WATERFORD LADIES GAELIC FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

PORT LÁIRGE

A guide for the
CLUB PRO

HOW YOU CAN PROMOTE YOUR CLUB

HINTS & TIPS ON

- SOCIAL MEDIA
- NEWSPAPERS
- PHOTOS & VIDEO

Contents

Introduction

So you've been given the job of being your club PRO, what now? If your experience is anything like mine, you'll be given great encouragement but little enough direction. The job of the PRO is a wide ranging one and there is no one best way of doing it. If done correctly it can really help build up a club's sense of identity, improve the flow of information around the club and even help with sourcing funding. Here's some of the jobs you should look to getting done as quickly as possible once you assume the role.

1. Do an audit of your online and social media assets. What social media accounts exist, who has access, what are the passwords? These passwords should be shared with your club secretary and accounts administered through the official club email account. On platforms where it is possible eg Facebook add a second person to oversee the account. This is useful if your personal Facebook account is disabled or you lose access, you can still recover the club account. It also means that any messages sent to the account are visible to someone other than yourself.

2. Assemble an online library of content on Dropbox or Google Drive. At a minimum you need a high-quality version of your club crest or logo. If you have time take some photos of the club grounds and club house etc. Find out what your club colours are. You can ask the graphic designer that designed your logo or you can upload an image of your logo to https://imagecolorpicker.com/ and you'll be able to find them. These colour codes will allow you to accurately render club colours on posters etc. Add your photos to this account as you take them.

   The password for this account should be shared with the club secretary and administered through the official club email account. As you add to this library of content not only will you be assembling a photographic history of the club but you will quickly end up with an image for every occasion. If "Mary" scores a goal you'll have an image on hand to illustrate your match report. Store match programmes, posters and anything else you create in this account they'll be useful the next time.

3. Find out what the local media deadlines are. Local papers are still a great source of coverage. What is their deadline for submitting copy?

4. What reporters and news outlets cover sport in your locality? Assemble a directory of their contact details. Start following them on social media if they have a presence. Twitter is particularly good for developing a relationship with the local media.

5. The GAA have produced an excellent guide on the use of social media in clubs, particularly as it relates to child protection. It is essential that you read this. The 2020 guidelines are available online.

6. Get to know your fellow PROs and your county PRO they will be happy to help you.

Social Media

Username & URL

With luck you will inherit some existing social media platforms. Most clubs have a Facebook page, many now have Instagram and Twitter. You don't need to start opening new social media accounts straight away. If you do open new social media accounts, try and use the same custom url/address style for the different platforms. **E.g. don't mix phrasing**:

- @stpatslgfc

- @saintpatricksfootball

- @stpatsladiesfootball

Social Media Platforms

Here briefly are the strengths and weaknesses of the main Social Media platforms.

Twitter

Twitter doesn't have the reach of Facebook, but it is particularly good at keeping up with news from your sport. It is a useful learning tool and is a great way of interacting and building relationships with journalists.

Instagram

Very popular with the younger demographic, it is very a visual medium with the emphasis on photos and video. If your club already has a Facebook account and you're looking to expand, Instagram is probably the platform to look at.

Facebook

Facebook is still the largest social media platform by some distance. It is free and easy to create content for. In simple terms it is the social media platform most used by the parents of players. Over the years it has gotten more difficult to get posts seen by people following your account. Only a small fraction of your followers will see any post that you publish.

Other Platforms

Not a week month goes by without a new social media platform launching with a promise of revolutionizing communication. These platforms may turn out to be important, but more frequently they fade away quickly. Three of the platforms mentioned in the 2020 GAA guide no longer exist or have become irrelevant. Your time is valuable, if the platform matures you can always join it later. Don't go chasing the next big thing.

Profile & Cover Pictures

Each social media account you have should have a profile and cover image uploaded to it. Ideally the same images should be used across all Social Media platforms. Once you have a good quality version of your club crest or logo upload it to your account. Ideally the crest will be against a white

or plain background. If the image looks poor, is badly positioned, or is illegible, change it. It costs nothing to do this.

Information on Social Media Profiles

Fill out the profile information fully on each social media platform. Not completing About Us or Contact Us sections on these profiles is a cardinal sin. If you have a web site include the web site address. Don't forget that many clubs share names with clubs elsewhere so ensure that your geographical location is mentioned in your description.

Google Maps

Check that the Google Maps listing to your club grounds is filled out accurately and fully. If you have a web site you can get that put up as part of your listing. If you don't have a website, link it to your Facebook account etc. Google Maps is used to return local search results. If someone is searching on Google for a football club in your locality having a Google Maps listing will help your club be found.

What Will I Post?

One of the most frequent questions I'm asked is "What should I post?" Here are some things you can do that will help you identify appropriate content.

- Have a PRO on every team. Even in small clubs it can be hard to keep on top of everything that is happening. Have a contact on as many teams as you can. These people will function as "assistant PROs". In our club we have found that the Covid officers attached to each team are well placed to supply the PRO with content. This also avoids the PRO over focusing on a team he is engaged with.

- Identify events coming up. You can post before events, during events and after events.

