

THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL



AN CHOMHAIRLE SPÓIRT

NGB SUPPORT KIT

Chapter Eight

COMMUNICATION



8. Communication

Introduction

Communication is the art of successfully sharing meaningful information with people by means of an interchange of experience. It involves not only verbal communication but many other means such as eye contact, body language and the use of writing. Communication is essential in our lives because it facilitates interaction, co-operation and collaboration with those we want to have dealings with. This chapter examines communication as it applies to your sport including communicating with your members, press releases, dealing with the media and tips when being interviewed.

8.1 Communicating with Members

Communication is the art of successfully sharing meaningful information with people by means of an interchange of experience. It involves not only verbal communication but many other means such as body language, eye contact or the use of writing.

Communication is essential in our lives because it facilitates interaction, co-operation and collaboration with those that we want to have dealings with.

Good and effective communication should contain the following six elements:

- Clear
- Concise
- Correct
- Complete
- Courteous
- Constructive

Communicating with Your Members

Attracting and recruiting members is one half of a National Governing Body's job. The other is retaining their interest and developing their sport. Of course, the primary route by which you retain members is ensuring that they have access to good facilities and plenty of opportunities to enjoy the sport at their own level. However, many members do not have as much opportunity to participate as they might wish, so it's vital that you keep in regular contact with them. This way, they stay informed about the organisation, and you keep tempting them with more sport.

Newsletters

Most National Governing Bodies publish a regular newsletter with a round-up of activities, results, plans, announcements and other business. These can range from simple one-page flyers with text to elaborate multi-coloured magazines with photos and advertising. It all depends on your resources and expertise.

At the basic level, it's very easy to create a simple newsletter using word-processing software. Many such programmes include one or more newsletter templates when they are installed on your computer. Check your Templates folder for examples. You can also ask around your membership to see whether anyone has more



sophisticated desk-top publishing software that they would be willing to use. For small numbers, you can print off copies using a domestic printer, but for larger numbers you will probably prefer to use a local printer.

In order to maximise the distribution of your newsletter, you should arrange for the newsletter to be distributed to each member's home address. In terms of managing costs while maximising distribution, many organisations create e-zines which may be downloaded or emailed. Plus, the e-zine concept is environmentally friendly.

Web

Most NGBs have established themselves on the Internet. Many people use the search engines to find information on the Internet and this can bring your organisation to the attention of a whole new audience. It's also a great way to regularly update information for your members. This is very easy to do today at minimum cost.

You can also dedicate a place on your website where member clubs can publish their own pages.

Use the free space offered by most Internet Service Providers to create and host your own pages or approach a local computer company to host your website for a modest fee, and recruit a computer-literate member to create and build the pages.

The secret of a good website is that you keep it regularly updated. You might want to consider publishing different pages with the following information:

- Introduction to the governing body - who you are, what you do
- Key documents such as constitution, child protection guidelines, rules etc.
- The range of activities offered by your Association, and location of facilities
- Calendar of events such as coaching sessions, matches, tournaments
- Results and reports from recent matches, competitions and events
- Membership information - how to apply, eligibility, criteria
- Contact information for key officers

If you have the time and know-how, you can provide a much wider range of online facilities including member discussion forums, team lists, coaching information, committee papers, and so on.

More and more organisations are now publishing an electronic newsletter by email. If you collect the email addresses of your members you can either send them all a simply formatted email using your email software or use any of the various commercial solutions to run an automated email bulk distribution system.

Online Results

Another excellent use of the web is to publish your league and competition results online for all your members to see. These services enable you to create an area for your competitions and to upload the results after each event; many of them automatically recalculate the rankings.

Both Newsletters and the Web can be good mediums for your NGB to promote itself in a fun way to its members by use of such things as the following:

Forthcoming Events

- Date of event
- Time of event
- Location
- Brief information about the event

The Soapbox

The public will be encouraged to write into the notice board with comments, ideas and suggestions about the NGB. A local sponsor could be brought on board to reward the best letter each month with a prize (100 words)

The Month in Review

A short narrative summing up the NGB activity for the month (200 words)

Sports Person of the Month

This could be anyone from a player on the Under 10 panel to an experienced senior or even a new recreational player. This section would include:

- An action shot of the sports person
- A profile of the sports person - their sporting achievement, age, occupation, how they got interested in sport, what they hope to achieve in the future, etc. Follow with a question and answer format based interview (100 words)

Feature - Club of the Month

Each month, there would be a section focusing in a different club - e.g. Moylagh, Ballinrobe, Fermoy, Wicklow etc. Look at any new developments available in the latter club and plans for the future (200 words)

Contact Details

- Email
- Website address
- Telephone number
- Address

Customer Relationship Management

Internal communications are vital to every organisation. Good communications within organisations improve their performance. Well-informed employees, and in the case of NGBs, volunteers, are happier and work more productively, but getting it right needs careful attention.



