



# PR and Communications in the GAA Club

CLUB MAITH TOOLKIT



## INTRODUCTION

GAA clubs across Ulster are doing a great job providing playing and volunteer opportunities for club members, promoting healthy lifestyles, encouraging people of all ages to get involved in the club, improving the local community through its games and activities. However, very often GAA clubs shy away from PR and Communications, thinking it's not part of their core duties. Communicating to your members and the wider public is a very important task for your club though and should be a focus for your PRO and Communications Sub Committee. Sell the GAA message and emphasise the importance of your club to your community. This advice note gives you some guidance on how to best communicate your club's message.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media plays an ever increasing and important role in the organisation and promotion of our Games. It provides an engaging forum through which the GAA community can connect and keep our games top of mind

There are very many social media channels and clubs do not need a presence on all of them as this stretches resources and increases the risk of improper use. The channels explained in this section are established channels, deemed to be the most appropriate and effective for the GAA and its Clubs and Counties.

## FACEBOOK

Facebook is a social networking website and service where users can post comments, share photographs and links to news or other interesting content on the Web and stream live video. Clubs and Counties can use Facebook to promote upcoming games and other events, post videos, share content from other accounts and create positive interaction with the community of followers. When setting up a Facebook page for a GAA Unit it should be set up as a 'Like' page and not as a personal 'Friend' page. If your page is not currently set up as a 'Like' page there are simple steps you can take to migrate to this page format. More information on this can be found via Facebook.

Some of the key features of Facebook include:

- **Profile Photo** – This should be your official club crest
- **Cover Image** – This can be modified to promote an upcoming event, celebrate a recent success or display important club information such as website address and contact details.
- **Status Updates** - These allow you to update your followers with information. The best practice guidelines suggest that followers should be able to comment under your posts, but they shouldn't be able to create their own posts on your page.
- **Photos** – regularly update your Facebook Page with good quality pictures from activities taking place in your club and encourage your members to tag themselves in the photos. Photos can be uploaded individually or as part of an album.

Facebook is best for:

- Visual material such as photo galleries and videos
- More detailed, less frequent posts

## TWITTER

Twitter is an online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages called tweets. Tweeting is sending short messages to anyone who follows you on Twitter, with the hope that your messages are useful and interesting to someone in your audience. Twitter is the perfect channel for Clubs to post live match updates and other timely news. Photos and video can be uploaded directly to Twitter. Links to external content such as news and match reports from a website is also a useful feature. You should encourage your followers to share or 're-tweet'

Twitter is often the platform on which inappropriate comments are made due to the 'in-the-moment' nature of the platform and so admins should be highly aware when posting or moderating comments on this platform.

## INSTAGRAM

Instagram is a social networking app made for sharing photos and videos from a smartphone. Similar to Facebook or Twitter, everyone who creates an Instagram account has a profile and a news feed. When you post a photo or video on Instagram, it will be displayed on your profile. Instagram is like a simplified version of Facebook, with an emphasis on mobile use and visual sharing.

For Clubs, Instagram is the perfect platform for sharing the great photos that come from our Games. Instagram admins should be aware of legal restrictions around sharing photos and video taken OF and BY others on their account. Instagram Stories offer users the ability to post more timely content that will appear for 24 hours. Stories also offers other features such as polls and the opportunity to link to external content. It is the perfect way to give a behind the scenes insight to games and events.

The current GAA Social Media Policy and Guidelines document, which looks at this key area in more detail can be found at [www.ulster.gaa.ie/club-maith](http://www.ulster.gaa.ie/club-maith)

## CLUB WEBSITE

The club website should be your online hub and your social media should be used to complement this. Your club website should be well designed and should include the features and content such as:

- Correct club name in English and Irish
- Latest news / Club notes / Lotto results
- Latest fixtures and results
- Social media feeds / links
- Photo Galleries
- Sponsor's ads
- About the Club
- Location
- History
- Teams/Codes
- Club committees
- Contacts

Your club website should showcase the entirety of your club to include all codes at all age levels and don't forget about your Scór and cultural activity.

## MOBILE RESPONSIVE WEBSITES

With the majority of users now viewing websites on tablets or smart phone devices as opposed to desktop computers or laptops, it is important that the layout and / or content of your website responds or adapts to this, based on the size of the screen it is presented on.

A responsive website will automatically change to best fit the device that you are viewing it on, so this should be a key consideration when designing a new club website.

If you already have a website provided by the GAA (the Microsoft-based Club Website Solution), your website will continue to be supported. You can still receive support and guidance from [globalservicedesk@ergogroup.ie](mailto:globalservicedesk@ergogroup.ie) for your site.

