

Guide to Media & Communications for Athletics Clubs



Introduction

This guide has been put together to help clubs with their communications such as producing information and articles for local media, responding to requests from local media, putting together news for the club website and creating the content for other resources, such as a club newsletter, that the club may want to create from time to time.

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The Importance of communication

Strong communication lets people know about your activities, opportunities and work. It encourages and enables them to get involved. They know how they can become a part of what you do and be confident in becoming involved.

Dealing with media queries

1. Think about the question

- ◆ Consider if you can see ways of including core messages from your club:
 - ◆ Highlight how people can join your club as an athlete or volunteer
 - ◆ Flag up recent successes
 - ◆ Show ways in which your club is open to people of a range of abilities and across a number of events.
- ◆ Be aware of current issues in the national or local media 'spotlight' and think of any potential broader implications / insinuations around the subject that becoming involved may have for your club.

2. No comment should be made about a subject or for an article that:

- ◆ exposes someone to hatred, ridicule or contempt
- ◆ causes them to be shunned or avoided
- ◆ lowers them in the estimation of 'right thinking' members of society
- ◆ disparages them in their office, profession or trade.

Core principles

When sending out material, including stories or press releases:

1. Ensure all content includes appropriate sponsor references or logos.
2. If giving a point of contact or making a release of information that is likely to lead to queries to specific people ensure that these likely points of contacts are briefed about the announcement and have any information they need. This ensures that they are placed to deal with queries. If necessary (e.g. they are on holiday) it may be wise to adjust the timing of the release/ announcement.
3. Check whether there are any references to any potentially sensitive / controversial subjects or situations. Avoid these if possible – they may become the story rather than what you want to promote! Ensure content is all approved by the appropriate people including external partner organisations if they are referred to in the story. Note this also applies when these references are not the main subject of the release.



What to consider when creating communications

Whether it is a news story for the website, press release or a poster:

1. Who will be looking at this information?
2. What's the key message you want to convey?
3. What else is important?
4. Keep it relevant.
5. What information do people need to act? What is the 'Call to Action'?
6. Don't forget outcome (who attended/ will attend and what did/ will they get out of it).
7. Who is supporting / sponsored the event?
8. Who said what?
9. Try to keep news to a maximum of about 250-350 words.
10. Try to use an appropriate picture – but ensure you have the right to use it and / or supply it to others for use (think Copyright).

Create a communications plan or plan how and when you will communicate:

1. Know your calendar.
2. Plan ahead – think of communications around events, competitions, launches, announcements; in advance.
3. Know your key messages.
4. Build relationships with local media.

Creating news and event information

It is well worth keeping the local media up to date on activities that you are going to be holding or that have been held. You should also seek to keep your website updated with recent news and up to date information.

Simple guidelines for events

*I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.*

Rudyard Kipling

Include details such as the following:

- What** What it is. Not just the name of the event. What the purpose is. What is expected to happen. What people need to bring...
- Why** Why people should want to attend. Why you are holding it. Perhaps details such as why the venue has switched etc...
- When** Date and time. When do you need to book by? When will you get confirmation?
- How** How you register. How you get there. How you find out more details. How you contact the organiser. How much is it?
- Where** In enough detail to help people find it.
- Who** Explain who the people involved are – outline their credentials. Who is organising this? Who is invited to attend? Who will be involved in delivering the day? Who is the contact if you wish to find out more (and how to do so)?

Also add a quote to give a more human angle.

Simple guidelines for news stories

- What** What happened? What you are doing next (so people can get involved next time). What benefits people gained from the event (whether a personal best or better skills).
- Why** Why did this happen? What was the reason for the event? If someone has won an award, why were they chosen?
- When** When it happened. When will it happen again?
- How** How people got involved. How you went about delivering this event. How many people were there? How did it benefit them? How much was it (shout about it if it was free or subsidised by your club or a sponsor – everyone loves a bargain)?
- Where** Where it was held. Where it will be next time. Where you find out more. Where people involved came from.
- Who** Who was involved – participants, sponsors, staff, athletes etc.

