

**FundSport**



**The Essential Guide to**

**Grass Roots Sports and Social Media**

**Ash Read**

**Foreword by Lewis Howes**

# FundSport



[www.FundSport.com](http://www.FundSport.com)

© FundSport.com 2010

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or redistributed in any form without the prior written permission of the publishers.

# Contents

## Foreword

## Introduction

### 01 Setting The Foundations

- Passion
- Setting Goals
- Your Website
- Making A Good First Impression
- Consistency Is Key

### 02 Introduction To Social Media

- What Is Social Media?
- Why You Should Care
- Time Management
- The Two C's: Content and Community
- You Have Great Content
- Storytelling

### 03 Choose Your Platform(s)

- Introduction
- Facebook
- Linkedin
- Twitter
- Twibbon
- Youtube
- Flickr
- Blogs

### 04 Case Study

- Social Media and Amateur Football

# Foreword

I meet with thousands of sports executives every year and sooner or later, the topic always shifts towards what their social media strategy is. Today, there is no question whether or not your organization should have a social media strategy or not, it is a must, especially for grass roots sports.

For a sport to grow, it must first be seen and talked about, and the social web is a free ticket to accomplishing both. However, utilizing the power of social media is more than simply getting a Facebook account or signing up for Twitter. It's a fundamental change in the way things are done, and the way messages are spread. This is why communities like FundSport.com are so important.

On a personal level, Ash has been a regular contributor for my sports networker blog for a while now, and don't let his age fool you, his passion for building up grass roots sports combined with his expertise in social media is unparalleled. He is a valued member of our Sports Executives Association, and anyone who works in PR or marketing for developing sports will sure be able to learn at least a thing or two from this ebook.

I am a personal testament to the power of social media when used appropriately and have helped countless organizations grow in the last few years. It is not a fad, and the sooner you start to join the conversations about your brand, the sooner you are on the road to success.

Lewis Howes

Founder - Sports Networker.com & Sports Executives Association

**For a sport to grow, it must first be seen and talked about, and the social web is a free ticket to accomplishing both. However, utilizing the power of social media is more than simply getting a Facebook account or signing up for Twitter.**

# Introduction

The Internet has provided one of the biggest cultural shifts ever. It's changing the way we do things and the way we communicate. Gone are the days when the Internet and social networks were for techies, now everybody is getting involved, checking social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube is now one of the biggest reasons people come online.

Nowadays it's essential that every sports club or athlete has some form of online presence, whether it's your own website or a social networking account. The Internet is a great promotional tool and can also help you when looking for new members, volunteers and sponsors.

Whether your a large sports club, a Sunday league football team, or an individual athlete there's no escaping the fact that the Internet is going to play a big part in your development, and your future.

Social media is about adding to the enjoyment of being a part of your club - giving your members more memories, more talking points and more laughs. For athletes and clubs alike a strong online presence can separate you from others and make you stand out, this could potentially be the difference between getting sponsorship and not getting sponsorship.

Professional sports teams such as Real Madrid, Manchester City, New Jersey Nets and leagues like the NBA, are now starting to use the Internet and in particular social media to it's full potential, and there's no reason why you can't benefit from applying the same techniques with the same FREE tools.

A good online presence can benefit you in many ways, including:

- **Generate a professional image:** Gives confidence to people who are not familiar with you.
- **Access to information:** Whether its fixtures, training times or information on joining, it's vital that information about you is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **Increase exposure:** A strong online presence will provide you with potentially massive exposure allowing you to reach new members, sponsors and fans that otherwise you may not have reached.
- **Feedback:** View your club from the eyes of others and gain an insight into the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that you're presented with.

In this guide I'll talk you through the ins and outs of social media and aim to answer:

- Why should you take advantage of social media and the Internet?
- Why should you care about social media?
- How can you use social media?

**Whether you're a large sports club, a Sunday league football team, or an individual athlete there's no escaping the fact that the Internet is going to play a big part in your development, and your future.**

And help you to understand:

- The importance of your website
- How to get found
- The tools and platforms available

Social media is a great way to add to your enjoyment of sport, share your passions and it can also play a huge part in your success on and off the field.

What I'll cover in this guide is the basics of social media, what it has to offer and some of the main platforms. The only way you can really find out how big the world of social media is and how much it has to offer is to get involved.

I hope you enjoy this guide and pick up some useful tips and ideas.

Thanks,

Ash.

[@AshRead14](#)

*P.S. If you have any questions, feedback or would just like to chat please feel free to post a message on our [FundSport Facebook page](#), [Tweet us](#), start a [Linkedin discussion](#) or send us an [email](#) - we'd love to hear from you!*



# 01

## Setting The Foundations

# Setting The Foundations

## Passion

Why do so many of us choose to give up our spare time to participate in sport? The simple answer is we love it. Grass roots sport goes much deeper than winning and losing, it's about camaraderie, team spirit, passion, education, creating opportunities for others, and so much more! Of course winning is nice too, right?

Some of you reading this will work within the sports industry, some of you may even be amateur or semi-professional athletes, however many of you are regular people with regular jobs who made the decision to participate in sport or help run local sports clubs in your spare time. Either way, I'm sure sport makes up a massive part of your day-to-day life and it's that passion that, when utilised, can play a huge part in success on and off the field.

