blogs, discussion threads, forums and social networking sites.
- If a crisis does occur, you can immediately respond to concerns and post information. Addressing crises quickly can head off speculation and accusations that you are trying to deny or hide something.

- If you have built up a reputation for transparency through your online presence from the very beginning, your crisis response will carry more weight.

Creating a Public Relations Plan

Developing a focused plan is important when considering using PR as part of your sports organization marketing mix. The key areas to consider are the following:

- Define your PR goals and objectives. These should flow from your marketing and business strategy.
- Agree on your communication/PR principles. You can consider, for example, whether one of your principles is to get back to a media request for information within 4 hours.
- Conduct a situational analysis. Provide an overview of the media landscape in the country, an overview of the PR Department, a SWOT analysis of PR in your Federation, an analysis of your competitors as regards communication, etc.
- Identify your key stakeholders and the key messages for each group.
- Outline the resources required in terms of budget and resource.
- Develop an annual communication plan.
- Establish a crisis management plan.
- Agree on methods for evaluating the success of the plan.

Identifying Your Target Media

The first step to getting media coverage for your Federation/club is to decide who your target audience are and which media you should use to reach them. These types of media should become your target media organizations. Ask yourself who will be interested in your story and which publications or media will reach these fans or key stakeholders. Your list may include the following sources:

- Local paid-for newspaper
- Local free paper
- The country sports magazine
- Local and national radio and television stations
- Trade and professional magazines covering business, sports business etc.
- National newspapers
- Consumer and lifestyle magazines

How to Get Media Coverage

You may spend substantial time developing a press release, but how do you ensure it gets covered in the media? To ensure you gain coverage in the local media, consider the following measures:

- Write local stories for the local media.
- Involve a high profile personality such as a player, manager or past player.
- Involve in the community on CSR programmes; you can work with a local charity.
- Create a story around each event that you organize, from international matches to Grassroots Festivals.
- Get to know the journalist and editors; understand what interests them and what will get covered in their publication.

There are many natural PR opportunities:

- A new League launch
- Launch of the new home and away shirts
- Significant anniversaries such as the 50th anniversary
- New sponsor announcements

In addition, you can create publicity opportunities by doing the following:

- Submitting articles for publication
- Commissioning a survey on issues in your sport and sending the results to the press
- Developing a unique competition with a newspaper with the chance to win tickets to the next match as the prize
- Developing Player or manager interviews

Building Contacts with the Media

Sports news editors decide which news stories will be covered by their reporters. If you do not know any of the reporters, contact the editor.

Introduce yourself to editors of local papers, broadcast and sports magazines, perhaps at a media reception or sports organization's annual dinner.

The features editor will decide which longer analytical or background articles will be included in a publication. The press release can be one of the key points of contact between the sports organization and features editors.

Put journalists on your emailing list for background information they may find interesting, such as your sports organization's newsletter.

Sports Journalists work to tight deadlines: find out the deadline and supply your story well in advance. If a sports journalist is trying to get hold of you, respond quickly before their deadline.

Sports journalists' news agendas are different from yours. Provide what is interesting to them and their audience. They are always looking to fill space, so putting facts down in writing —including quotes from the sports organization— before a conversation with them can be very helpful. Emails are good for cutting and pasting, and so, they are easy to edit ready for publication. Besides, emails can be sent and responded quickly and easily —a big benefit for a sports journalist with a tight deadline to meet.

Dealing with Bad Publicity

Disgruntled fans, a crisis and a run of poor results can all generate negative news stories. The following is a list providing tips in case you face bad publicity in your sports organization:

- Establish a crisis management group at the sports organization, consisting of the President, Secretary-General/CEO, Head of Media and other specific experts within the organization.
- Create a crisis plan. You can do the following:
    - Clarify the problem 100%
    - Meet with the pre-organized crisis management group (i.e. President, Secretary-General, Department Head of Media, Outside Agency, Lawyer)
    - Agree a plan of action
    - Implement the plan
    - Speak with one voice
    - Remain focused and consistent
- Make sure staff know who to refer journalists' enquiries to and ensure that only employees who are authorized to do so respond to enquiries.
- If a sports journalist contacts you, check their deadline, carefully construct a written statement, and respond in time. It usually does not look good if you refuse to comment.
- Show you have done everything you reasonably could to correct any problems.
- If there is a tricky follow-up question, take time to put your case forward and restate it by written communication if possible.
- It is not a good idea to go off the record when there are bad news. Answer truthfully to any questions put to you.
- Be aware that any response you give may carry legal implications. In the worst-case scenarios, it might be worth seeking legal advice before making any responses or considering making statements for the media through legal representatives.

