



CASE STUDY

HOW YOU CAN BUILD RELATIONSHIPS IN THE EDUCATIONAL/INSTITUTIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS COMMUNITY

OVERVIEW

The Sir Tom Finney Football Club and Soccer Centre in Preston was established 20 years ago.

It was named after Preston North End and England legend Sir Tom Finney, who died in 2014, aged 91.

Over the last two decades, the club and Centre has become a hub club providing opportunities for all to play competitive and recreational football. Opportunities have been broadened to enable girls, refugees and those with a disability to play the game.

In addition to providing vast opportunities for all to play the game, the club also offers an exciting and progressive opportunity for young people to volunteer at the club.

"The relationship which has been built with The University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) hasn't just been built overnight. It's taken over 16 years of determination and dedication from everyone at the club. You have to find the best contact within the university and understand what they are their aims and outcomes are. Then you need to be able to demonstrate what you can offer. The relationship has to work for everyone involved."

Pete Mason – Chairman, Sir Tom Finney FC and Soccer Centre

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS



Time

Relationships take time to build and develop. Persistence and determination is key.



Communication

Look to connect and communicate with the right people.

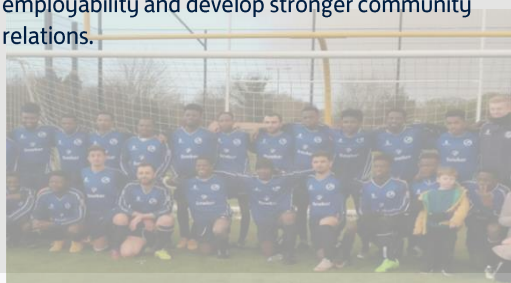


Common goal

It has to be a win-win for both organisations.

CORE ELEMENTS

The work within the club happens in partnership with The University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) underlined by two strategic priorities which sit across most universities, i.e. to improve student employability and develop stronger community relations.



Three factors have been instrumental in the development and continued relationship with the university: **time**, **communication** and understanding the **common goal**.

These working principles have enabled the club to build and support the workforce, grow participation as well as play and train at state-of-the-art facilities within the university grounds.

How has it benefited the club as well as the university students?

Communication and connecting with the right individuals within the university has been the real driving force behind what is now a successful and vibrant partnership.

This has successfully resulted in approximately 60 students a season joining and supporting the club, gaining volunteering experience to support with the requirements of their degree but also supporting the club and the wider community.

The partnership continues to receive great support and benefits from across the wider university. The club has connected with lecturers across a number of different fields, not necessarily sport. These connections have given students opportunities to gain practical experience in the field and be part of a wider community programme.

From physiotherapists to media students, the club has welcomed all disciplines, broadening its skill sets and enabling areas of the club to expand.

The club continually make themselves known by attending the annual Freshers' and Volunteers' Fairs, the latter now led by the students already engaged with the programme. This approach enables the current students involved in the programme to speak from a student's perspective, communicating the personal benefits the experience has brought them.

As part of the support package on offer to students from the club, (i.e. gaining experience plus the opportunity to gain FA coaching qualifications), strengthened knowledge and heightened employability are other key attractions. As a result students from the club and university are regularly successful with applications to support overseas summer football camps.

Of course, there has to be success for everyone involved. From a **university** perspective, it's about students becoming more employable, gaining experiences and working with the local community. For **students**, it's about their personal development, such as gaining additional qualifications and valuable field based experience. For the **club** it's about supporting growth through recruitment, providing young people the opportunity to grow and develop and for gaps in the club's skills and knowledge to be filled.

TOP TIPS FOR WORKING DIFFERENTLY WITH EDUCATIONAL/INSTITUTIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS



Explore joint funding applications. There may be opportunities to work collectively.



Understand how you can utilise some of your own assets to help establishments. Remember it has to be a win-win for all.



Assess what gaps in skills and/or areas of knowledge your club/league may have. Then work out if/how an establishment can help.



Look at who else within the establishment could be an additional contact(s) with whom to connect, with depending area of work.

"We needed to think wider than football if we were to open our doors to more students. As a result we now connect with lecturers who teach within sports management, physiotherapy and media. This broadens ourselves as a club and fulfils roles for which we don't necessarily have skill sets. It's also a fantastic opportunity for students to combine their degree with their love of sport and football, all through our club and Soccer Centre."

Pete Mason
Chairman, Sir Tom Finney FC
and Soccer Centre