## Setting Goals

Everyone has goals they want to achieve and you should think about what you want to achieve before doing anything - if you don't have a set of goals get a pen and paper or open a new document and write some down, don't limit this to just social media or the Internet think about everything. Some example goals may include:

- Start a youth team/academy
- Win the league
- Find new players
- Find new coaches and volunteers
- Launch a website
- Get some new equipment/kit
- Find sponsors

Once you have your own list of goals start thinking about how you can achieve them. I'd recommend breaking them down into small realistic tasks that will help you reach your larger overall goal.

For example a goal of finding sponsorship could be broken down into the following smaller goals;

- Work out how much sponsorship you need
- Work out what you have to offer sponsors
- Build a list of potential sponsors
- Write a sponsorship proposal
- Send it to sponsors

Of course there's a lot more to sponsorship than these points but it helps to show you how to break down goals. Now think about how the Internet and social media could help you, as I'm sure there will be ways it can help with almost all



of the goals you've written down, even if it's just to assist with research or starting a conversation with like minded people.

If we go back to the above example goal of finding sponsorship, social media can play a big part in achieving this. A couple of ways social media can help with finding sponsorship are;

- Getting on Twitter or LinkedIn and networking with sponsorship experts and learning as much as you can.
- Building a strong social media presence for your club - sponsors are after eyeballs and the more exposure you can offer them for their money, the higher your chance of successfully finding sponsorship.

Try to think 'outside the box' when looking to achieve goals, what can you do to make you stand out from the others? How can you be the best you can be?

## Your Website

A website is essential nowadays and if you don't have one then you're missing out on a great opportunity.

Your website is your online home, all the social media tools and platforms we'll talk about later are great, but imagine if they suddenly disappeared? What would you do? How would people find you online? This is why it's essential for you to have a website and ensure that it remains the central point of your online presence.

A website is a great place to showcase yourself or your team. The quality of your website will affect how successful it is in attracting sponsors, players, fans and volunteers. A professionally designed website that is regularly updated with news, results, fixtures and images will obviously be more successful than a poor quality one that isn't always up-to-date.

Not everyone can afford a professionally designed site but there are some very good alternatives out there that have been specifically developed with sports clubs firmly in mind, including:

- Club Website
- Digital FC
- Eteamz

Your website opens up several potential new revenue streams. For example you could sell banner advertising and website sponsorship packages to local businesses, run targeted affiliate marketing campaigns and promote any services or facilities your club has to offer.

It could also be worth speaking to local colleges and universities that have web design courses. Many students will be looking to boost their portfolio and will be happy to build a website at a very low cost or completely free of charge.

## Getting Found

Even though this guide focuses on your online presence, offline conversations about your team are still as important, if not more important, so don't stop doing what you do offline. Recent studies confirmed that offline conversation is still what prompts us to search online, so you need to ensure that when people search for you, you can easily be found.

Social media allows you and your content to be found. It doesn't have to be complex either, something as simple as tagging a photo on Facebook can help you to be found. The important thing is to use what works best for you. Google analytics is a great tool for checking out where your traffic is coming from and a good way to see what may be working and what may not.

Google has now started to include real-time results from sites like Twitter, so any mentions of you on Twitter will help you to be found, also YouTube is now the worlds second biggest search engine (behind Google) and videos also rank highly on Google.

Also, remember to include a link to your website and social networking accounts (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) in your email signatures.

**Social media allows you and your content to be found. It doesn't have to be complex either, something as simple as tagging a photo on Facebook can help you to be found.**

## Making A Good First Impression

As the saying goes, you only get one chance to make a first impression. On the Internet that saying couldn't be anymore true, in fact most people have made up their mind about a website within the first ten seconds of viewing it.

So how do you make a great impression on your visitors in ten seconds?

- KISS - Keep It Simple Stupid; Put yourself in the shoes of your visitor, what would you want to see upon arriving on the site? Don't fill your homepage with clutter and make sure all your important information is easy to find and view.
- A simple yet clear description gives your website visitors an idea of what you're all about and what they can expect from you. For obvious reasons, to confuse them is to lose them.
- A picture paints a thousand words. I'm sure you've heard this saying a few times before but, images are one of the best ways to engage your visitors and they certainly play an important role in grabbing and keeping their attention.

There's a good chance that if someone stumbles upon you or your club online they may come across your social media profiles too. Every now and then take a moment to look at your social media profiles and think 'What would someone who knows nothing about me or my club think?' Will they see an organisation or an individual they'd like to get involved with, whether it's playing, coaching, volunteering or sponsoring? I'm not saying you should keep your social media profiles strictly 'professional' and I'd encourage you to have a laugh and a joke and show the 'real you' on social media sites, but, you need to make sure your posts aren't all negative or complaining about results or referees. Social media can be a bit of a grey area at times and you need to carefully balance how you behave online with how you'd like to be perceived.

## Consistency Is Key

You need to keep your message consistent throughout your online presence and whilst you don't have to come across all business like (after all sports is about fun, right?) it's best to try to think and act professionally.