## NEW CLUB WEBSITES

Clubs who wish to develop a new website should look at the GAA's updates *Club & County* solution, which offers a progressive and more managed website than what was on offer from the previous solution. Details to be found at [www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/administrators/club-website-solution](http://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/administrators/club-website-solution)

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA

### CLUB NOTES

A very important communications tool remains the club notes. PRO's across Ireland often spend their Sunday evenings writing up their club reports for their local newspapers and now you can publicise your club notes on your club website and your social media networks – making your notes more accessible to people.

Club notes are an ideal opportunity for you to provide short match reports across all age groups and all levels within your club. Try to make your notes completely integrated – so if you have Ladies Gaelic, Camogie or Hurling assign someone to provide you with notes on those sections of your club.

Your Club Notes should include match reports and promotion of upcoming events but you can also use your club notes to emphasis the place of your club within the community. You can do this by including: local deaths, births and marriages within your club, key school events to promote good club-school links etc.

Remember, your notes are targeting your club members and will include those living away from home – so try to provide an overview of what's going on within your community. Every local newspaper is different in terms of coverage of club notes, so get to know your local newspapers and write your notes to suit. But remember your extended club/ community notes can be published in full on your website and put a link onto your social media networks on a weekly basis.

## LOCAL NEWSPAPERS

In addition to your club notes you can use your local newspapers to promote good news stories about your club. You can do this by releasing a Press Release and good quality photo. When writing a press release remember the “Five Ws” - Who; What; Why; Where; and When. They provide a framework around which all press releases should be built:

### **WHO is doing it?**

This is usually your Club or someone in it. Ensure that you include the full name of the Club in the first paragraph. Remember there may be two WHOs ... for example your Club and a funder. Make sure to include both.

### **WHAT are they doing?**

State clearly and precisely exactly what it is you are doing. Ideally you should only be doing one thing. If you are holding a fundraising event or launching something state just that in the first paragraph. You can list all the various details later in the release.

### **WHY are they doing it?**

Again, state clearly and precisely why you are doing what you are doing. If you are opening a new pitch state just that in the first paragraph. Why you have developed the pitch and what you will do with it come later

### **WHERE and WHEN did it happen?**

This is self-explanatory but is essential to include nonetheless.

**REMEMBER** to send a good quality photo with your release as it will have better chance of being featured in the local media.

## BROADCAST MEDIA

TV is not typically accessible to GAA clubs but local radio is a great way to get your news out to a wider audience. To get coverage on your local radio simply send through your press release with contact details of someone confident to speak on the airwaves. You can also follow up your press release with a phone call to the studio to encourage your local radio presenter to cover your story.

Some general points to remember for both TV and radio interviews are:

- Write a few facts and figures on a single sheet of paper and make a mental note of three major points you want to get across. Make sure you get the three points across.
- Anticipate the most awkward questions you are likely to be asked and rehearse your answers with a colleague.
- Ask the reporter beforehand the area he/ she aims to cover in the interview
- Try to relax and keep the answers simple, avoiding jargon. Aim to be concise, alert and interesting. Speak slightly slower than normal.
- Tell others in the Club when the broadcast is planned so it can be monitored.

Some tips for radio interviews are:

- If it is over the phone, call the reporter back if you need to collect your thoughts and make sure you know when the recording starts and finishes.
- Choose a quiet location for an interview into a tape recorder.
- If it is in the studio get there in good time and tell them you've arrived.
- Don't thump the table or use your hands to express yourself.

## OTHER PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

There are many more platforms available to you to promote your club activity including:

- Irish News ClubCall is published every Thursday. To get a club notice in simply email [clubcall@irishnews.com](mailto:clubcall@irishnews.com) with no more than 100-word summary. You can also email a photo if you have something that you would like to promote. Emails to ClubCall should be done by Wednesday 12noon at latest.
- Gaelic Life is always keen to publish good news stories about clubs. Simply contact the paper if there is something you want to promote. Keep Gaelic Life on your Press Release Distribution list. Get the most updated email addresses for reporters at [www.gaeliclif.com](http://www.gaeliclif.com)
- Parish Bulletins are useful for promoting key events in your club.

## WHAT TO DO IN A CRISIS

From time to time, some clubs find themselves centre of a media storm for all the wrong reasons. This is an important time to ensure all communications are strictly managed. The message is very clear if you find yourself in a crisis situation, don't try to ride out the media storm on your own. Contact your county board or the Communications team at Ulster GAA, who will advise you on how best to deal with your crisis.