



CASE STUDY

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTIVELY

OVERVIEW

Bolton, Bury & District Football League (BBDFL) was established in 1996 to provide football to young people in Bolton and surrounding areas. It now offers a variety of playing opportunities for over 8,000 players across 600 teams.

It's one of the fastest-growing leagues in the areas and attributes part of its success to its use of social media. The key has been understanding the different audiences within the league and communicating with them effectively through various social media channels. The league divides its communications across three main platforms:

“Strategy to deliver not only the football element but also to communicate and market is key. We are one league so we need all sections sharing the same messages to all our different audiences. It takes time to pull that consistency together and get agreement from the Committee but it’s the right way forward.”

Warren Barlow – BBDFL League Secretary

1



Facebook

Used as the primary communication channel to parents and carers of the development age groups (under-7-under-11) and to set-up events the league organises.

2



Twitter

Used as the primary communication channel to parents and carers of the older age groups (under-12+), as well as to the league’s match officials.

3



Website

Used as the central source of communications across the league. It covers everything communicated via Facebook, Twitter – and a lot more.

STRATEGY

The different social media platforms BBDFL employs have been selected based on the audiences each attracts. After a small amount of research it became clear that Facebook was the platform the parents, carers and family members of their young players used more than others.



The functionalities on Facebook have allowed different events and activities to be created and shared in partnership with other stakeholders.

Maximising the different social media functions has been a positive driver of attendances at events – not only from those already involved in the league, but from outside too.

The latter aspect has helped share the messaging and branding of the league to new audiences.

Below are a number of ways the BBDFL uses social media effectively to share its messages as far and wide as possible.

CONTENT

User-generated content can be some of the most powerful material to communicate. The league regularly shares content from its member clubs. This not only allows the clubs' messages to be heard by a different audience, but also demonstrates collaboration between the league and its members. To support with further content creation, BBDFL listens to its member clubs to understand what is important to them and what they need. This way of thinking recently saw a funding guidance document communicated to help clubs during Covid-19.

TONE

Having a specific tone for a specific audience is vital, but they must still all be consistent with the overall strategy set by the league's Trustees – and with the brand that's been created. This consistency has been instrumental in supporting growth and development within the game.

- 1. Understand your brand:** What are the outcomes looking to be achieved and what steps are being taken towards these? Once these are agreed upon and understood, the message and content can follow.
- 2. Understand your audience:** Visitors to your digital platforms may not always be those who have a direct link to league or a member club. Try to understand who visits the individual platforms and why. That way marketing and communications can be made relevant and relatable to all your different audiences.
- 3. Refine according to channel:** Each social media channel will attract different types of audiences. Adapt content and messaging to each, keeping the focus of the message consistent.

CONSISTENCY

Having a clear strategy and defined people dedicated to social media enables important messages to be shared. It also creates consistency across messaging and branding. Social media accounts across the different areas of the game are linked to support this consistency. In addition, scheduling software packages are used so key messages go out at set times on set days. Further consistency is the result. It all means the league's messaging is unified – and it saves volunteers' time too.

ENGAGEMENT

Using social media creates a stronger connection with BBDFL's member clubs, who can share messages on player recruitment, in-house events or other activities.

Externally, it also allows the league and clubs to connect with people who have 'liked' or commented on posts, widening the networks to promote the league and clubs' brands.

BBDFL Top Tips



Be clear: Set objectives and know which steps are needed to achieve them. Strategy is key!



Use the right tools: Not all the tools.



Be consistent: Setting a defined tone by audience and social channels boosts brand awareness and amplifies the messages you want to communicate.



Check your data: Understand who is visiting your social media platforms and how you can better interact with them.



Interact and engage with your audience: this not only keeps your current audience engaged but help attract new ones.

“For us it's all about having the right Committee members connected to our different audiences. Our match officials' Twitter account is run by our Referee Secretary and Development Officer, while our female accounts are run by our women's and girls' league. The message doesn't change but the tone and way it's delivered does, so it all relates to our different audiences.”

Warren Barlow – League Secretary

For more information on Safeguarding in the Digital World visit;

<http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/section-6-safeguarding-in-the-digital-world>