In your quest for consistency, one thing that is often overlooked is email. Let's say your looking for sponsorship and you're emailing local companies and potential sponsors - most won't take you seriously if it's coming from an email account like 'cooldude86@hotmail.com'. If you have your own website hosted on your own domain name, then you can set up your own email address, if not then you may need to use a web based email service like Gmail.

If your going to set up a Gmail account though, I'd recommend keeping the name simple and registering 'ClubName@gmail.com' or 'YourName@gmail.com'. This will all help to add to your professional image.

Consistency goes far wider than email. You need to keep the messages you send out consistent across all social media sites, as well as your own website.



# 02

## Introduction To Social Media

# Introduction To Social Media

## What Is Social Media?

Social media is online or mobile media that users have the ability to interact with. Social media is all about conversation, sharing and discussion. It provides a great way to engage your members, players, sponsors and fans and allows communities to form quickly and communicate effectively.

Whereas traditional media, newspapers, magazines, etc. are about broadcasting a message, social media is about building a conversation and encouraging interaction. For example you can't interact with an article in a newspaper or magazine, but with social media you allow people to comment and share their thoughts and ideas, building a conversation.

## Why You Should Care

1. Time spent on social network and blogging sites is growing at over 3 times the rate of overall Internet growth. (Nielsen, Global faces & Networked places, 2009.)
2. Social network and blogging sites are now the fourth most popular activity on the Internet. (Nielsen, Global faces & Networked places, 2009.)
3. 90% of consumers trust recommendations from people they know, whilst 70% trusted consumer opinions posted online. (July 2009 Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey)

**Social media is about adding to the enjoyment of being a part of your club - giving your members more memories, more talking points and more laughs.**

Word of mouth has always been the most effective form of marketing and promotion. People have always trusted their friends opinions and social media is like word of mouth x1000!

Of course people still talk to each other face to face, but the Internet and social media has allowed conversations to spread so much faster and be heard by so many more people. For example, if you run a basketball team you may know a few people who would like to play for you, you can give them a call or speak to them face to face, but social media has opened up the doors for those conversations to reach a much larger audience - just getting your teammates to put a quick message up on their Facebook or Twitter would allow you to reach a large number of potential new players.

As I stated in the introduction: Social media is about adding to the enjoyment of being a part of your club - giving your members more memories, more talking points and more laughs - not just promotion and marketing.

## Time Management

One of the largest stumbling blocks when it comes to social media and the Internet is time. A lot of you reading this will probably be working full time as well as being involved with grass roots sports, but the great thing about the Internet and social media is you can be as involved as you want. Like most things in life, you get out what you put in and the more time you put in the more you will get out. But, you have to work to your time frame.

It may be best to share out duties amongst people at your club, this will make it easier to manage and it may also help to get perspectives from people in different areas players, coaches and committee members for example.

Management shouldn't take too much time, for corporate brands, pro athletes and teams managing social media accounts can be a full time job but for grass roots sports its not all about monitoring 1000's of comments and driving sales, its about creating community, fun and new opportunities.

## The Two C's: Content and Community

Content and community are probably the two key factors to social media success. 'Content is King' is one of the most overused phrases in social media, and whilst I don't totally agree with that statement, there's a reason it's a social media cliché - the content you put out is often the difference between success and failure. The Internet is the information superhighway and generally when people come online they are looking for some form of information.

The content you put out can help establish you as one of the best, whether its by videos of games and match reports, follow ups on where players have gone upon leaving or even coaching videos to help out other teams and highlight your expertise.

Using social media to create an online community for people involved with your club is a great way to add to bring everyone together and constantly keep them thinking about your club. You can also use an online community as a way to add to your clubs overall experience and create a feelgood factor.

## You Have Great Content

Everyone has the ability to produce great content. Producing great content is not about glitz and glamour, if you're making videos it's not the quality of the camera that makes the difference, with blogs it's not the widgets and plug-ins that make it successful, it's the content.

Think about what content people will want to see - players, coaches, sponsors - what appeals to them? What will make them continue to pay an interest in you?

Keep the content you post relevant to your audience. Think about who you are talking to? Each platform is different and so is the audience, the people you talk to on LinkedIn may be very different to those on Facebook and Twitter so your posts should reflect this.

A great example of making the most of what you have is Mark Titus, a former walk-on basketball player for The Ohio State University. On the court he was fairly unremarkable, playing 47 minutes and scoring 9 points in his 4 year collegiate career. However, off the court is where Titus shines.

In November 2008 he started his blog, Club Trillion. The blog now has over 3 million views and lead to Titus becoming one of the most popular players on the Ohio State team. Club Trillion is also a great example of how an athlete can build up a following through social media; the blog has nearly 10,000 fans on Facebook and over 15,000 followers on Twitter.

**Think about what content people will want to see - players, coaches, sponsors. What appeals to them? What will make them continue to pay an interest in you?**

Titus is also a hit on YouTube, his video Mr. Rainmaker has nearly 300,000 views.