Writing an Effective Press Release

Here is what you do!

Most press releases are now delivered electronically: by email. Write the date. Put a headline on the left —six or seven words in bold type. The headline will be active and understandable; it will convey the main point of the story and make people want to read on.

The first paragraph, the introduction, expands on the headline. It concentrates on what has happened or will happen, who is involved and where. It conveys the whole story in a nutshell and informs about its interest and relevance to the readership. It would still be understandable if the rest of the press release was deleted.

Tailor the introduction to the publication –a sports trade journal is attracted by what a new sponsor can do for the sports organization, a local paper is interested in local players/human interest.

Subsequent paragraphs give the how and why -—the explanation and development of the first paragraph or two— and the when.

A quote from you is essential.

Keep everything tight and clear, with short sentences. Do not make it sound like an ad. Write the release like a newspaper report. Refer to your sports organization in the third person: 'it not 'we'.

Write 'end' and then name yourself as a contact, with phone and email details. A 'note to editors' can give background or more detailed information.

Tips for Writing a Press Release:

- Keep your title concise and include your most important keywords.
- Your lead paragraph needs to announce your most important news.
- Your body copy should range from 300 to 800 words. Ensure your copy includes the who, what, where, when and why.
- You need to think like a reporter. Remember, reporters look for a story that will satisfy both their editor and their readers.
- Always write it from a journalist's perspective. Never use "I" or "we" unless it is in a quote.
- Read lots of good newspaper writing, such as the *Telegraph*, to get a feel for the style.
- Shorter is better. If you can say it in two pages, great. If you can say it in one page, better.

How to Take a Photo for Online Platforms

Taking a good photograph which will accompany an online press release is vital, yet often overlooked. Taking a well-crafted photo will help to get your message across –a picture speaks a thousand words!

The following provides a number of tips to consider when taking a photograph:

- Make sure the photograph is relevant to the press release!
- Get to know the sports journalists and editors in your local area and that you send the photo to them directly.
- Ensure you provide a briefing document to the photographer on the type and style of images you want. This can be simply a one-page document outlining who needs to be in the image and the creative approach you are looking.
- If you are including a sponsor, ensure their logo is on a piece of equipment or apparel such as a football club.
- Be creative. Can you make the photo quirky and grab the attention of the reader?
- Be careful of 'group' shots!
- Do not forget to bring a digital camera with you to your various events for both traditional media and social media.
- Try to take as many photos as possible each week and send them to the local paper.
- Include an extended caption with all photos.

Photographs can boost your chances of getting your story covered.

Final Thoughts

Use the following table to assist you when thinking of online communications:

Table 1. Online communications

Online PR is about influencing people, which in turn can lead to a story in a newspaper. While traditional PR is typically focused on print, awards, events, TV, and radio, online PR is very varied and includes the following:

- Sports reports and columnists
- Sports bloggers and vloggers (video bloggers)
- Social media influencers
- Podcasters
- Websites and brand sites
- Social media platforms
- Directories and lists
- Web search/SEO

When focusing on vloggers, bloggers and sports reporters, make sure you make a list of those relevant to your sports organization.

3.2 Unit 2

Web and SEO

Content marketing is a key part of your online communication and PR strategy. The more your content is found in search and subsequently shared, the better your domain authority grows. This effectively means your online reputation gets stronger.

When you are sharing your story and communicating good news, make sure that you put these news on your website. You can tell your story in many ways: use texts, videos and repurpose them again with infographics or graphics. This all helps you promote and strengthen your reputation and increases awareness.

When creating your content, think of SEO (Search Engine Optimization). It will help you gain greater awareness. The following paragraphs provide some useful tips.

> Search engine optimisation (SEO) - Increasingly fans are searching online to find information they require. It is more common for current or potential fans to access websites via search engines rather than the web address. To ensure that your website is appearing prominently in the natural listings, i.e. the free listing on a results page, you can do certain things. Search engine optimisation (SEO) helps tune website content to improve visibility. Search engine visibility is the key to online success. Search queries bring interested users directly to a website or other online platforms. However, the vast majority of those using search engines will not go beyond the first page of results. The higher you rank in a search engine's index, the more visible you will be. This means more visitors, who can be turned into customers/fans. (Omagh Enterprise Company, n. d., para. 1-2)
>
> The goal of search engine optimization is to have the search engine spiders not only find your site and pages but also specifically rank the page relevance so that it appears at the top of the search engine results. The process of optimization is not a one-time process but requires maintenance, tuning, and continuous testing and monitoring. (Rognerud, 2014, para. 2)

According to an article posted on *Business Gateway,* "search engines use programs, often referred to as spiders, robots or crawlers, to search the Internet. These programs are used by search engines to build an index of the internet" (Search engine optimisation (SEO), n.d., para. 5). However, although most search engines will provide tips on how to improve your page ranking, the exact algorithms used are well guarded and change frequently in order to avoid misuse. Still, by following a few well accepted SEO techniques, you can ensure that your website is well indexed and remains high in the rankings.

