

Public Relations and Communications

Cairdeamh Poiblí agus Cumarsáid

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. But, very often GAA clubs shy away from PR and Communications, thinking it's not part of their core duties.

However, communicating to your members and the wider public is an important task for your club 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:

Club Notes

The single most 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 emphasise 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.

Online Media

We are living in the digital era and that means you need a strong presence online. There are many ways to do this and there are many benefits including: instant updates, increased interaction, free or relatively inexpensive, and increase audience.

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 (refer to Ulster GAA Clubs & grounds booklet)
- Latest news / Club notes / Lotto results
 - Latest fixtures and results
 - Social media feeds / links
 - Photo Galleries
 - Sponsors 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

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age levels and don't forget about your Scór and cultural activity.

Mobile Responsive Website

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.



Social Media

Social media networks are an essential means of staying connected with your members and remaining top-of-mind. They provide a great medium for sharing stories and encouraging interaction.

The two key social media platforms are currently Facebook and Twitter – both allow users to publish status updates, upload photos and videos, and send messages, but both also have their own particular advantages.

Facebook

There are two types of Facebook profiles: Personal Profiles and Fan Pages. GAA clubs should be set up as a fan page under the 'Amateur Sports Team' category.

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 allows you to post short messages or 'tweets' to your followers. Tweets are limited to 140 characters in length – perfect for keeping your followers updated on match scores or short notices. Tweets can also contain links so you can direct users back to news items on your club website. You can also post individual photos on Twitter. You should encourage your followers to share or 're-tweet'

your messages with their followers in order to spread your coverage as much as possible.

Twitter is best for:

- Brief, to-the-point information and latest news
- Score updates from games
- Less detailed, more frequent posts

Club social media administrators should always remember: *Any posts on social media channels should accurately represent the official views of the club.*

There are GAA specific social media setup guides and usage guidelines, which are available to download from the Club Maith website at www.ulster.gaa.ie/club-maith

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 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 fund-raising 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.



Newsletters

Newsletters are a great way to get news out about your club, but the key to success is distribution. Think about how to get your newsletter out – in your local shop, chapel, leaflet drop to all houses in your club, by email, through your online networks. When developing a club newsletter some things to think about include:

- Apply the “Five Ws” principle to your news-sheet.
- The key things with local news-sheets are circulation (i.e. making sure you get them to your readers) and regularity (i.e. infrequent, irregular news-sheets tend not to have much impact).
- Give someone in the group the job of producing the news-sheet.
- Make sure it’s attractive to look at: use pictures and colour if at all possible.
- Allocate some money to it and get it well-designed and well-printed.

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 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. Remember to keep Gaelic Life on your Press Release Distribution list. Get the most updated email addresses for reporters at www.gaeliclife.com
- Text Messages are a great way for communicating with your members, especially your playing members. The GAA has an official text messaging service built into the Servasport Registration system at people.gaa.ie ****Remember child protection guidelines in relation to texting youth players. See the Advice Note on Duty of Care and Child Protection***
- 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.