- What is happening in the community? Clubs don't exist in isolation; they are part of their local community. Your primary focus is promoting your club, but this is easier if the local community is engaged with your club. If you share their content, they will be more inclined to share your content.

- Look at what other clubs are doing. Follow other club social media accounts, they do not need to be ladies football clubs. You should also follow accounts that you enjoy, though obviously nothing too controversial. Look at how they are presenting their content, what apps they use, the content they create. There are lessons to be learned from your favourite accounts.

- Photos are great, people love interacting with them.

Most social media users log into their accounts at least once per day and many people are checking social multiple times per day. Keep your social posts entertaining and informative, and your followers will be happy to see your content in their feeds.

Promotion is a Process Not a Post

One of the biggest mistakes I see being made on Social Media accounts even by professional organisations is putting too much effort into one post (particularly video). One post, photo or video, doesn't make a Social Media account. Social Media is transient, if a post is viewed for 24 hours you're doing well.

Your content should be good enough, it doesn't need to be perfect. Perfect takes time and you are a volunteer. I see too many groups spending days setting up and editing video that will get 20 likes and be visible online for 8 hours. If you enjoy doing it great, but it is not the most efficient use of your time. You are better off frequently posting content that doesn't take too much time to create. Keep your eyes open for photo opportunities when you are around your own club. Develop relationships with the various teams and identify people on each team to help you. I have found teams are very good to provide content once you let them know you want it.

The influence of your social media account is from the cumulative impact of all of your posts. If you have something you wish to promote don't just post about it once, don't reuse the same post or poster over and over. That's boring. Use your imagination. Let's say you have a sponsored walk coming, up you can reuse the same text about the walk but change up the photos for each post. Here's how I would publicise an event:

- **Monday** [Photo of U12's] Our U12s will be on our Sponsored walk Friday…..

- **Tuesday** [Photo of U14's] Support our U14s on our Sponsored walk Friday…..

- **Wednesday** [Photo of Minors] Our minors will be on the club sponsored walk this Friday..

- **Thursday** [Photo of Junior team] Great to see the Junior team signed up for the…

- **Friday** [Photos during the walk] Do a few live posts from the walks.

- **Saturday** [Photo of the various groups on the walk] Report on how the walk went.

Photos & Video

Take Better Photos
If you go online you'll find lots of articles about how to take great photos using your camera phone. Here are some simple pointers that can help you produce more interesting photos for the newspapers and social media.

Framing and Composition
Don't center everything in the middle of the frame. Off-center can be more interesting.

Lighting
One of the biggest mistakes you can make is shooting photos into the sun. Make sure that the sun is towards your back when photographing people.

Background
You should be thinking about the background behind the subject of your photo. It can be a sunset, a hill, a tree or a toilet block.

Camera Angles
How you hold the camera or phone can have a major visual impact. Many of the interesting photos you see in social media are interesting because of an unusual angle. Shoot a team holding your camera phone near the ground, or hold your phone extended in the air and take the photo from an elevated position.

Edit Your Photo
You can improve a photo after it has been taken. All camera phones now have easy to use editing software. Cropping or brightening an image can transform it. Don't overedit a photo, less is more.

Don't Overreach
Professional photographers are really good at what they do, they use very expensive equipment to produce fantastic action shots. These photos are very hard to reproduce with a camera phone. You will probably be better off trying to take good quality images of players posing for a photo before or after a game.

Take Lots of Photos
If you line up a team and take one photo, there's a good chance someone will be looking away or will have closed their eyes. Modern camera phones can take lots of images quickly, use this facility.

Videos
Videos can really enhance your social media presence. It can be difficult to capture a game using your camera phone (remember you need to get permission to film it). Too often you're left with shaky, grainy, footage and you can't quite work out what's going on. If you don't have a professional setup you might find the best use of video might be for player profiles, raffles or interviews.

A small tripod (circa €30) or a smartphone gimbal (a gyroscope on a selfie stick, circa €100) can really improve the end product and remove a lot of the "shake" from your video footage. You can search for these online.

Short videos don't require much effort and any technical flaws are not as obvious or irritating in them.

Growing Your Online Audience

The best way of gaining an audience is to post interesting content. When I post something, I ask myself do I find this interesting? who is this content aimed at? **If content is dull, don't post it** (unless it relates to safety or is in some way mandatory).

Each Social Media platform has different guidelines for post frequency. You can post multiple times a day on Twitter but doing the same on Facebook will have them viewing it as a type of spamming of your followers. On Facebook I aim to post once a day. If I've a lot of news I will post twice a day, leaving a good interval between posts.

It's best practice to post content regularly for your followers. If you can post 5-7 times per week your followers should see a steady stream of updates from you.

Determine the best time and days to post on social media. Test out the different times of the day to see what works best for you. The best time varies from platform to platform. I find early evening works well on Facebook, early afternoon on Instagram. Sunday tends to produce poor results for posts.

Each one of the social media platforms provide statistics or insights. Have a look at these stats, they can be useful to see what posts are most effective.

Facebook users need to engage with your content for Facebook to identify it as something "worth" showing to your followers. If an individual engages frequently with your content on Facebook, your page will show up more prominently on followers news feeds when you post in future.