The three main search engines are the following:

- Google: It assesses the value of a webpage based on the number of backlinks, i.e., links back to your website. Links from pages that are seen as important by Google weigh more heavily and increase the ranking of the linked pages. Google also analyses the relevance of the content on the page and other factors like mobile-friendliness. The Google ranking algorithm changes constantly. It can be useful to keep up to date with the latest changes.
- Yahoo!: It began as a manually edited directory. It now uses link analysis tools to determine page relevancy, though content is also important in deciding search relevance. Other factors that are important include backlinks and a good site design.
- Bing: Microsoft's Bing search engine ranks websites based on the webpage content, the number and quality of websites that link to your pages, and the relevance of your website's content to keywords.

SEO Checklist

Note: Not all of these may apply to you, and SEO techniques may change during the year, so keep an eye on SEO sites/blogs.

Table 2. SEO checklist

Tick *Yes* if completed	Checklist
☐	☐ Have you installed Google Analytics on your website?
☐	☐ Have you installed Google Search Console?
☐	☐ Are you using WordPress? Make sure to apply a Google Analytics plugin!
☐	☐ Have you checked Google's Search Console for 404 / 500 errors, duplicate content, missing titles and other technical errors that Google has found?

☐	☐ Have you used Screaming Frog to find broken links, errors, and crawl problems?
☐	☐ Have you used Google's Keyword Planner for keyword research?
☐	☐ Have you looked at competitor link profiles? This is the easiest way to get started with link building. This way, you can see what kind of anchor text they are using, as well as how and where they have been getting their links. Majestic can be very helpful.
☐	☐ Have you incorporated your primary keywords into your page URL?
☐	☐ Is your keyword in your title tag? Is your title tag enticing?
☐	☐ Are all of your meta description tags approximately 160 characters? Is the keyword in the meta description?
☐	☐ Have you used an H1 tag on your page? Is your keyword in the tag? Is it before any (H2, H3, H4,...) tags? Are you only using 1 H1?
☐	☐ Do your images have descriptive ALT tags and filenames? Search engines "see" images by reading the ALT tag and looking at file names, among other factors. Try to be descriptive when you name your images, photos, or videos.
☐	☐ Are you linking to your internal pages in an SEO-friendly way? Are you describing the page you are linking to in the anchor text, so that both users and search engines understand what it is about?
☐	☐ Have you started off-page optimization and begun building links with key sites such as media, sponsors, etc.?

☐	☐ Have you checked your site speed with Google PageSpeed Tools?
☐	☐ Is your site responsive? Does it render on a mobile device? You can check it with a tool like ResponsiveTest.net.
☐	☐ Have you created an XML sitemap and submitted it to Google and Bing Webmaster Tools? Use XML-Sitemaps.com or the Google XML Sitemaps WordPress Plugin.
☐	☐ Have you created a Robots.txt file and submitted it in Google and Bing Webmaster Tools?
☐	☐ Have you set up social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+?
☐	☐ Have you used an SEO Audit Tool to double-check everything once you are live?

Social Media

Social Media is a tool to help you share your message to your relevant audience. Some sports organizations will use social media as their first port of call for communication, especially when it involves the first team. Signings of players and team announcements are generally shared, in different formats, across social media channels.

The core channels used by clubs are Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. There are others such as Snapchat, TikTok, Reddit and LinkedIn, which are also used while some regions have their own localized channel, such as Weibo and WeChat, specifically in China.

It is important for a club to have a strong social media presence and to make sure it is part of your communication strategy. You need to understand where your existing and target audience are hanging out and create communications and stories that they want to see and share.

The benefits of social media are that it allows you to be creative and create your own buzz around the announcement (but you do need to be creative to stand out). You can

reach nearly anyone in the world (tagging, if used wisely, is a good tool –do not tag everyone!) and you can find journalists on social media that are interested in your story.

Regardless of the size of your sports organization, you will have someone who supports you that potentially has a bigger audience than you. See if you can involve them in your communication. If they are a supporter, they will want you to do well.