*I've written a piece about Mark Titus for SportsNetworker.com - if you'd like to learn more about him and what other athletes could learn from him check it out at: <http://www.sportsnetworker.com/2010/04/07/one-in-a-trillion-mark-titus-wins-with-social-media/>*

## Storytelling

Storytelling is the backbone of social media, films, marketing and music (the list could go on). Check any advert – printed or on TV – and it will be telling some kind of story. Music is the same, listen to your favourite song and there's a story in there somewhere.

Here's an example of great storytelling from one of my favourite films, Rocky. First and foremost we all love Rocky because it's a great story – a story of an underdog who would become champion (I'm sure I didn't need to remind you of that). But, would we all love the films so much if we didn't see what went on behind the scenes? If we only saw Rocky's interviews with the press and not what he's like away from boxing?

Probably not.

Storytelling can be just as important for you. It allows you to share what happens on the field/track/court but also allows people to get to know the personalities of the people involved, highlight the social side of team or the positive impact you may have on the local people or area.

Social media allows you to share your story in many ways: images, videos, blogs and status updates to name just a few.

## Measurement

Measurement is one of the most important aspects of social media and also one of the most overlooked.

Before you do anything you should first ask yourself why? Think about what you aim to achieve from it, how it helps you and how you will measure success.

Ways you can measure the success of your social media use and online presence include;

- Increasing your media coverage
- Drive sales
- Find new members
- Get more website traffic
- Find Sponsors/deliver for current sponsors

It's important to determine how you will measure your success before you start out. Too many people jump in head first with

no real goals and end up wasting time, not knowing whether or not they have achieved anything.

Your goals may simply be numerical for example get 300 'likes' on Facebook, but also think about how can these people help your club? Some things though can't be measured by numbers such as team spirit, enjoyment and memories and these are also great ways that social media can benefit your club too.





# 03

## Choose Your Platform(s)

# Choose Your platform(s)

So, we've discussed the basics of social media and how it provides a massive opportunity for clubs of all sizes, from amateur to professional. There are hundreds of social media tools out there and in this chapter we're going to run through the main tools and how you can utilise them.

When reading through this chapter, it's worth remembering that not all tools will be a fit for you, it's about choosing the ones that are best suited to your strengths. If you're good at writing then a blog with match reports and team updates would be a great way to engage your team and followers. Maybe you're more comfortable in front of a camera? In that case video would be a good way to go, capturing that big dunk or perfectly struck freekick on camera would be priceless! If you're unsure what platform would suit you best then why not try a few different options and stick with the option you found worked best.

## Facebook

Facebook now has over 500million users, in fact the site is getting so big there's even a Hollywood film being made about it!

Facebook has become one of the Internets fastest growing websites and attracts a wide audience of people of all ages and from all sorts of backgrounds. Facebook allows you to share photos, videos, articles, information about you, status updates and much more. With so many users, I'd guess that if you're running a sports team a good percentage of your players will own and maintain active profiles on the site.

There are three main ways you can utilise Facebook:

- Personal Profiles
- Pages
- Facebook Ads

### Personal Profiles

If this book was aimed at businesses and large sports clubs and athletes then a personal profile would not be something I'd recommend using as you can only have around 5,000 friends on Facebook ultimately limiting your potential fan-base as well as making your personal information available to people you don't necessarily want it to be made public to.

If however, you're only running a small sports team, for example a Sunday league football club, then using your personal profile could be a good way to go. Personal profiles have one main advantage over business profiles in that people don't necessarily want to be friends with a brand or organisation, we like to be friends with humans!

Your personal profile can be a good way to spread news about yourself or your team via status updates, images, or just plain old talking to friends. One of the simplest examples is updating your status to something like "Your Club FC is looking

for new players, anyone interested?" Whilst this is very simple it can also be very effective, and the people you know personally are probably quite likely to help you out.

## Pages

In their own words; "A Facebook Page is a public Profile that enables you to share your business and products with Facebook users."

Pages can be just as useful to sports clubs and athletes as they are to businesses. Facebook now has over 500 million active users worldwide and provides your club with a great way to connect with members and fans as well as attracting new people to your club and adding further opportunities to your sponsorship inventory.

A Facebook page is an extra communication method for everyone involved in your club, you can keep everyone updated with the latest scores, news, events, images and videos.

**A Facebook page is an extra communication method for everyone involved in your club, you can keep everyone updated with the latest scores, news, events, images and videos.**

Conversation and interaction are key to a successful and engaging page, if people feel there is a sense of community around your page they will keep coming back. Conversation can also help to grow your presence on Facebook, when someone interacts with your page (writes on your wall, posts an image etc.) this will appear on their profile and their friends news feeds, giving your page exposure.

Here are a few top tips for building a successful Facebook page:

- **Use multimedia content:** Uploading photos and videos of the team, recent games, social events etc. is a great way to keep people involved in your page. Photos and videos also spark a lot of comments and conversation, and they're also a great way to share what you've been doing. Tagging multimedia content within your Page is also a great promotional activity. When you tag someone on a photo their friends can see it and the photo will also link to the containing album on your page.
- **Build an active community:** Community is a key aspect of social media in general and isn't just limited to Facebook. In order to keep people coming back and paying attention to your page you'll need to create an active community. One of the best ways to do this is by building an active wall - encourage people to leave comments, ask questions and reply to people.
- **Make it a resource:** Make your page a resource and people will keep coming back to it. If people want information about you or your team, give it to them. On a daily basis your players, fans, sponsors are far more likely to visit Facebook than your club website, by giving them the info they want on Facebook and then linking this back to your site you're likely to increase traffic to your own site too.

