

Grow Your Football Club's Income

How your football club can generate income by delivering services that people will want to pay for



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delivering services that people will want to pay for*

The financial challenges of running a football club are obvious as the clubhouse constantly needs repair, the ground has to be maintained, the juniors want to go abroad for that important etc.

Football clubs must develop a sustainable income model - getting away from the panicky Dash for Cash, literally begging for money.

The key is to look at the whole operation and ambition of your club and then identify and implement projects which can help grow your income to match your requirements.

It is key to integrate the sporting aspects and ambitions and your income generation as you must ensure that all your club's operations are financially sustainable. It may sound like basic common sense, but I guess we have also seen examples where that was not the case!

Hopefully, this guide can help you to improve the way you grow your club's income. This is not an exact science and each club and environment is different, so you will have to adapt the advice given here to your specific situation. This is work in progress, so please do let us know how you are getting on.

Contact your regional Football Development Manager for any assistance you require with advice on growing your club's income.

Good luck.

Svend Elkjaer

Sports Marketing Network



Generating income should be at the core of your club

What is your income generation strategy? Have you got an enterprising financial plan? Or do you have a 'we are a football club, so all this business jargon doesn't really apply to us' approach?

How you generate the income to finance the activities of your club should be at the core of your club, your leadership and your thinking. It is simply no good to have an attitude where the coaches 'just want to do cricket' and somebody should else make sure that the finances are in place to ensure that coaches' wishes are granted.

Having a 'Fundraising Officer or Committee' operating in splendid isolation from the rest of the club is rarely going to make a real difference to the financial state of your club. Whilst I am not disputing that a few dedicated fundraisers can indeed generate some income even at the most insular clubs, their efforts are not sustainable, as these entrepreneurs lose their spirit because of the indifference from the rest of the club.

If you want to be able to put any viable business proposition to funders, sponsors and other partners you must recruit people into your club who has a background in business development. Being able to influence other people/organisations to give you money and is one that many sports and cricket clubs lack. It is crucial that your club puts a strong focus on attracting those kinds of people - otherwise you won't progress, I fear. For ideas on how to attract change-makers please read our *More volunteers at your football club* guide.

So, why do you need ££££££££?

Let me first ask you a question.

Does your club make a profit?

I understand that your club does not exist to make a profit, but if you are losing money, and you can't pay your bills, you won't be around for long.

So, what level of 'profit' are we talking about?

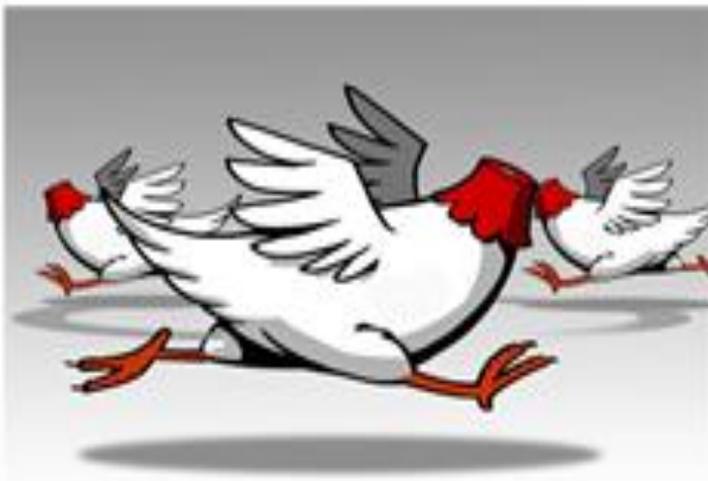
1. Can you pay your everyday bills and still have money left?
2. Are you generating enough cash to be able to pay £3,000 for that club trip to Ireland?
3. What about paying for weed killer and other 'stuff' for your ground maintenance?
4. How much can you put forward towards the refurbishment of your changing rooms?

Also, remember, many funders insist on some sort of match funding, so if you can't put forward some of your own money towards that big project, you will find it more difficult to attract grant funding.