Example of good social media leading to PR: Bristol City is a good example of a communication strategy that led to excellent PR. During the 2017/2018 season, the club decided to use GIFs to celebrate goals. These GIFs were shared on Twitter when a player scored a goal ("Bristol City beat Man United", 2017).

There was a twist within the twist however as the GIF featured the goal scorer was doing random things. One, for example, featured Bobby Reid smashing two cans together and drinking them, and another that caught the eye was Josh Brownhill doing the bottle challenge while Aden Flint DJ'ing with plates.

Image 2. How a brave and bizarre social strategy put Bristol City FC on the map

(McCarthy, 2018)

Such was the impact of their GIF campaign, that outside of social media they were covered by sites such as SportBible, Copa90, *BBC*, Joe.co.uk, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Mail*, generating thousands of pounds worth of media value.

Tip: Replicating something can be good but you need to make sure you put your own twist on it.

Paid Search Marketing

Pay-per-click (PPC) and paid search advertising uses programs such as Google AdWords and Microsoft Advertising. Paid search advertisements can also be placed on directories, content websites, portals and other listings sites.

The key metrics used in measuring your PPC campaigns include te following:

- The click through rate: number of ad clicks divided by the number of ad impressions
- Cost-per-click: the amount you paid for each click
- Conversion rate: the percentage of those that clicked on the advert who went on to complete the campaign objective, e.g. signing up for a newsletter, completing a purchase, etc.

Integrating Pay-per-Click Campaigns with SEO

In order to get the most from your search marketing, you should align your PPC activities with search engine optimization (SEO). SEO promotes websites in the natural listings of search engines so that users can find your website when they do a keyword search.

An effective search marketing campaign should include elements of both SEO and PPC to boost your website's visibility in search rankings. This will ensure you are taking advantage of the way search engines work.

Ultimately, having high-quality content on your sports organization website will aid all aspects of your search marketing, by attracting visitors and encouraging third parties to link to your website.

Pay-per-click search advertising: seven top tips

Follow these tips to make PPC work for your sports organization:

1. Relevancy: Ensure that your keywords, ad copy and landing page all closely match each other. This will increase your chances of online conversions: ticket sales, online merchandising sales. Having an ad that matches your landing page will also drive down the cost-per-click (CPC).

2. Account structure: Structure your account so that similar keywords are placed together within the same ad group. This will help you to line-up the most relevant keywords, ad copy and landing page.

3. Negative keywords: Check the actual search terms that fans use to find your ad. You may find that certain terms are not relevant to what you offer.

4. Dynamic keyword insertion: Consider dynamic keyword insertion, which will update your ad copy to match the fans exact search terms. This can help to increase your click-through rate (CTR).

5. Call to action: Increase your click-through-rate by including a strong call to action in the ad copy - e.g. 'Purchase today' or 'Register today'.

6. Match types: Choose the right keyword matching option. Using the default 'broad match' will display your ad more frequently, but his could mean your ad is less targeted and result in wasted budget from irrelevant clicks. Using 'phrase match' or 'exact match' keywords will offer more control over the search terms that will result in your ad being shown. This should improve your click-through-rate.

7. Optimisation: Once your campaigns have been running for a while, check what has been working and what has not. Adjust your bids if they are too low to reach the first search engine results page (and will still deliver a return on investment). Use several ad copy versions and see which is most effective. If an ad results in a high bounce rate or low conversion rate, consider how the landing page could be improved. (Pay-per-click and paid search advertising, n. d., para. 2-9)

Social Media Advertising (Facebook, Instagram)

Many sports organizations find that their social media posts are seen by only a small percentage of their followers. Social media offer a range of advertising options that may help you to reach a wider audience and achieve your digital goals —increase ticket sales, email sign-ups or awareness.

Types of advertising

The following list provides a broad range of different types of ad formats:

- Promoted posts: pay for your post to reach a wider audience.
- Stories: use vertical full-screen ads.
- Page like: encourage users to like your Facebook page.
- Clicks to website: push traffic to your website.
- Click to website videos: use video content to push traffic to your website.
- Website conversion: encourage users to take an action on your site such as sign-up for your newsletter.
- App installs: link directly to the app store.

- App engagement: link to a specific part of your app such as a purchase page.
- Local awareness: focus on targeting users near your club/federation location.
- Video views and slideshows: a visually engaging way to communicate your message.
- Carousel ads: advertise multiple products or promotions at once or highlight multiple aspects of a single product.
- Collection ads: showcase a range of different products in a single ad that people can browse and purchase.
- Dynamic ads: use remarketing to make your adverts more relevant.
- Lead adverts: encourage registrations and sign-ups.
- Messenger: advertise through the Facebook Messenger app.