Remember

Quotes always lift a story. Someone saying how much they benefitted or a well-known athlete praising an event or scheme is ideal.

Never assume prior knowledge.

Photographs

Pictures can lift a story. Look to include smiling faces unless, of course, it is a sad story.

Look to build up a library of images of club athletes and coaches that you have the rights and permission to use, and to supply to the local newspaper. Try to have people wearing club kit – it all helps to build awareness of the club.

'Fill the frame' - make the photo focus in on the key people.

Show 'busy'. If the event had lots of people get shots of groups of people

Think 'angles'. A long line of people can be hard to fit in a shot, for example, if people are spread along the straight of a track. Changing where you are stood and the angle you are at makes it possible to 'fill the frame' and/ or enable you to fit more people into the photograph.



✗ Boring!



✓ Less boring!



✗ No focus and no connection between subjects



✓ Tight grouping with clear focus and connection between subjects



✗ Too dark, sky bleached out (try to keep the sun behind the camera)



✗ Too dark, poor lighting indoors (natural light is always better, either outside or with subjects facing the window)



✗ Subjects distant from camera and spread out – hard to see what's going on



✓ Subjects fill the frame – busy picture with a feeling of movement



✗ Stock image – good quality but doesn't say anything specific – avoid if possible.



✓ Dynamic image, real people!



✓ Interesting characters



✓ Emotion

Story structure

Headline – simple as possible, just grab attention with the basic facts.

e.g. *Somewheretown sprints coaches help youngsters hit top gear*

Then it's a case of WHAT

W – What

Start with the punchline. Very basic, very punchy. An introduction does not have to try to tell the full story.

The simplest test of what the intro should be is it is what the first thing you would tell someone about the story if you had to give them a brief update – e.g. if you bumped into them at the shop. You rarely start a story at the beginning (chronologically), you start with the punchline.

e.g. *Coaches in the Somewheretown area have given youngsters from a range of sports an opportunity to develop their skills in a special coaching session this week.*

H – How

Start to fill in some of the detail.

e.g. *Youngsters from local schools and sports clubs were invited to attend Stadium Road track to benefit from coaching by sprint coaches who work with local clubs.*

A – Amplify

Give the full picture. This is where to put in the quotes.

e.g. *Arranged by coach Phil Philson, the event was designed to help give youngsters aged 11-15 a chance to build their speed and to find out more about how getting involved with a local athletics club can help them develop further. Phil said, "Many sports have speed at the centre. Helping young athletes to improve their sprinting will benefit them when they do their other sports as well as showing what athletics has to offer them."*

T – Tie up

Wrap it up. When is the next event? Who do people contact for more info? Where is the booking form?

e.g. *The event attracted 60 participants and, with more wanting to attend, another event is now planned for...*

Details will be available at ... or email ...

Examples of good and bad wording

✗ DON'T SAY **✓ DO SAY**

✗ *The event went really well.*

✓ *More than 60 coaches attended from five different clubs. Joan Johnson from Athleticsville Athletics Club said, "It was great for us to get together to look at how we could work with introducing people to hurdling."*

✗ *We would welcome people to attend the next session.*

✓ *The next taster session for youngsters aged 8-11 takes place at Stadium Track, Athleticsville, at 6pm on Tuesday 5 February. If you want to register or find out more see www.athleticsville-ac.com/taster-sessions.*

✗ *Coaches are welcome.*

✓ *The session is targeted at sprints coaches working with senior athletes. To find out more or register see www.athleticsville-ac.com/coaching.*

✗ *Athletes enjoyed the session.*

✓ *Athleticsville middle distance runner Ellen Jones said, "I loved getting together with other athletes. I made some new friends, got to know a lot of people much better and it gave me a real idea of what I need to do to improve my times."*

✗ *If you are attending wear appropriate kit.*

✓ *The session will be held outdoors and will involve some training on both the grass and the track. Changing facilities are limited so you should ideally come changed ready for the session. Trainers should be worn for the warm up and drills and, if you have them, you may want to bring spikes to wear for parts of the session.*