For starters, here is little test to get your club thinking money and your club's attitude to it. Ask as many people as possible involved with your club to consider the statements below and then you will have a clearer picture of where your club stands:

1. We are completely committed to running a sustainable community cricket enterprise. We have innovative initiatives for engaging with our all our funding partners and are in control of our income. We have maximised our commercial opportunities and have robust financial planning
2. We are working hard to grow our income and to broaden our sources of funding. There's a commitment across the club to take on a more innovative and enterprising approach, but there is still some way to go
3. We need to do much more to raise our income and control our finances better. It's going to be a long journey, but at least we've started
4. We are sinking fast, maybe we should have started at looking at increasing our income a bit sooner. We do have too many 'grant-addicts' within the club
5. We are a football club, so why can't we just get some grants from somewhere? We are in deep trouble and the receivers are coming tomorrow

So, how did your club score? What comments were made during the process of getting people's opinions? What lessons can be learned? What is the attitude toward financial matters within your club? Is something you discuss openly or is it swept under the carpet?



Dash For Cash Syndrome

Is that you and your club's committee chasing after money, without a strategy, plan or innovation?

Headless chicken are not very productive, are they?



.A simple but important tip

Welcoming clubs have more members, volunteers and money

So, just by having a welcoming culture your club will grow

There is no point doing any of the stuff suggested in this guide if your club doesn't make that new person feel welcome

A few words about planning (and remember, it is the planning that's important - and not just some fine words and figures in a boring document.

What is your situation?

Do spend time some across the club discussing:

✓ Where are we starting from?

- What is our current situation?
- What resources and income do we have now?
- What are our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?

✓ What can we do?

- What is our culture like?
- What capacity do we have?
- What capabilities do we have?

✓ What do we need?

- How much will it cost?
- What people, skills, experiences, premises, equipment, funders and volunteer time do we need?

Does it all add up?

“there’s no free lunch”



How does your club make money?

Get a clear picture of your club's mix of income streams using this simple template below

	£	% of turnover
Annual membership fees		
Fees (match, game)		
Donations		
Bar, catering, hospitality		
Grants		
Commercial sponsorship		
Hiring out facilities		
Other		
Total		

How would you like those figures to look like next year and in three years?

How to develop a Balanced Income Model

In order for your club to become long-term financially sustainable, you will have to develop income streams from different sources and build relationships with a variety of funders, partners, customers and others.

From ASK to EARN a balanced income model



The key here is to make sure that you have the right income profile where you are not too reliant on one source of income, which makes you very vulnerable (just ask the clubs where their 'sugar daddy' ran into financial problems).

This is not simply a question of getting better at fundraising
but about building a sustainable business model

Sustainable income is about exploring income opportunities across a spectrum of funding streams, from small events (gin nights and ladies lunches), charitable donations, through to grants and providing community services under contracts. This not only spreads risk, but it ensures that your football club is best placed to take advantage of emerging trends and opportunities.

Sustainable funding can involve all these income streams.

The key to sustainability is to have a clear knowledge of which streams are the right ones for your club to explore (and which ones are not!)

The model says that there are four types of income.

Different income types are sought and managed in different ways and involve developing specific relationships with whoever is providing the funds. If you move up the X-axis - from ask to earn - it is more likely that the consumer of your services actually pays for them and they then become the sole customer.

Whereas if you run a programme where a grant funder pays for you to deliver cricket for some young people from a disadvantaged area you have two customers: The grant funder who wants to see their money being put to good use and the young person

The first three types are long-term unsustainable and where you ask for the money and the person/organisation as the grants etc. always have a limited time span.

So part of your brief is to ensure that you develop an income model where you build in long-term financial sustainability into your project - indeed many grant funders ask you to demonstrate how you intend to do that in your application. Donors give you club money because they want to support the good work that you are doing and do not expect anything specific in return.

I've heard of cases where some long-standing members/supporters have wanted to give something back to their club. So, the advice is here is to simply be a good, friendly and welcoming club that plays an important role in people's lives.

Funders

Within the range of options, there are enormous ranges and possibilities. Sustainable income generation can involve all these four streams or just one or two options all depending on your objectives and skills.

