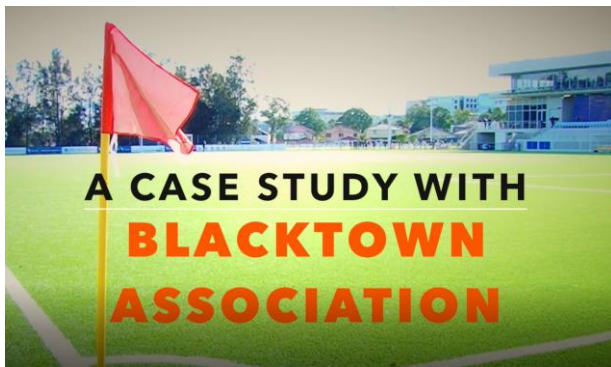


A Sports Club HQ Case Study with Blacktown Football

A bit of background info is in order to bring you into the loop...

We are **Sports Club HQ** and we spend our time helping keep people connected, in the most convenient and excellent ways possible. Maybe you are a **coach**, maybe you're a **Club administrator**, maybe **you run a Sporting Association**, or maybe you are just here because you are looking for a better way to communicate. However you found us today, welcome! It is nice to have you here reading stuff about what we do and what is going on now.



So, a little while back, some of us were chatting about how one of the soccer associations that we are working with were doing a great job with including everyone in the process of making the move to their own version of our Sports Club HQ Platform.

What we noticed first was a bunch of approachable people at the Association level, as well as really involved clubs and coaches. Being completely honest, this was really refreshing, and even inspiring to see, it was quite a surprise to see all the elements of an association working together in unison. They all had the end goal of finding a way forward for cohesive communication for each of their own environments. So, we thought what a great example, and that it would be cool if we could try and document the thoughts and feelings of several users at different levels within the process. So, here's our crack at a case study with the Blacktown District Soccer and Football Association.

Let's take an inside look at sport from the three different perspectives

- The Club
- The Association
- The Coach

Christos Panayi – Vice President at Parklea Football Club: from a Club perspective

Christos gave us a terrific perspective on the challenges and focus on volunteers in Clubland and vitally important they are.

Christos on 'Managing Volunteers', **“when you want to raise the benchmark, when you want to be the best, you need committed volunteers”**

Volunteers are our biggest issue, our biggest focus that we face on a day-to-day basis. Everyone involved has been a volunteer or worked in a volunteer capacity for the club at some point. Most people will stay in a volunteer role for many years, when they have kids playing, or even when their kids have grown up and left. They usually also have a full time job to juggle



and at times require being at the club during their normal work hours. There is a lot to juggle and a lot of logistics to work out.

Sometimes it is all weekend, some volunteers coach more than one team, some end up being at the club nearly everyday due to training, planning and scheduling. **We must use the tools that are out there to meet these challenges, and make the lives easier for these very important volunteers.**

A lot of stuff...the fixtures and everything, are all on the internet. We have had some challenges in the past few years where people were not keen to use the internet for information but that is changing.

It is not about being the biggest, it is about looking after the members that we have. Everyone is paying for the service and it is important that we provide a good quality service for that. In the end, the club is there to allow children to play sport, the sport that they love. The children are at many different skill levels and many different needs and we need to cater for all.

With all clubs, the biggest challenge is communication. We want player retention but we feel that will come about through quality communication and engagement. Working with Sports Club HQ, it has been great because you understand what we are facing, you understand the club environment. HQ has been helpful with everything, even with building the website for us and making it something easy that we can manage and update ourselves. Our priority is good communication and we know that by doing things like recognising the kids' achievements, uploading some photos of the kids to their group – kids like to see themselves up there – a photo of them in the game or whatever, it really works for saying 'this is what is happening at our club'. And of course, you add in communicating efficiently to parents, we are going to build community and foster that environment for that to happen.

We use Facebook to advertise things like fundraising but it doesn't work for everything – it can't. There just isn't that two-way, or private communication to a club Facebook page – and we are wanting to build two-way, appropriate communications.

Better communication, if we are clear in the direction that we are going, there is a better chance that people will want to join our club. If we don't, there is a good chance they will go elsewhere.

We need everyone to feel informed. The more empowered they are, the better they will be at providing support to our junior players. The more chance we have then of people returning to the club to play again. A lot of our coaches and managers have never done it before and it is our job as a club to make sure that we provide them with the resources and communication tools to do the job well.

Hopefully, with the other clubs, they feel the same. At the end of the day we are all aligned with the kids. We all need to stay committed and stay focussed to provide the best possible opportunities to these kids to play the game that we love.

We are all doing a great job...the best we can, we are all giving up our time and any tools that we can implement to make that whole experience simpler and work better, the better it is for all of us. The hard work that clubs do behind the scenes, you see it come to fruition on a game day, The times when you can look around and see that there are full teams, there are kids on the field, there are reserves, there are coaches, referees and the fields are set up ready to go. I am not trying to sugar coat it, there are days when it doesn't work but that is when we need to take stock and look at what's not working and say, ok, we need to do this better, it comes back to the communication. **When we communicate well, good things happen**".