Once your Facebook page has over 25 'Likes' you can claim your own URL or Vanity URL, for example Facebook.com/FundSport. When choosing your URL there are a few things you need to consider:

- Usernames can only contain alphanumeric characters (A-Z, 0-9) or a period (".")

- Once created these cannot be changed, so choose carefully and double check spelling!

Once you've decided on your URL sign into Facebook and follow these simple steps to claim it:

1. Go to [www.facebook.com/username](http://www.facebook.com/username)
2. Select 'Set a username for your Pages'
3. This brings up a drop down menu, select the page you want to create the username for. If your page has the needed 25 fans it will bring up a box.
4. Enter your desired username and click on 'check availability' If it's available, you will be shown some final terms – if you are happy with your choice click 'confirm' or select 'cancel' to try another one.

## Ads

Facebook have developed their own advertising platform which is still fairly under-utilised meaning it can still offer good value to advertisers. When someone clicks on your ad you have two options, you can either send them to your website or, alternatively, you can send them to your Facebook page. Which option you choose will greatly depend on the purpose of your ad campaign.

One of the main advantages of Facebook Ads is your ability to carefully target your adverts to people you feel will be interested. For example, if you run a basketball team and you are looking for new players, you can specifically target males in your town between the ages of 18 and 35 who have the keyword 'basketball' in their profile. Not bad 'eh.

If you do decide to use Facebook Ads then remember to make your ads as targeted as possible, otherwise you run the risk of turning a cost-effective ad campaign into an expensive, less effective one.

## Getting Started

Like most social networks, getting started on Facebook is pretty simple head over to <http://www.facebook.com/> and simply follow the on-screen instructions. Once you've signed up you'll need to fill out your personal profile and if you want to create a page for your club go to <http://www.facebook.com/pages/> and click create a page in the top right corner.

[Join FundSport.com on Facebook](#)

## Linkedin

At the FundSport.com [Grass Roots Sports Sponsorship Seminar](#) we ran earlier in 2010, LinkedIn was one of the talking points that came up during both the talks and the Q&A session, so it's a platform I feel we should definitely talk about.

LinkedIn is a business networking site, in fact it's the world's largest business networking site, with over 70million users and its growing fast. In their own words "LinkedIn connects you to your trusted contacts and helps you exchange knowledge, ideas, and opportunities with a broader network of professionals."

As well as networking with others LinkedIn also offers the opportunity to learn from field experts. The two best ways to do this is through utilising the 'Answers' and 'Groups' tools.

## Answers

LinkedIn answers is one of the best places on the web to share knowledge, you can:

- Ask your question and get fast, accurate answers from your network and other experts worldwide
- Showcase your knowledge, expertise, and interests by answering questions
- Stay up on the latest in your industry and area

Asking questions couldn't be easier, you simply write your question and select the category you would like to post it under. You can also send your question out to email contacts if you feel you know anyone who may be able to provide an answer.

To highlight the power of LinkedIn answers I recently asked the question "[How can amateur sports teams utilise social media?](#)" Within the first day I received a couple of answers, and in total 10 people replied to my question, sharing their knowledge and some great ideas.

You can also search through questions others have asked and see if any are relevant to you. You may even find some which you can answer yourself and pass your knowledge on.

## Groups

There are few (if any) better ways to build up new relationships, share your knowledge and also learn from others. LinkedIn Groups are communities of like minded people with common interest, goals, aims and experiences. There aren't many better ways to network with people and build up your contacts on LinkedIn than getting involved in groups.

There are many great reasons to join LinkedIn groups, including;

- Meet people who share your interests - professionally and personally. While sports may be one of your personal interests, LinkedIn can also help you in your professional career.
- Keep up with the latest news and trends in your industry.
- Follow and get involved in discussions of interest.
- Start discussions with like minded people

In order to find groups which match your interests use the search bar at the top right of the page, once your results have appeared you will be able to browse matching groups. If you select a group you will then be able to view the group information page showing a brief description, which will help you to decide whether or not you want to join.

If you'd like to network and start discussions with like minded individuals within grass roots and amateur sport join the [Grass Roots Sport Network](#) and get involved.

## Getting Started

Once you've signed up to LinkedIn one of the first things you should do is complete your profile 100%. When I first joined LinkedIn I left my profile half complete for months and had very little success. However, once I finally got round to completing my profile I soon started to understand the power of LinkedIn.

**Once you've signed up to LinkedIn one of the first things you should do is complete your profile 100%.**

When you've filled out your profile you'll want to start adding connections, the best way to find connections is to look for people you already know - current/past colleagues, college classmates, friends etc. When you invite people to connect LinkedIn provides a standard message 'I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn.' My advice would be to change this message and make it personal, explain why you are inviting this person to connect.

Once you have a complete profile and a few connections, start joining and getting involved with Groups and Answers.

