



Marketing Guide for Clubs

With football, cricket and rugby dominating the English sports scene, it is understandable that many of the nation's volleyball clubs find it difficult to be seen and heard.

In order to overcome these challenge, clubs need to adopt a tailored approach so as to achieve their goals, whether that's to attract new players, increase spectator numbers, or generate sponsorship.

Furthermore, with time and money being of the essence, it is important to utilise innovative methods that won't deplete your resources. Thankfully, there are a number of cost effective exercises that can be undertaken to help you market your club.

First things first, it is essential to determine precisely what you're trying to achieve, and who you're trying to target.

Attracting new players/participants

Word of mouth is always one of the greatest ways to attract new players to your club. Assuming the recommendation has come from a trusted source, your potential new players will already view you as being a credible club which is a good start.

If you want to reach a wider audience, you can try advertising. Avoid major publications and go for niche placements **Gumtree** has been a favourite over the years due to the low advertising rates and wide visibility. Also, try university boards – as volleyball is so popular in other countries, an advert on a student board may attract internationals who were not even aware that such a thriving volleyball community existed in the UK.

Spectators

Keep the public informed about events at your club well in advance: open days, matches, tournaments, celebrity visits etc. Make sure you provide information about ticketing/access where appropriate. Richmond Volleyball club, for example, has taken steps to position a volleyball match as a fun day/evening out, and has a dedicated "events" tab on its website that highlights upcoming free dates.

If your club doesn't have a Facebook page set up yet, it is worth investigating. It is an easy way to invite and remind friends of upcoming matches.

Sponsorship

If you're after sponsorship, think about targeting local commercial businesses to boost your link with the community. Pitch an arrangement with your club as being a beneficial venture that would give the sponsor exposure to key audiences, while being a worthy exercise in social responsibility by "giving back" to the community.

Bear in mind that sponsorship is not free money. The firms and corporations that sponsor your club want something in return so be clear on what your club can or cannot do. Consider placing their logo on your team kit and make sure that they receive a team photo and regular updates of your season.

Increased awareness

PR is a valuable way to raise your club's profile in the local community. Get into the habit of writing concise yet comprehensive match reports and get into the habit of sending them to the sports pages of your local newspaper. Make sure to find out in advance what the deadline date for submissions is. Images always help to sell a story so try to include one with all submissions.

Also, if something exceptional has happened at your club – contact 3Touch magazine! It's a great way to communicate your news to the UK volleyball community.

Identifying what the club can offer

All successful marketing strategies, regardless of industry, budget or goals, need to consider which aspects of their product or service are of value to their customers in order to anticipate their needs more effectively than competitors.

How can you persuade people to spend their spare time getting involved with your club, rather than staying at home or going to the pub?

Some suggestions of aspects of volleyball club to highlight:

- ***Sociability***
- ***Fitness***
- ***Fun!***
- ***Trying something new***
- ***Challenge/competition***

Useful Tools

Vista Print

A great way to get your printing and done for competitive rates is Vista Print. You could print general club postcards or flyers with your season fixtures. Whatever you choose, flyers are always useful tool of communication as your audience have a point of reference.

Facebook

If Facebook were a country, it would be the 3rd most populated in the world! Facebook is an interactive forum where your club's members can directly engage with you and with each other. It's ideal for placing video footage, photos and news items. It's also a great tool for promoting events and sending out personal invitations. It's very easy to set up your volleyball club with a 'Page' (not a personal profile) -- people linking to you become 'Fans' as opposed to 'Friends'.

Twitter

Twitter is such a rapidly growing social trend that it is worth looking into. With each "tweet" having a maximum number of 140 characters, Twitter is a great channel for communicating succinctly and efficiently. It's an open group, so anyone can follow you; this increases your reach dramatically especially with the press and media. "Twitpics" allow you to upload pictures in real time. You can also follow people like @volleyballengland @VolleyballBuzz and @volleyball_fan for interesting information and opinions on your favourite sport.

You Tube

The second largest search engine after Google, You Tube is a video channel that people, businesses and clubs can use to post information and education material, as well as fun, creative videos! Remember to link your You Tube channel to your website or Facebook group.

Flickr

Flickr is a photo sharing social network. You can upload your photos from events you hold and ask members to upload their photos too.

Student photographers

Enquire as to whether or not there are any student photographers at your local college who need to build their portfolio as it is another good way to add photos to your club image bank.