Jack Taylor, General Manager at Blacktown District Soccer Football Association: from an association perspective

Jack was able to share some of the logistical type requirements that an Association faces every day, from dealing with the weather, to several councils and fields to name but a few, however there were 2 things that were really evident to us:

1. A terrific drive to provide the tools and resources to Clubs & Coaches to coach the FFA Curriculum within a fun and safe environment
2. A real want to engage with the Mum, Dads and caregivers of all the junior players to ensure that they had the latest information, that they were engaged to ensure retention and keep the numbers growing.



Hats off to Jack and the team, their results speak for themselves. Here's some of his thoughts;

“An association needs to manage the logistics as a constant. It is a constant. There is always the weather...always something. Our messages need to go the clubs, the clubs can get to everyone. Everything else we do well, but communication, before Sports Club HQ, we have not done that well. That is another job of the association, recognise what is not working and find a solution, bring people in to fix it. “

When required, we needed a format to get all the way to the end users quickly. The parents and grandparents of the kids playing football, we want the end user to know that our goal is grass roots development, we bring happy stuff and we bring the tools to learn the sport. Our job is to repeat that message and provide the clubs with the support and tools that allow them to practically pass on all that information. That is what HQ has done for us...

Of course, we need to ensure the clubs are involved in that communication reach, as well as the end users – as an Association we want to engage and hold onto them in the long term and we want to cultivate team sports people so that our association can continue to grow. We believe that we can continue to do better with our growth (which has been huge), by enabling our coaches to have the tools they need and find a way to share the curriculum, which we are so excited to have and release via the network and apps.

Wouldn't it be good as a volunteer on your way home from work, you take out your smart phone and tells you what you need to do tonight and whether you are 6 or 60, you know what you need to do tonight. So...it's fabulous, fabulous.

We are not expecting this to be a quick solution, this is going to take time to filter the change but we are expecting this to be the solution we have been waiting for.

The thing that stands out about Jack Taylor is his all-encompassing wisdom and knowledge related to how football has been built and grown in Western Sydney. It was a pleasure to hear the story of how the complex was built and his passion about football – that doesn't appear to have waived in his 40-year career in the game.

David Scott – Coaching Coordinator at Newbury Bulls: from a coach's perspective

David's perspective was very interesting as it tied into a lot of what the other two guys had said without us initially realising. David's focus for the HQ app (or Hub as he called it) was centred around 2 things:

1. Having the resources on hand for planning each coaching session
2. The ability for 2-way communications with the kids' parents

Here's some of David's thoughts:

"The greatest challenge is keeping the kids interested, making the challenges interesting so that they want to keep playing. I personally think that it works best to plan out the sessions ahead of time before getting to the ground so that I know exactly what I am going to do with the kids... We are encouraging the coaches to use the HQ Hub to have the sessions all planned ahead of time. I encourage the coaches to tell the kids what the plan is – if you plan better it works better. The Hub allows the coach to go ahead and select the drills and skills training and it is ready to go – they don't have to research – it is all there for the coaches.



I also make sure that the parents are all aware of the two-way communication that the hub allows.

As coaches, we need to be prepared that parents will also want to come and communicate with coaches directly about any issues or discussion points, and it is hard to find that time to spend one to one with each of the parents... say at the ground before or after training... particularly if the coach has another team to coach straight away (often the case).

The HQ hub offers the benefit of being that source of communication – a lot of people have been impressed with that, just in general but it has also allowed the day to day stuff to be shared more easily and overall, it is a brilliant idea that we are benefitting from.

Everyone can get what they want and take what they need and I encourage everyone to get on and, not just from our club, but from all the other clubs... it is the way we have been waiting to be able to share the coaching curriculum as well as all the other possible club and team uses that we have discovered.

The aim of the club at Newbury is to encourage the kids to have a way to develop and be the best player they can be, whether that is going on to play as a first grader or just playing on the weekend as a kid, it is all there".



WRAPPING IT UP.....

It's a great crew at BDSFA with Jack & the Team, including all the clubs within the Association. Their support in completing this Case Study as well as their feedback and insight into their experience has only helped to strengthen Sports Club HQ's drive to support grass roots sports.

When compiling this Case Study, we obviously liked the idea of engaging personalities who wanted to discuss their positive views and experiences of our communication platform. But we know that not every body loves every solution. Some people don't like change, some people have different views on how things should be done, and you come across these people at grass roots level. We get it. But volunteers are hard to come by and are integral to the ongoing viability of community junior sports, and we will do all we can to support these people, lovers or not.

It has been terrific to confirm that ONE UNIVERSAL communication solution for Sporting Associations streamlines the communication workflow for Teams, Clubs & Associations. It has also proven to be a leading solution for delivering important documentation (ie. Coaching Curriculum) to many users. Tying in all solutions within one application has proven to be a success and an ongoing need as well.

We look forward to continuing to deliver leading technology to Sporting Associations with our user-first approach and **#HelpingSportHappen**. If there are any readers who wish to discuss this case study, other issues or are interested in implementing the platform for their own sporting association, please feel free to contact us.