## Twitter

Twitter allows users to post updates of 140 characters, with the main aim of answering the question, "What are you doing?" You can choose to follow other peoples updates and others can also follow you.

If you're new Twitter the above description may seem a bit vague, if so, I'd recommend watching this short video [Twitter in Plain English](#) - even if you're not new to Twitter it's still worth a watch.

Though Twitter was set out for users to answer the question 'what are you doing?' The sites use has evolved and updates now take many different shapes and forms, from sharing interesting content from across the web, to images, video, music and much more.

Nowadays everyone seems to be using Twitter from sports clubs and athletes to celebrities and businesses. A twitter account would allow you to keep your followers up-to-date with what's going on at the club in a simple and easy manner.

With many businesses now using Twitter it also provides you with a great opportunity to connect with local business and spread the word about what you're doing. It may even help you attract sponsors.

However, don't use Twitter to bombard businesses and other users with messages asking for support and sponsorship. Just like any other relationship online relationships should be built up over time. Casually start conversation, introduce yourself, ask how things are going? And definitely don't sell! Think of it like this, would you walk into a pub and ask a stranger for money? Probably not. So why would you do it online? People don't use Twitter to be sold to, in fact most people get annoyed by selling or spamming on Twitter.

## Getting Started

If you're not already on Twitter head over to <https://twitter.com/signup> and follow the simple on screen instructions.

Once you've signed up to Twitter and filled out your profile you'll need to find people to follow and there are plenty of ways to do this, couple of the best ways are;

**Twitter People Search:** Twitter's own people search is probably the best place to start when looking to find people to follow. Simply enter the name of who you'd like to follow and Twitter searches the "real names" people enter in their bio fields. It can be pretty hard to find the people you want to follow, especially if they have a common name. Still, this is probably a good place to start your search.

**WeFollow:** Started by Digg founder Kevin Rose, WeFollow is a Twitter directory which categorises people by hashtags.

**Twellow:** One of the most popular Twitter directories with nearly 6 million Twitter profiles registered.

To help you get started on Twitter we've put together a list of must follow sports people who regularly share great content:

**Daniel McLaren;** [@DanielMcLaren](#) - Daniel is the founder of The UK Sports Network and also ran the Grass Roots Sponsorship Seminar along with FundSport.com. He shares great content all the time and the UK Sports Network blog is updated on a regular basis with great sports content.

**Lewis Howes;** [@LewisHowes](#) - You may recognise Lewis' name from the foreword of this ebook. Lewis is the founder of SportsNetworker.com and the Sports Executives Association. He's also one of the most well known people in the sports industry.

**Anthony Alsop;** [@AnthonyAlsop](#) - Anthony is making moves in sports and social media in Australia. He's always writing great articles and Tweeting good content. He also organised the Digital Sports Summit.

**Brian Gainor;** [@BrianGainor](#) - Brian is the founder of PartnershipActivation.com and regularly shares great sports marketing content. If you follow his Tweets and subscribe to his newsletter think about how you could adapt some of the ideas used by pro's to help you.

**BetterFootball;** [@BetterFootball](#) - If you're into football/soccer coaching then Paul Williams is definitely worth following. He always shares great coaching content and writes a coaching blog, which is worth checking out.

**Manchester City FC;** [@MCFC](#) - Manchester City are a team that really get social media, and even if you're not a fan they are still worth following, even if it's just to pick up some social media ideas and see how it should be done.

**Ryan Knapp;** [@RyanKnapp](#) - Ryan's a great guy with a passion for soccer. He was recently appointed New Media Coordinator at the National Soccer Coaches Association of America and he also founded Buffalo Futsal. Ryan also has a lot of experience in all areas of running a club and is definitely one you should follow.

**FundSport;** @FundSport - Don't forget to follow FundSport.com on Twitter for all the latest news and updates from the site.

## Twibbon

Twibbon is a unique way to spread your message across Twitter and Facebook. Twibbon allows you to upload an image - maybe your club badge or logo - and then others can add it to their Twitter or Facebook profile images.

This gives you the opportunity to generate more exposure, hype and constantly remind people about you. For example a football (soccer) team probably has around 20+ registered players, there's a good chance most of those players are on Facebook, and a few may be on Twitter. If you create a team Twibbon they can add it to their images and it will give you exposure to each of their friends every time they see the profile image.

The team Twibbon will also be a constant reminder about you, it may remind people to visit your Facebook page, or website, or even encourage people to join your team. If someone is looking for a new team and your the most visible to them there's a good chance they'll give you a try.

It's easy to set up and start a Twibbon campaign, just visit <http://twibbon.com/howitworks> and follow the on-screen instructions.

## YouTube

YouTube is now the Internet's second biggest search engine, behind Google (who own YouTube). People are watching 2 billion videos a day on YouTube and uploading hundreds of thousands of videos daily. In fact, every minute, 24 hours of video is uploaded to YouTube.

There's so much that can be done with YouTube, and whilst it's the platform which may take the most time, with editing and filming etc, it can also be the most rewarding and fun. Nowadays you can pick up a decent quality video camera fairly cheap, or someone you know may already have one you can use and most modern Windows and Apple computers include some free, easy to use video editing software. Filming games, social events and people making mistakes on the field or generally making a fool of themselves can provide priceless material and hours of enjoyment.