The people at the very top must provide visible leadership and vision, and articulate their organisation's purpose, and CEOs/ Line Managers must be involved to interpret the mission for their teams/ committees. There need to be systems in place to allow this to happen regularly.

There should also be processes for distributing accurate information and meaningful feedback systems. This means that communication is as important from the ground up as from the top down. All these varied elements, and others, should be integrated to achieve effective, enlivening communications serving the organisation's aims.

8.2 Publicity

The Importance of Publicity

Publicity is essential for the NGB. People need to know you exist and how to get in touch with you. Publicity is more than media coverage.

The first time someone picks up the NGB newsletter, phones the NGB or hears of an experience someone has had with you, it should have a significant and positive impact. How you communicate with the public will say a lot about the organisation you represent.

Every time someone from the NGB speaks to a member of the public or media, they need to be aware that they are the face of the organisation and act accordingly.

The media has an enormous and increasing influence on all our lives. Using the media effectively gives you the opportunity to make a significant impact on a large audience quickly. If the NGB is mentioned on the radio or in the local newspapers, your message may have an immediate impact.

Planning an NGB Publicity Campaign

For some people, organising a publicity campaign can seem like a daunting task. In reality it can be as simple as sending out a letter to publicise a meeting or issuing a press release. The extent of the NGB campaign will depend on what you want to achieve and the resources available

Identify Your Objectives Before You Start

Before starting your campaign, it is important to identify what you want to achieve. All campaigns should set out to achieve clear objectives. A single publicity campaign can be used to achieve any of the following results for the NGB:

- Create awareness - e.g. to let people know there is a club or sporting organisation in their community
- Provide information - e.g. on changes in the latest budget
- Help educate - e.g. about a new NGB/ISC initiative
- Start debate - e.g. create a discussion about the sport facilities, programmes, etc that are needed locally
- Produce action - e.g. to get volunteers to help the NGB

Getting Started

Whatever your campaign objectives, a few basic guidelines will help your chance of success:

- Publicity does not happen by accident - one or more individuals must accept responsibility for it
- Without clear objectives, your campaign will not have a focus - identify what you want to achieve
- Objectives must be attainable - match what you want to do with available resources
- Using several kinds of publicity has a greater effect than just one - e.g. put up posters as well as sending out a press release about an upcoming NGB event
- Think of your target audience - what do they need to hear? How best can you get your message across?

Once responsibility for publicity has been agreed, a number of crucial steps should be taken to lay the foundations for your publicity campaign:

- Assess your current activities - how can they be improved? What needs to be done differently?
- Plan a calendar
- Develop a comprehensive circulation list - this should include all relevant local contacts including media, public representatives, local sport groups and voluntary groups. This list should be updated regularly

Evaluation of a Publicity Campaign

Through regular evaluation, the effectiveness of the NGB's publicity campaign can be assessed and modifications made. This will also ensure the best use of available resources.

The implementation of any publicity campaign should be evaluated on a regular basis, at least every six months.

This evaluation should be formal, and involve everyone who has a substantial role in any aspect of your publicity campaign

To facilitate this evaluation, the coordinator should circulate to the evaluation group, in advance of the meeting, the following documents: -

- List all publicity activities since the last evaluation
- Note all media enquiries
- Listing of all publicity related documentation issued by the NGB, and the reason for issuing
- Listing of all media coverage indicating date, location, journalist, topic/issue, NGB input and whether it is balanced/neutral, positive or negative from the point of view of the NGB

The objectives of the NGB would be to:

- Critically examine the profile of the NGB through all public events and media coverage since the last evaluation, including any "missed opportunities"
- Identify and address any specific organisational difficulties, which may have arisen in the implementation of the publicity campaign
- Highlight any unintended effect of media coverage of the NGB or its activities
- Assess the interest shown by the media in the NGB and consider how it may be enhanced
- Review the publicity calendar in light of the evaluation
- Decisions should be documented and monitored until fully implemented



8.3 Public Events

Organising a Public Event

Public events or activities will help to increase the visibility of the NGB. They will help to establish the NGB as an integral part of the community, and will present potential media opportunities

There are several different types of events you can organise either independently or in partnership with other NGBs / LSPs or, one or more local organisations. The following list is indicative:

- Host an open evening - e.g. to provide information on the NGB, its objectives and vision for the future, guest speakers ...
- Organise a public meeting - e.g. host an information evening on what the local community want from the NGB, and what the NGB has to offer
- Launch a report - e.g. on the activities of the NGB
- Plan a community exhibition - e.g. involve a significant number of other local sporting organisations showing the services they provide for the community.

