

IRFU Welcoming Clubs Programme



Case Study #2: Sligo RFC

Sligo RFC play in the AIL 2B league and have an enthusiastic plus “professional” approach to the development of their club which is certainly material for a “best practice” manual.

Their structure is very “business like” with developed strategies; they focus on building up relationships with the community and with their customers (sponsors, members) as well as creating an environment for enjoyment within the club.

The “Business Structure”

In common with many clubs Sligo has an executive committee which has five members, each one with an area of responsibility. Above this committee is the Chairman who acts as an “MD” of the business. There is also a President which is an Honorary Role and which the committee has removed any “business” responsibility from to enable the President to act as the club representative in all formal situations.

The club recognises that resources are limited therefore need to be optimised. Therefore all plans and strategies are run against the SMART concept. This means that they are all Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Resourced and Time Framed. In other words no project is attempted unless the club has the resources to ensure that it can be achieved. There is a time limited during which it needs to be achieved and measurement is taken along the way to ensure success.

A new strategy is in the process of being developed which focuses on the facilities and on building up the volunteers at the club. The first aim will be to improve the club house and grounds. At present the MD is carrying out an analysis of the changes that need to take place, how long they might take and how much they will cost. On completion of this research a strategy will be developed which will focus on what is achievable and by when.

The previous plan was a five year plan which was written in 2008 and aimed to get the team back into the National Leagues. They achieved this with two years to spare!

The second aim is to attract a wider group of volunteers from the region. There was a volunteer coordinator whose role changed due to necessity. The next step will be to replace this person and to attract further support.

The Teams

The club runs two senior men’s teams (the 1st xv recently lost to Galwegians who are two divisions above them, in the final of the Connacht Cup), there is a ladies team who won the Connacht league and plate (who are also proving to be fantastic event organisers), Youth and mini rugby contingencies. The junior sections aren’t able to play at the home club house due to the lack of facilities. This is being addresses in the new strategy since it needs to be attached to the main club in all areas, facilities, ethos and support

Links to the local community

The clubs strives to a) be visible within its community and b) to support the local community whenever possible. It achieves this in many ways and below is a few examples of the activities and the approach.

Press and PR – the club has a very good relationship with the local newspaper and has a page in the sports section each week. It also promotes and events and activities through the newspaper.

The local radio mobile studio has broadcasted its show from the ground on match day. The club has linked this broadcast to its sponsors who have been provided with further publicity.

There is a Club Community Rugby Officer (half paid for by the Club) who works in the local schools developing the game and promoting the club. They recently had a “blitz” at the club to which over 550 children from 29 schools were present.

The club provide their facilities free of charge to local Churches and schools for them to run their summer fetes.

Last season the club ran a “community day” during a two day training camp for the Connacht Rugby team run by Eric Ellwood.

Several hundred people came and were introduced to the club for the first time. The event was promoted throughout the town.

The club runs several events within the town and there is further information later included in the fund raising section.

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.

Sponsorship

The club has a very active and successful sponsorship programme. It has 6 main sponsors, 8 supporting sponsors and over 30 “business friends” of the club. The focus is on understanding what the sponsor wants and delivering it but on also having a range of levels of sponsorship. The relationship and involvement they have in the town does help as does the fact that they are all very proactive in building relationships with the businesses to get to know them before they try to sell them anything. An example of their approach can be highlighted by their approach when the radio station was broadcasting from the ground. Sponsors were promoted whenever possible during the broadcast and there was a special rate for the sponsors to use to have advert during the broadcast.

Fund Raising

As has already been mentioned wherever the fund raising event can involve the whole town the club does push this since as well as income it develops brand awareness, data base/social media links and reputation.

Teenage Discos – Eight times a year the club runs and stewards a teenage disco (u14, u15). It is stewarded very tightly with a Garda presence and they even check all of vicinity for hidden alcohol before the end (and find quite a lot). It generates several thousand euro’s a year for the club.

Tag Rugby – the club runs a very “social” tag rugby event every Thursday with many cars being picked up on a Friday morning after people taking taxis home the previous night. It also generates several thousand euro’s for the club.

Naked Calendar - The 1st XV had photographs taken for a naked calendar and then also did a majority of the selling. A print run of 2500 was all sold at e10 a calendar, 30% of the profit was donated to the local cancer centre and the club still made around e10, 000.

The club has also run a furniture auction and a scrap metal event as previously discussed in the case studies.

“Take me Out” – the biggest success was the “Take me out” evening which was run by the Ladies team. They had the videos sponsored, the hair and makeup sponsored and the printing sponsored. Over 500 tickets were sold (many through social media), there was an after event party in a local pub (tickets were also sold for this) and the event was a huge success for income, brand, data bases and reputation.

400 Club – The Club also runs a ‘400 Club’ whereby members (and non-members) sign up by DD for €10 per month to a draw. There is a monthly draw for prizes of €100, €75 and €50. They raise around €18,000 per annum from this draw and they believe that it has more potential. The “joy of it” is that once the club signs someone up, they are signed up ‘for life’ or until they cancel the DD. If you consider the effort that goes into running a once off draw with just one payout per member, the ‘400 Club’ has huge potential because it serves as regular annual income.

Communication

The club has a comprehensive communication programme covering social media, web site, text and e mail. This forms the basis of much of the activity that takes place around the club and its community.

Key Points:

The club is run in a very “professional” manner. There are very well developed plans and strategies within the club and everyone involved understands their individual roles/ responsibilities in the delivery of them.

There are very strong links within the local community and the club is very “visible” within Sligo. The events they run involve the whole community and as well as generating income they build the club’s brand and reputation.

The Sponsorship offering is well developed with a range of financial options and a belief that all sponsors need to be looked after – provided with “customer service”.

This commitment “off the field” is reproduced “on the field” with a successful senior and junior structure.