YouTube can be used in many ways and you don't simply have to point your users over to YouTube to watch your videos. Over recent months they have added more social features allowing you to share your videos to Twitter and Facebook, and you can even embed your videos into your own website using the 'embed' code provided by YouTube.

**People are watching 2 billion videos a day on YouTube and uploading hundreds of thousands of videos daily. In fact, every minute, 24 hours of video is uploaded to YouTube.**



## Getting Started

Once you've made a video - maybe some highlights from a game, a coaching video, or an 'own goals and gaffs' style video - head over to YouTube.com, click the 'Sign Up' button and follow the simple on screen instructions. Once you've set up your account and uploaded a video you'll need to write a description, remember to include keywords related to your team and the video here. As I mentioned earlier YouTube is the worlds second largest search engine, so it's important to make sure you can be found.

## Flickr

This photo sharing site is definitely worth taking a look at. They say 'a picture paints a thousand words' and the old saying still rings true, maybe even more so in the digital world. Flickr is regarded as the best online photo sharing service and allows you to upload and share high quality images. The service is widely used by bloggers and provides a great place to host any images you may want to use on your website.

**Flickr is more than just a photo sharing site though, its a community with a very active and passionate user-base.**

Flickr is more than just a photo sharing site though, its a community with a very active and passionate user-base. It's a place for like minded people to come together and share their stories through images. Flickr images include rich descriptions such as titles, tags, location, people and more allowing you to give your photos context and a life of their own.

The best way to utilise Flickr is to become part of the community. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing your photos in groups, you may find a group dedicated to your sport or maybe one for your local town/area, this could be a good way to get known and spread the word locally.

## Getting Started

Signing up for a Flickr account is free, however if you really get into it and want to upload a large amount of images their are paid options. You'll need a Yahoo ID to sign up to Flickr but setting one up only takes a matter of minutes. Once you've signed up you'll be free to upload images join groups and get involved in discussions.

## Blogs

It's hard to sum up blogs and blogging in a few short paragraphs, but I'll have a go.

To put it simply a blog is a website where you post content on an ongoing basis. The newest post usually appear at the top so that visitors can read whats new. Blogs are a place to share your thoughts and also share what's going on at your club.

Blogging is about more that writing and posting stuff online, it's about building up connections and hearing from people who care about your niche or subject. Traditionally readers are free to comment on blog posts making a blog a two way

conversation, this helps you build relationships with your club members and fans.

Over recent years blogs have reshaped the web and given people the freedom to share their thoughts with anyone that cares to read them.

## Getting Started

Before starting a blog you will need to think about content, will your blog focus solely on you? or will it focus on your sport as a whole? It's a good idea to plan some blog posts, get a piece of paper or start a document and just write down as many different titles and topics you can think of. Next you will need to decide which platform you're going to use, this will of course vary on what sort of blog you are starting and which platform fits best.

Your blogs have to be what your niche wants to read, if you runs a women's football team will you readers want articles only specifically about women's football or football in general? When you first start blogging you may have to experiment with content and see what's popular and what works best for you.

## Blogging Platforms

There are many different blogging platforms and they all have their own strengths and weaknesses. Wordpress and Tumblr are two of the best and most popular blogging platforms around and the two which I've had the most experience with.

Wordpress is probably the most popular blogging platform. Wordpress gives you the option to set up a site on your own servers or create a free Wordpress hosted blog. Thanks to the size of it's userbase Wordpress has a massive catalogue of themes and plugins. It isn't as simple to set up as other blogs but once you've got past the initial set up your options are almost limitless.

Tumblr, on the other hand, is extremely simple to set up and very easy to use. Tumblr is a fusion between a fully-fledged blog and a Twitter feed, it's focused on short frequent updates and makes posting multimedia content extremely simple - you can post images, videos, audio or text posts at the click of a button. Personally, I'm a big fan of Tumblr and it's no surprise to see the platform growing rapidly.

Of course Wordpress and Tumblr aren't the only two blogging platforms around and before deciding which platform you're going to use I'd advise taking a look at Blogger, Posterous and TypePad too - have a look at what they all have to offer and make notse of each platforms pro's and cons and choose the one you feel will work best for you.



# 04

## Case Study

# Case Study

We've covered the basics of social media and some of the platforms available to you, now it's time to see social media in action and how one amateur football club has utilised it. The below case study was written by Sam Brown about his football club Old Headindly AFC and how they've used social media.

## Social Media and Amateur Football

I help run an amateur football team in Leeds. It's an immense passion of mine. The team itself and everything it stood for was what actually kept me in Leeds after I finished University.

We strive to provide the best possible experience for the players including the best pitch, the best kits, the best social events and best clothing. It helps create an incredible vibe throughout the club and makes it truly special.

In 2010, I decided to add an extra level to the Old Headingley experience by expanding our offering to give the players the best online experience too. I wanted to give them more memories that they could look back on, I wanted to give them talking points, give them laughs and perhaps most importantly keep them constantly thinking about the club and their next game. I also wanted to add more to the Old Headingley brand to make it more desirable to new players and potential sponsors.