Timing

In order to maximise attendance and media coverage for your events:

- Avoid clashes with major local, national and international events - e.g. these vary from the local football final to broadcasting of an international soccer match
- Don't run events at times of the year when a large number of people are particularly busy or away - e.g. Christmas and mid terms from school holidays
- Consider local media deadlines - e.g. host an event on a Monday evening if the local newspapers' deadline is on Wednesday.

Choosing a Speaker

When you are inviting a guest speaker, you will need to time your event around their availability:

- Contact the guest speaker well in advance
- Clarify the subject on which they will talk
- Check what facilities they will need on the day - e.g. projector or video facilities
- Confirm whether they are willing to speak to the media in advance or at the meeting
- Request a copy of their speech in advance in order to prepare a press release
- Ask for photographs of the speaker so they can be used for publicity purposes.

Choosing a Venue

Issues to keep in mind when choosing a venue:

- Capacity - how many people do you expect to attend?
- Facilities - are they available/can they be sourced?
- Location - is the location easy to find?
- Disability access - is there appropriate access for all?

- Parking - is there adequate, safe and accessible parking?
- Cost - is there a venue you can use free of charge?
- Transport - do you need to hire a mini bus or organise car pools?

Let People Know In Advance

You can plan a perfect event but unless you tell people about it, nobody will turn up. In the two weeks prior to the event, you should:

- Distribute posters and leaflets
- Inform the local radio station so they can include your meeting in the events diary
- Send a notice to the local correspondent for inclusion in the community notices of your local newspaper
- Phone all relevant radio shows to promote the event
- Issue a press statement
- Inform key groups directly.

Publicity material should contain the following information:

- Date of event, time, location and direction to venue
- Title of the event, names and titles of speakers
- Indicate if there is an opportunity to ask questions
- Contact number/email for further information.

8.4 Media Coverage For an NGB Event

Getting Media Coverage for an NGB Event

The media should be invited to all public NGB events. Keeping the media informed of your activities will help raise public awareness of the event and of the NGB in general. In advance:

- Appoint a publicity coordinator for the event
- Compile a list of local journalists you would like to cover the event
- Send them individual notices with the details of the event
- Notify news desks and photo desks of local newspapers
- Follow up with a phone call to confirm attendance and receipt of invitation
- Ring relevant radio shows to inform them of the upcoming event
- Book photographer for photo call

On the day:

- Issue a press release to the local radio station and newspapers in an effort to get media coverage to promote the event
- Telephone the news editors to ensure they have received the release and offer extra information or an interview with a guest speaker
- Reserve seating for members of the media who have agreed to attend
- Organise a photo opportunity
- Double check to make sure everything is working - projectors, videos, etc
- Have a guest book at the front door



- Ensure all journalists who attend receive a press pack
- Arrange NGB poster and leaflets for the venue
- Talk to the media who attend and get to know them

Press Pack

A press pack is an aid for a journalist and should give all the relevant information needed to write a report on the event. A press pack should include:

- A press release
- Copies of any speeches given
- Background information on the NGB
- Any relevant photographs with captions
- Present the pack in a simple folder so that all the information is contained in one place

Photo Opportunities

Newspapers like photographs and may use one even if they don't carry a news report. The more unusual a photograph the better the chance of it being carried. Formal posed shots tend to be boring, relaxed shots showing genuine interaction of people or action shots are better:

- If you can afford one, book a professional photographer or perhaps use a photographer who is willing to provide this service at cost price
- Invite the photographers from the local newspaper; if they attend they will submit the photographs to their publications automatically. You can submit their shots to other papers and magazines, which don't attend the event
- Identify a specific time for photos - at the beginning or end of the event - and request that guests pose for photographs
- If you organise the photographs yourself, send them to the local papers with a press release and caption attached to each photo as soon as possible in order to meet deadlines
- Each photograph caption should state who is in the picture, what NGB event they were attending, and the date and venue of the event
- Ensure that there is a clear reference to the NGB in each caption
- Write or type the caption on a piece of paper and tape it lightly to the reverse of the picture

After the event:

- Send press packs to the media who could not attend
- Make follow up calls to see if any of the journalists require further information
- Issue photographs, which were taken at the event, accompanied by captions
- Send letters of thanks to all those who facilitated the event, especially guest speakers
- Keep a file of the positive and negative coverage, which was achieved, and lessons learned from the event

8.5 Press Releases

Press Releases

No doubt when your club is successful you'll also want to tell everyone else about it. The best way of doing this is to create Press Release and distribute it to your media. It's worth drawing up a list of the contact details for local newspapers, radio and TV stations; usually you should send your press releases to their News Desks. A press release template can be downloaded from the Resources panel.