Facebook Advertising Targeting

Facebook generates detailed information about its users. This means that advertisers can reach specific target audiences in line with their marketing strategy. Some of the targeting options include the following:

- Location: target users based on geographic location, such as those who live near your club/federation.
- Demographics: reach an audience based on their gender, age, language, recent life events, education, job and industry.
- Interests: find potential fans who are likely to be interested in purchasing from you based on their current interests such as sport, fashion and more.
- Behaviours: target users who are more likely to make a purchase based on their previous online behaviour.
- Connections: reach the friends of your current audience.
- Existing fans: upload your marketing list to target your existing fans through Facebook.

Tip: Test with a social media advertising campaign to boost key content on your Facebook and Instagram platforms.

Storytelling

While there are numerous tools to help you spread your message, you need to make sure that the story you are telling is going to hit the right note. Think back to family gatherings, social occasions and even books you have read: the way you hear or read the story is what sticks in your mind.

“You can walk down a street”, or “you can ramble down a cobbled street with old lampposts either side of you and a heavy moon above you”, both are the same, but the second one captures the details and makes the reader more curious as to where the person was ultimately going.

Great stories capture the imagination, but in the sports marketing industry they lead to opportunities. All stories have a beginning, a middle and an end; make sure your PR communication is well structured. Besides, remember online PR is more than a press release, it can be a video, newsletter, social media post or even an animation – think about what is the best way to communicate your message.

Amplifying your communications

Sports organizations are often in a unique position in that they have access to influencers and partners that can help amplify the reach of their message. Make sure you are using the social channels of your players to help spread the reach of the message as well as the social channels of partners.

If you have signed a new player, make sure he or she interacts and engages with the content, while if you have signed a new partnership, make sure that they are sharing the news (in line with your communication strategy) on their channels, and release online PR to their industry.

Amplifying your communication increases your reach, which in turn increases the awareness of your brand.

Communication Template

There are seven aspects to communication:

1. The message or story you want to share.
2. Who to share the message or story with (which stakeholders).
3. The objectives.
4. The key actions required.
5. The delivery channels selected to get your message or story across.
6. Who will share the message or story.
7. When he or she will share the message or story.

The main thing to understand here is that if you have a good news story, you need to share it. Either a player was signed, an award was won, or a new sponsorship partner was signed, whatever the good news is, you want to get it out to your audience. This increases your visibility and keeps your brand front and central in the audience's mind.

To do this you need to have a multi-faceted strategy that includes everything, from media announcements and blog posts, to social media.

The template below provides a basic communications template:

Table 3. Basic communications template

Communication plan						
Stakeholders	Communication objectives	Key actions	Message	Owner	Delivery methods and channels	Timing

PR Checklist

What do you need to write a PR communication piece? First, you need a story that needs to be told! After that, this checklist is worth following:

Header	Contain action words – The call-to-action to open it/click on it
First paragraph	This needs to answer the 4 W's – the who, what, why and where.
Language	Use language that is easy to understand and resonates with your audience.
Quote	Include a quote from a senior figure involved in the deal/partnership/signing.
Keep it short	Most press releases/media releases do not go over a page in length. Remember you want people to write about you are telling so make sure there is enough material for them to tell their version of the story.
Stick to the truth and facts	Online PR stays online, so do not embellish or tell lies!!

Press Release Tips:

- Make sure your headline stands out.
- Communicate the value of your news story to the target audience ("For the first time in our history…")
- Offer a quote that is quotable.
- Make sure you give useful background information on the subject.
- Provide a summary of the "who" and the "what" at the end of the PR piece.

Tools to Help:

While building your own target lists is important and crucial, if you need some help with amplifying your message, there are several sites which can help, such as the ones mentioned below:

- Vocus
- PRNewswire
- Business Wire
- MarketwireCision

- PRWeb
- VMS

Hint: Make sure you do your research and select the distribution channel that is relevant for you.

Remember, it takes time to develop brand awareness, it does not happen overnight. Have a clear strategy around this: track the campaigns, tweak strategies and be patient!!

Tips

Try out some of these ideas for raising awareness of your Federation/club online:

- Giving talks on webinars such as sports news outlets
- Organizing online eSports tournament in cooperation with a news organization
- Meeting and talking to online opinion-formers, sports journalists and other business people and leaders
- Teaming up with players to work on attracting joint publicity – Twitter takeovers, behind-the-scenes content, day in the life of a player, etc.

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