### So What Have We Done?

[Facebook Fan Page](#) – Standard behaviour adding a Fan Page really and I haven't added anything special into it using FBML. What we have found that it's a great extra communication method for us to talk to not just players, but 'fans' too. By fans, I mean people who aren't directly involved with Old Headingley so we're talking former players, girlfriends, wives, brothers, sisters, housemates, parents or even people who are completely unassociated to the club. Any fan can post updates, motivational messages, the latest league tables, videos or pictures to the page. The more people we have who take an interest in the team, the more commercial avenues we can explore (there's a theoretical example of this later on).

Being an amateur football team, we all have jobs and other commitments. Now, instead of having to wait until training or having to ring someone over the weekend to find out how the club had done, they can visit the fan page for real time updates on how games are going. The updates are posted via Twitter and then routed through to the fan page using Ping.fm. The first weekend we had this up and running, there were people commenting and liking the updates coming through and helped us for the first time create a feeling of really being a fan of Old Headingley and reacting how you would if you saw your team go two nil up on Sky Sports News so the value of this service was realised almost immediately.

We had often mooted the idea of an 'Old Headingley Supporters Club' to help generate much needed income for the club. What always held us back was that we never felt we had enough to make any prospective members feel like actual fans. . . after all, would a monthly newsletter really cut it? With our social media offerings, we now felt we finally had a suitable offering for them to keep up to date on how we were performing and learn more about the squad. If our social media offering wasn't what , the Supporters Club wouldn't know that [Rio can't rap properly](#) or that we raised £1500 for Sport

Relief by running through Leeds together singing 'Can't Take My Eyes Off You'. It gives them a real insight into the faces, and perhaps more importantly, the personalities behind the names that crop up when they ask who scored at the weekend. Ultimately, they grow more attached to Old Headingley.

Twitter is used pretty much purely for the pushing of messages to the Fan Page. There are rarely updates posted during the week, we have few followers and we follow few people too. We've not utilised Twitter to its full effect as we are unable to dedicate enough time to it to be able to contribute to any conversations in a worthwhile sense. We may broadcast website updates from time to time, but there is little gained and little added to the twitterverse.

YouTube is an area we slowly but surely building up a presence upon. We have a branded Old Headingley Channel where all videos are now added as and when they are taken. This is again to keep the players and fans interested – seeing a daft video that one of their teammates made whilst they were playing are always a talking point and have helped create a definite feel good factor. If we're lucky, we get to catch a phenomenal goal too such as [this free kick](#) which instantly becomes a priceless memento for the goalscorer (although three weeks later he took an identical free kick and the keeper saved it...had he done his research and seen the video?!).

Our YouTube Channel also has favoured videos that other players have put up over the years to pull everything into one place, and we've been careful to only put videos up that are interesting...if we filled it with dross then people would realise very quickly that it wouldn't be worth visiting from time to time.

We chose YouTube over Vimeo purely down to popularity. Whilst I personally feel Vimeo is brilliant, only 4 members of our 50 man squad had heard of it. They all knew of and use YouTube however.

We also operate a [Flickr channel](#) where we have all the photos that have been taken over the last 18 months. Not only are all the pictures visible and divided into sets, the players can go to any picture and download it for their own use whether it be using it as their Facebook profile picture or desktop background or getting printed, framed and put up on their wall.

I mentioned before that the more people we have who are taking an interest in the team, the more commercial avenues we can explore...

By this, I expressly mean in terms of sponsorship. In the past, we have written speculative letters to companies local and national with the hope that they will help fund our club. Only every so often do we get any luck, but looking back through our approaches over the years, I'm not surprised. We could offer them very little aside from their name on a shirt, their name & link on our website and well...that's kind of it.

Now, using the channels available to us, we can brand our channels so our Twitter/YouTube page features our sponsors. Perhaps most importantly, we can use our networks to push sponsorship messages. Given that Headingley is an enormous student hot spot and we have a good number of students (current and former) playing for us, we could (for example) announce that a property agent's student housing list was now available or announce it a few days earlier to our fans and followers to build a buzz and desirability about the offering. This in turn would:

- a) bring that company to a dedicated number of people who listen to what the Old Headingley channel is saying thereby gaining the backing of a key influencer.
- b) grow the good will towards the company in an industry that is often tainted with stories of woe
- c) maybe, just maybe, generate some new business. Maybe not through an Old Headingley fan, but maybe when one of Tom's friends say their looking for a new flat to rent, Tom may point them in the Agent's direction. The trust of the company is much higher due to a peer's recommendation so rather than trawl through Rightmove or do it 'old skool' and pound the pavement looking at each Agent's offerings, they may use this Agent solely.

We're still in the early stages of social media and Old Headingley and we're pleased with how it has progressed. We need to make sure now that we dedicate just as much time to it next season as we did this season and look to develop areas further (yes, the Old Headingley Home Pitch is on [FourSquare!](#)).

*To find our more about Old Headingley AFC visit [http:// http://www.oldheadingleyafc.com/](http://www.oldheadingleyafc.com/).*

*Follow Sam on Twitter [@brownsam](#).*

**FundSport.com**