Writing and Issuing a Press Release

Journalists are sent a huge number of press releases, and many of them end up going straight in the bin. This may be because the press release is irrelevant or badly put together

Two golden rules to press releases are:

- Make sure you have genuine news - a new service, a new office opening, results, etc. Looking through the papers and listening to the radio will give you an idea of the kind of stories, journalists are interested in
- Keep press releases short, ideally one side of a typed A4 page. It is fine to include additional materials, such as leaflets, but keep it relevant. Remember, if the journalist is interested, they will contact you for more information

Content

- Date - the date you issue the release
- Embargo - if you do not want the story covered until a certain date/time, you can put an embargo on it, in which case you must make this clear on the releases - e.g. Embargo: 5pm DD/MM/YY. Be aware however that embargoes can be broken by accident not just by intention
- Heading - a short headline summarising the story
- First paragraph - the most important facts should be included in the first paragraph. Newspapers often cut the information to make it fit the space available, and this is likely to be from the bottom up, so vital information could be left out if it's not at the beginning of the release. Answer as many of the "W" questions - what, when, where, who, why and how - as you can in the first paragraph
- Second paragraph - provide more detail or further information in the second paragraph, including any of the "W" questions you couldn't fit into the first paragraph
- Quote - a quote can explain the importance of the story in clear language, or it can add a new dimension such as the personal side of the story. Quotes may also be very useful in other ways - e.g. identifying the spokesperson of the NGB, or as a means of endorsement by a supportive individual or organisation, thus adding to the NGB's credibility. However, don't use quotes just for the sake of it, they must bring extra value to the release
- Additional paragraphs - if you have more information, add further paragraphs but don't write more just to make the release look more important
- Contact details - the contact name, title, day, time and out of hours telephone number should be included in clear, bold print at the end of the release. Email and website addresses should also be included where possible



Checklist For Issuing a Press Release

The following checklist should be placed beside the NGB fax machine and used as a final checklist before you send out every press release:

- Is the release printed on NGB paper
- Is the release dated?
- Is there a headline?
- Is an embargo necessary?
- Are the most important facts in the first two paragraphs?
- Have the “W” questions been answered - what, when, where, why, who and how?
- Are the facts, spelling and grammar correct?
- Have you got someone to proof read it?
- Is there a contact name and telephone number for further information?
- Is the layout simple and clear?
- Have you checked the newspaper and radio deadlines?
- Have you checked an updated listing for recipient contacts?

8.6 Interviews

Sending out a press release with the full details of any news may result in coverage in the newspaper or on the radio. If a journalist requires further information or is particularly interested in the story, you could be asked to give an interview on behalf of the NGB.

Preparing For Interviews

First, find out as much as you can about what you are being asked to say:

- Ask the interviewer what areas they want to discuss - they may not tell you exactly what questions they will ask but they should give you an idea of what they want to cover. You may even be able to suggest some areas to cover yourself
- Ask how long the interview will last
- Check what type of article or programme it will be used for - e.g. news, profile article, talk show, etc
- Find out whether anyone else is being interviewed at the same time or on the same topic
- If the interview is for radio, check whether the interview will be live or pre recorded, and ask how long they expect the interview to last
- Familiarise yourself with the programme - e.g. the format, the presenter’s name, the producer

Be proactive and think about what you want to say, and what information you want to get across. Being prepared will give you more confidence, but don’t over prepare; allow yourself room to be flexible:

- Think about who your audience is, and who you want to reach
- Write down a few key words to remind you of the points you want to make but don’t write a full script
- Try to illustrate your points with examples, anecdotes or comparisons, it helps people to understand
- Jot down the NGB’s telephone number and/or email address so that you can give it out on air, or give it to the journalist to include in the article



On The Day

If you are being interviewed face to face, at home or in the office:

- Make sure you won't be interrupted - take the phone off the hook, get somebody to stand guard at the door - especially if it is a radio interview

If you are being interviewed on the phone:

- Use a landline not a mobile
- Use a phone without "call waiting" services as this may disturb the interview

If you are going into a radio station:

- Give yourself plenty of time to get there, and try to arrive twenty minutes before you are due to be interviewed
- Be prepared to be kept waiting as programmes do not necessarily stick to original schedules

