

CLUB LIFE

Empower, Engage, Sustain

The following BLOG written by VGA (Valleys Gymnastics Academy) demonstrates the Power of Social Media in recruiting, retaining and promoting everything about CLUB LIFE.

The different avenues VGA have used to engage members are applicable to all sports clubs and there are some lessons we can all use here when looking at different ways of marketing your club.

We would like to thank VGA for sharing their story with us and wish them the best of luck for the future!

Valleys Gymnastics Academy – The Power of Social Media!

“ When the Crumlin based Valleys Gymnastics Academy open its doors in spring 2011 there were fewer than 100 members. In just over 3 years we have seen a growth of over 900% and now deliver gymnastics activities to over 1000 children, young people and adults every week across 3 local authorities. Our membership is now extremely varied, comprising parents of pre-schoolers and young children, primary school aged children (the 'typical' gymnast), experienced and committed gymnasts, as well as a large number of teenagers who access our freestyle / freerunning sessions.

Our key marketing method? Social media.

We tried out more 'conventional' methods; advertising through posters, leaflet drops and the local newspaper but nothing touched the power of Facebook and Twitter. A key aspect of our club ethos is involving and retaining members and social media has enabled us to do this effectively. We regularly share good news stories, clips of our classes and training sessions, awards presented to gymnasts, news from the national and international gymnastics world, healthy eating tips ... Anything we think may interest our membership and their parents. The successes of this method in enabling us to attract new members (and in allowing members to recommend us to their friends and families) meant that when we were offered the chance of a VGA App, we jumped at the chance.

The App includes basic information about the club and the classes we offer, a price list, up-to-date picture and video libraries, Facebook and Twitter feeds and special offers and a customer loyalty card - and it is free of charge. It was downloaded over 300 times in the first three months and feedback from the members has been entirely positive; they've told us that it's "great to find everything in one place" and that the "special offers are fab!" Parents have also reported that it is useful because children can now view the club's Facebook and Twitter feeds without actually signing up for the social media sites.



For more information, visit:

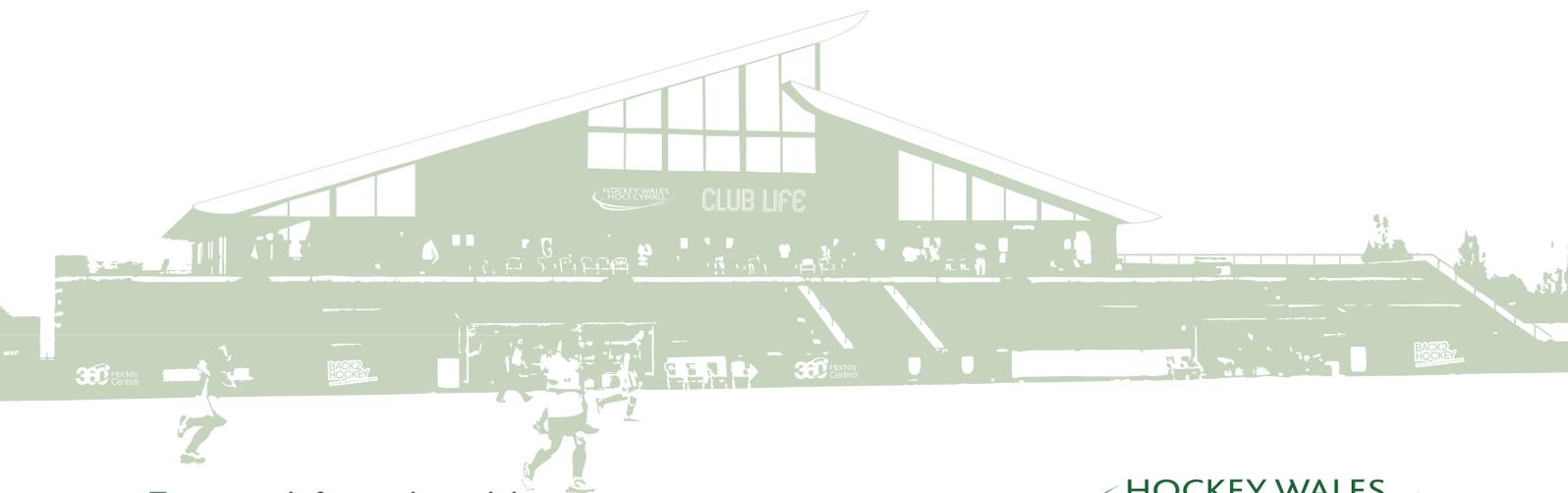
www.hockeywales.org.uk/play/club-life



Given the demographic of our membership, this is a massive benefit of the App - children and young people live in a media rich world and love to see (and show) videos of their skills and achievements. This enables them to do so in a more controlled environment - whilst enabling us to celebrate achievements and to engage with our membership on their level. This is particularly important when engaging with teenagers, who typically reduce sports participation and seek out more social activities during their secondary school years. Social media has played an important part in terms of building up our teenage freestyle (freerunning) membership. Young people are able to create their own performance clips (via mobile phone or Go-Pro) and share them via social media in a way that the club did not anticipate - in a fast, ever changing world of social media (Instagram, Snapchat etc).

From a club admin point of view, the App also takes up very little time; it is updated automatically every time we add to the social media feeds and only requires additional updates when a class time or price is changed. The App also allows us to change the special offers and loyalty cards we offer each month - so this means we can react quickly to demand and promote new classes with special, introductory prices, so it is a great tool for us. Clubs are competing for members in a crowded market and any opportunity to 'sell' and share the product are valuable. We know that customers are far more likely to share a poor experience compared with a positive one; however, the App and other forms of social media allow us to capitalise upon positive feedback and to share and Retweet with our target audience. ”

Thanks once again to VGA for sharing your story and good luck for the future.



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