Layout Your Posts Properly

How you lay out your posts online will vary from social media platform to platform. Common to all of them is that you should put the important content to the top, use headlines that inform and attract interest and spell check your posts. Most social media accounts don't allow you to format text easily but you can use space, emojis and capitalisation for impact. Use imagery that is interesting and attracts attention.

Interact With Other Accounts

A good tactic to improve your visibility is to interact with local organisations, sponsors and businesses using your social media account. This will increase the number of people talking about your page and sharing your social media posts. If you care about what they're doing, they'll care about what you're doing.

Not all Social media posts need to be directly about your organisation. You can post about activities in the community at large or about things you come across in your daily life e.g.

- A nice photograph of Dungarvan Harbour.

- Congratulate a local organisation on an achievement or an event.

Obviously, a balance has to be struck. You are running a ladies football page but giving a sense of the community in which you operate and the people behind the page serves to create interest and make for a more engaging social media presence.

Improve Content

Professional photographs should be taken or assembled form existing sources. These should be uploaded to a company Dropbox account and used as stock images to make operating Social media accounts.

Use Apps That Create Better Looking Content

The best apps for creating social media content change very frequently. Google "content creation for social media" or "best apps for social media content" to get current recommendations. At present the following (Android) apps are popular:

Canva – Available in free and paid for versions. Can be used for social media posts, videos, posters and much more. Highly recommended.

Inshot – Very good for creating simple videos, collages and basic photo editing. Simple to use. (Free)

FilmoraGo – Great for creating more sophisticated videos. (€2 to remove Watermark)

Fotor – Good photo editor and excellent collage maker. (Free)

Over – Excellent for making posters, simple graphic design. Lots of free templates to work with. It takes a little bit to learn. (Free)

All of the above apps have iOS equivalents.

Newspapers

Social Media has become very dominant, but you shouldn't forget the old school stuff. Posters, flyers, and newspaper notes are still a tool in your arsenal. Newspaper notes in particular are a great way of reaching those who are not on social media. Here are a few simple tips:

Get Your Notes in Early

Find out the submission deadline for your local paper. Don't send them your content at the last minute. That will ensure it will be inserted into the paper as an afterthought. If you get your content in well in advance there is a good chance that you will get a more prominent position in the paper and your content will be laid out more attractively.

Make It Easy for The Paper

With spelling and grammar checkers there is no excuse to have poorly composed material being submitted. Send in a caption with each photo. If you send in multiple photos make sure the file name clearly identifies which photo is which. Make sure photos are good quality, interesting and are of a file size that the newspaper can reproduce with clarity.

Develop A Relationship with The Paper

Get to know the person you are sending content to. If you're not sure what they want, ask them. Try and send in content regularly with approximately the same amount of content each week. It is difficult for newspapers if they don't hear from you for a few months and then you send them in a supplement's worth of content.

Assembling Your Notes

I go to the club Facebook account to copy & paste each post from the week as plain text into a word document. I start with the youngest team and I work down through the teams. This way I can't be accused of favoritism and hopefully won't miss a team.

Match Reports

Match reports can be great fun but they take time. There are two main schools of match reporting. The most common style is very factual and focuses on accurately recording, what happened and when. There's a very useful app called GAA Scores Stats that is helpful for taking notes during a match.

Personally, I have a more eccentric style that focuses on giving you a sense of what it felt like to be at the game. Here's an example of this type of match report that I wrote recently https://www.facebook.com/321843727838709/posts/4264501950239514/

Most match reports will be a blend of the two styles. Here are some tips.

Write about more than the game. What happened on the way to or from the game? What was the weather like? How did you feel during the game?

Write about your opponents and praise them when they deserve it. They are someone's daughter or sister too. I have the attitude that while we may not like to lose to them what is good for St. Olivers, Shamrocks and Abbeyside is ultimately good for my club. If you win by a cricket score don't crow about it. For underage games you can announce the win but not publicise the score. Even the most successful among us have tasted crushing defeat. You can congratulate your team on a dominant performance without trumpeting the 14 goals your forward line got.

Don't highlight errors by your players or opponents. You can describe it as unlucky or getting a bad bounce of the ball, you shouldn't describe it as a howler or a terrible miss.

If you're going to try humour be careful you don't offend. The only person that gets laughed at occasionally in my match reports is myself.

The most important thing you can do to a match report is edit it. You're unlikely to have an editor available to you, once the report is written leave it for a few hours or the following day and come back to it. You'll be amazed at the errors you'll spot and the improvements you can make.

Our job is to promote our club and the sport, not provide biting tabloid commentary.

About the Author

Willie Whelan has operated social media for Waterford County Museum since 2009 and the WLGFA since 2017. He also manages social media for St. Pat's GAA club and is County PRO for Waterford Ladies Gaelic Football. In all he helps administer over 70 social media accounts. He has been designing web sites (with his brother Martin) as Déise Design since 1999. He has authored / edited several history books and led the team that won Heritage Council Publication of the Year in 2005 and Best Small Museum Website (worldwide) at the Museums and the Web Conference in Albuquerque 2006.

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