It is really important to recognise that there is no such thing as free money. Whether you are a donor who makes a donation, big or small, or a housing trust who gives you a grant to engage with 'hard to reach' young people you want something in return for your money, be it a 'feeling of doing something good or improve the social skills of young people living within their housing development.

So, you have to make sure, whichever way you are generating income for your club that you are providing value for money and you are engaging with people who give you their money.

How to influence funders:

There are five Ps which will help you ensure success with your donors



Passion:

Success begins with your own passion for your cause; your club. If you are genuinely excited about how your club provides services to your community then you can excite and enthuse others - if not, it will show and you will simply not be able to touch other people's hearts.

A great way of bringing across the passion and enjoyment is through telling compelling case-studies. I am sure that you would be able to tell a number of stories about people within your club whom you have helped to fulfil their aspirations in all sorts of ways.

- Tell your story and you can sell your story!*
- Have a BIG idea - stand out from the crowd*

It is **NOT** about the money you are applying for - they are the tool

- Have some great partners, such as non-sport community organisations, schools, housing associations, health bodies, etc.*
- Use your direct and indirect network*
- Demonstrate that you can manage the project and the money*

Proposal:

Make sure you balance your passion with your proof that you have the capacity and capability to deliver what you are proposing. Demonstrate, prove, evidence.

Are you eligible? Are you in the right location? Yes, some areas are being looked at more favourably by some funders. Deprived areas are often more likely to attract grant funding in order to create better opportunities and some funders only want to fund projects in rural areas and some in urban parts.

Also, there are many cases where a willingness and capacity to change people's lives through sport are going to play a much stronger role and you'd better get started on how your club can get started on creating changes in people's lives through sport and your club.

(For more information read SMN's guide How your community sports club can help change people's lives).

If you are 'just a sports club' then you will find that your funding options are limited to 'sports only' grants.

Preparation:

Confidence equals preparation. The more homework you do the stronger your case becomes. Do you know your stats and not just some wild guesses? Have just checked whether the funder has supported projects similar to yours and what were the outcomes?

I have also found that by doing your homework, you are more likely to discover good stories and innovative ideas which will help your cause and your case.

Persuasion:

If you really understand where the funder is coming from and their criteria you are much more likely to be able a compelling proposal, as opposed to a run off the mill 'please give us some money' version. We all know the difference between an engaging proposal and a boring one.

Proof:

Increasingly, funders are asking for evidence that their money is helping you to make a real impact. So, you will benefit considerably if you record the actual developments and benefits that accrue from the great work that you are doing.

Are you ready to make that application?

Before you make that application, look at the set-up of your club.

It is essential that you demonstrate that your organisation:

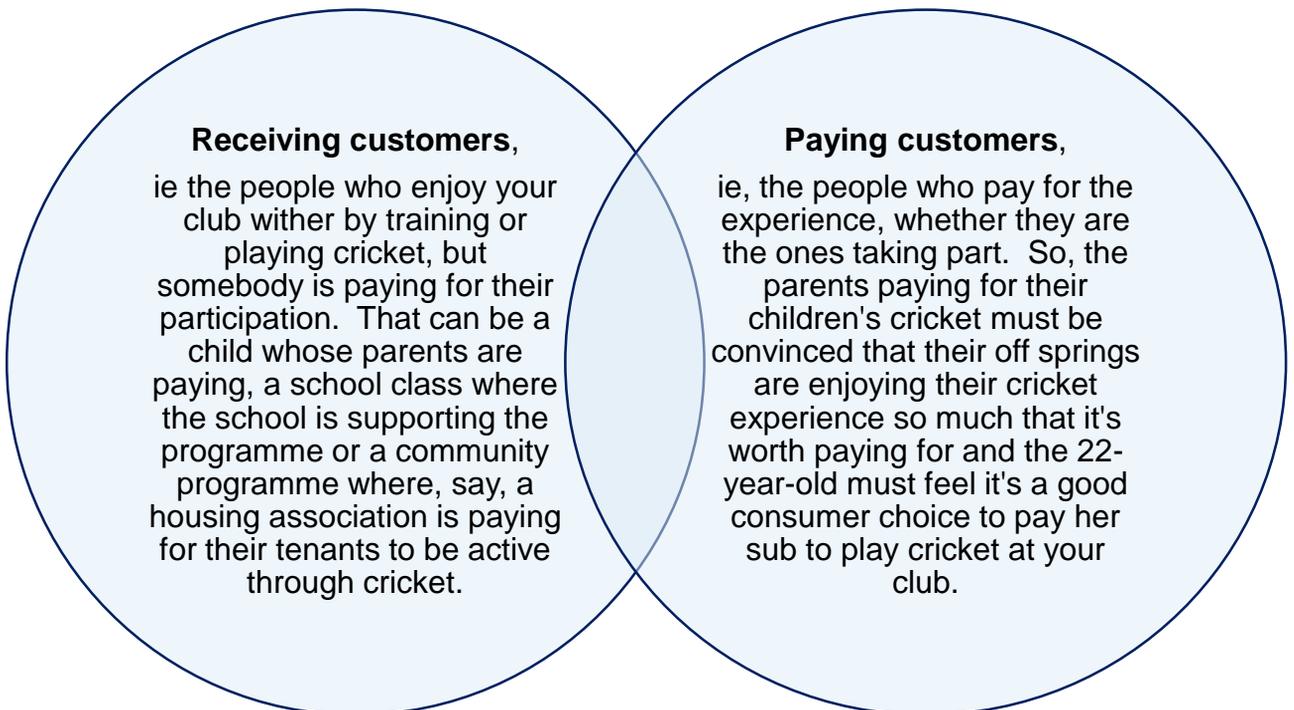
- ✓ is reputable and well-run
- ✓ has a clear and specific vision
- ✓ is clear about the benefits that will be achieved from the project
- ✓ has a strong committee
- ✓ has strong finances

Types of customers

You have three types of customers:

1. Receiving customers who are not paying for your services but who enjoy the financial support of a funders
2. Paying customers who are supporting the club to deliver services to people who are not paying themselves
3. Paying and receiving customers who are paying for your services through a membership, a sub or sponsorship

There are two types of customers in football clubs:



Remember, a customer always has a choice. If they are not enjoying themselves and/or are not enjoying themselves, they won't come back

Improve your retention rate and your income will grow:

If you retain 90% of your members year after year, after year 4 you will have lost a third of your members. If you retain 80% of your members year after year, after year 4 you will have 60% of your members.

So, improve your customer and footballing experience and see your income grow.

Sponsors

Football clubs have many assets that are commercially viable, but often they don't realise this. So here is a list of assets that can be developed and sold to sponsors:

- Team sponsors - sponsor's logo appear on team photos and any media interest the team generates
- Shirt sponsors - sponsor's logo appear on shirts
- Naming rights for club events - Presentation nights,
- Naming rights for the ground
- Naming rights for the pavilion
- Naming rights for the scoreboard
- Website banners and advertising space
- Social media advertising space
- Signage around the club
- Newsletter advertising
- Text/SMS sponsor
- Equipment sponsors

Work with your sponsors and see your income grow

When you have brought the sponsor on board to help them to get the most out of their involvement and investment. Sponsors who attend games and events, engage with member and others and generally take an interest are likely to get more out of their involvement. They will, therefore, stay involved for longer, so the more you work with your sponsors, the longer their involvement. Simple!

The more you do the more there is to sponsor - so enterprising and innovative clubs which run exciting initiatives and events are more likely to attract sponsors.

Not all sponsors are the same and not all are suited to your club

Not all businesses have the same culture and ethos and you have to be aware of that and should therefore not apply a one-size-fits-all approach. I would suggest that you try and assess your potential and current sponsors to find out whether you are providing value for money for them.