Additional Tips For Radio Interviews

- Sit about thirty centimetres/twelve inches away from the microphone
- Don't fidget, tap your fingers or rustle papers
- Ensure you have a glass of water available in the studio
- Keep your sentences short and simple, don't waffle and use everyday conversational language
- Avoid "ums" and "ers" if you can
- Try not to leave long pauses
- Stay calm, don't be rushed, breathe normally and give yourself time
- Try to slow down your normal speech and speak clearly. Don't put on a special voice
- Be positive and upbeat in your tone, vary the pitch of your voice and use emphasis to highlight key phrases
- If it is a pre-recorded interview, find out in advance if it is going to be edited
- If you make a mistake, don't worry, carry it and just carry on

After The Interview

- Find out when the interview is going to be printed or broadcast
- Exchange contact names and numbers with the producer/reporter in case either of you need to check anything at a later date

8.7 Media Do's and Don'ts

General Do's

- Plan a twelve-month publicity campaign and update it at least every three months
- Appoint someone to coordinate the publicity campaign
- Keep an up to date contact list, which includes details of community organisations, public representatives, media, etc.
- Make sure you have read the publication/listened to the radio programme before you contact it
- Find out when deadlines are
- Check the names of the news editor/producer and key journalists you are contacting
- Try to establish an ongoing relationship with journalists/editors, etc
- Think about who the audience is and who you are trying to reach

General Don'ts

- Assume people will be interested in your story, or have any knowledge of the NGB
- Call a journalist close to their deadline date

Press Releases Do's

- Make sure the people named as contacts are easily available by phone, also at weekends
- Follow up a press release with one phone call to check it has been received and say you are happy to supply further information - an interview, photograph, etc
- Keep your phone calls to a newsroom short otherwise you could end up being regarded as a pest
- Always ask the journalist have they time to talk to you. If they don't, ask what time would be convenient

Press Releases Don'ts

- Send out a press release unless you have genuine news
- Ask repeatedly if the story will be used
- Keep calling again and again

Interview Do's

- Ask for clarification if you don't understand the question
- Get to the most interesting point first
- Treat all microphones as "live"
- Give examples to illustrate your point
- Get permission from people if you plan to tell stories involving them

Interview Don'ts

- Panic if you make a mistake
- Speak too quickly
- Try to cram in too much information

8.8 Other Miscellaneous Ideas

The following is an idea that can be used to effectively communicate ideas about your NGB to your members.

Monthly NGB Notice Board

Publicity is essential for the NGB. The public needs to know you exist and how to get in touch with you. The creation of a monthly notice board will mark the beginning of the NGB's campaign to promote their activities and establish themselves as a resource to the community

Raising the profile of the NGB locally means an increase in public awareness and an increase in support for the partnerships as their activities become more transparent

The NGB notice board will have to be focused with clear objectives. Think of your target audience - what do they need to hear? How can you best get your message across to them?

8.9 Data

Data Protection

Your organisation is very likely to maintain a database of members and their contact information. As such, you must comply with the Data Protection Act and maintain the privacy of all the data that you hold on behalf of your members.

Being a data controller carries with it serious legal responsibilities, so you should be quite clear if these responsibilities apply to you or your organisation. If you are in any doubt, or are unsure about the identity of the data controller in any particular case, you should consult your legal adviser or seek the advice of the Data Protection Commissioner.

For more information on holding data and your responsibilities in this area, log onto www.dataprotection.ie

All about databases, importance, types and how to set up

In order to keep a register of your members it is critical that you have a database to manage these contacts. This could be using a basic Excel spreadsheet or similar tool, or a dedicated database such as Access. The critical thing here is to ensure that a process exists to ensure the membership data is up to date and accurate.

In order to be relevant to members, a NGB should be able to communicate directly with them. This could be updates, via a newsletter or e-zine, reminders when subscriptions become due, notifications about AGMs/EGMs and in some cases members may register to be a member online.

Some NGBs work on a provincial system where the members pay their subscriptions directly to the province. However, this does not mean that these records should only be available in the province.

It is crucial that members are engaged with regularly to ensure that they feel a part of your association as well as being aware of exactly what the NGB is delivering for them as members. This ensures that the NGB remains relevant to members. The Importance of Putting Key documents of the org on the website for members to download and become familiar with.

8.10 Downloads & Links

Downloads:

- Data Protection and Sport: Respecting the Rights of the Individual
Billy Hawkes Data Protection Commissioner
- Frequently Asked Questions on Data Protection for NGBs

Links:

- The Wheel
<http://www.wheel.ie>
- Boardmatch
[http:// www.boardmatchireland.ie](http://www.boardmatchireland.ie)