✗ *The club were pleased with the funds raised.*

✓ *More than £200 was raised by the raffle which will go towards replacing hurdles. Athleticsville AC would like to thank Buxton Baker for their kind donations of a range of raffle prizes.*

✗ *We would like to hear from people who can help us out at Athleticsville AC.*

✓ *Athleticsville AC is currently looking for someone to help with club kit sales. Club Chair Anna Cohen said, "The role is a great way of getting involved in a club that is right at the heart of the local community. It involves a commitment to set up the kit sales table at one training session a week, ordering stock liaising with the club treasurer around the financial side."*

If you want to know more you can contact Anna at acohen@athleticsville.com or see the club website at www.athleticsville.com/volunteer.

✗ *The club did very well in their league meeting.*

✓ *Despite a number of athletes being unavailable due to exams the club took second place in Saturday's Midtown League match against some strong clubs. Athleticsville AC were second only to Towns Athletics Club who are currently top of the league.*

✗ *Athleticsville AC is always looking for new members.*

✓ *If this sounds like the type of event you would like to be involved with why not come along? You can find out more about the club at www.athleticsville.com/get-involved or come along to Stadium Track, Athleticsville, at 6.15 on a Tuesday and speak to Kate who will be at the refreshments kiosk. We'd be delighted to see you.*

Putting together articles and features on your club

Here are some questions you can ask to gather some strong information for an article in different situations.

Club/ volunteer profile

- ◆ What is your club?
- ◆ Is your club part of an Athletics Network?
- ◆ What are your club's priorities?
- ◆ How are you going about achieving these priorities?
- ◆ How are you involved in this work?
- ◆ How long has your club been going?
- ◆ How long have you been involved in athletics?
- ◆ How did you begin your involvement in athletics?
- ◆ What would you like to see your club achieve in the future?

Athlete profile

- ◆ What is your event?
- ◆ Who is your coach?
- ◆ What is your club?
- ◆ What events do you do?
- ◆ What have been your best performances, including any successes at championships?
- ◆ How long have you been involved in athletics?
- ◆ How did you begin competing in athletics?
- ◆ What stage of education are you in?
- ◆ What subjects are you taking?
- ◆ Do you work? Where?
- ◆ Where do you train?
- ◆ How often do you train?
- ◆ Have you ever competed in other sports?
- ◆ What other hobbies do you have?
- ◆ Is there anyone whose support you really value?

Event Previews

- ◆ How long have you been working towards this event?
- ◆ Who has been involved in the preparation (individuals and organisations) for this event?
- ◆ What are the key objectives?
- ◆ What are your expectations?
- ◆ Who can get involved and how?
- ◆ Where and when is it?
- ◆ Have you held this type of event before?
- ◆ What have been the past successes of the event?

Event Reports

These should be seen as a guide and starting point rather than definitive.

- ◆ Are you pleased with how it went?
- ◆ How did it succeed in meeting your objectives?
- ◆ What were the key successes (in competitions these would probably be performances)?
- ◆ Were there any significant attendees (individuals, organisations, or just the number of attendees/participants)?
- ◆ Were you confident of how it would go?
- ◆ What's next in terms of other events or follow up?
- ◆ What do you hope people have taken away from the event?

Athlete Competition Previews

- ◆ How long have you been working towards this competition?
- ◆ What are your expectations?
- ◆ Have you changed your training routine in preparation?
- ◆ Are any friends and family coming to support you?
- ◆ How does this competition fit into your competition schedule for the year?

Athlete Competition Reports

- ◆ Are you pleased with your performance?
- ◆ Have you felt fit coming into the competition?
- ◆ Were you confident?
- ◆ What did you enjoy about the event?
- ◆ Is there anything you feel you could have done better?

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- ◆ How will you go away from this and improve again?
- ◆ Does this performance put you ahead of where you thought you'd be at this point in the season?
- ◆ What's next for you?