Here are four categories:

1. **Calculators and Commercial:** They enter into a sponsorship deal primarily for commercial reasons; they are likely to have a more strategic view of why they sponsor. Make sure you can substantiate your claims
2. **Cynics and Short-Termers:** These businesses are likely to have a very short-term view of their sponsorship. They will often ask for direct access to your database (don't!) and flog products/services to your members - best avoided.
3. **Carers and Communal:** They get involved with your club because of the social and community impact you have. Often I have seen housing, community trusts and educational bodies fall into this category. It is here your community engagement can help you generate income.
4. **Innocents and indifferent:** These sponsors are often not really sure why they are sponsoring your club but for many, smaller, clubs, this group can be surprisingly large

Think outside the box for sponsorship

For the football clubs who are genuinely 'more than a football club,' I believe there are plenty of sponsorship opportunities from local organisations who want to grow their profile in the community. Recruitment, making staff feel good about the organisation where they work or demonstrate a business's social responsibility are just a few of the reasons why many organisations sponsor community sports clubs.

Some local businesses do not necessarily want to sponsor your first team but would prefer to support community activities and events - it has been estimated that 80% of all business is done locally and also remember that most people work in local businesses. And, as community hub (which, of course, you are?!) you should be able to tap into the community spirit and engagement that many businesses want to demonstrate.

Sponsorship is open to us all

Consumers/Businesses

Big and small events which generate income and bring new people to your club

I have seen all these ideas work in practice at community sports clubs

Also, if possible, link up with local relevant community groups, get them involved in the organisation and promotion of the event and share an appropriate share of the income (remember, it's better to have 50% of something, than 100% of nothing).

Car Wash: On the matchdays offer to wash people's cars while they are watching the cricket

Cheese/sausage tasting: Local producers/shops provide different sausages/cheeses free of charge in return for publicity. People pay, say, £15.00 and then blind taste the produce and give marks to each sausage/cheese while they are enjoying local ale, etc. At the end of the evening "Sausage/cheese of the Night" is awarded.

Duck Race: All you need is a large supply of plastic ducks...and some running water. These can be bought or rented commercially. Ducks can be sold at £1.00 with prizes for the first three ducks across the finishing line, so each will require a number. It is important to have some way of retrieving the ducks so that they can be used again. Friendly local canoeists can be very useful.

Every New Year Day **Knaresborough Cricket Club** at the outskirts of Harrogate organise a Duck Race in partnership with a local charity supporting visibly impaired people. They raise £4,000 so after costs the two bodies share £3,000 and the community has a great day out, regardless of the weather



Midnight Walk: People meet at your clubhouse at midnight and walk a few miles (obviously where there is street lighting and return to the club for bacon sannies and drinks.

Doggy Walk/Scruffs: Link up with local vets, grooming parlours and dog walkers.

Rodley CC outside Leeds run Scruffs as part of their great Open Weekend. That part of the weekend is actually run by club sponsor, a dog grooming/walking business that, obviously, has a great number of canine contacts.

Beer Festival: This can also be a great income generator and start with having a conversation with the local branch of CAMRA and try and link up with them (they should have the technical know-how).

Bonfire Night: We know of a football club (Tynemouth CC in Northumberland) which makes £24,000 from their Bonfire Night which is pretty impressive. They did lose money on the first one they ran. Ladies Lunch If you know one or two females with a good, wide network of women in your area get them to organise a ladies lunch on a match day.

Whether they are interested in cricket or not is irrelevant.

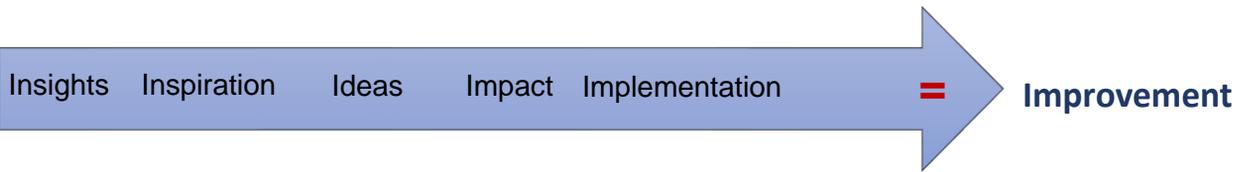
Golden Oldies Festival: There is an increase in interest in playing a sport for people of a certain age. from Walking Football to Walking Netball. Run a fun festival for, say, 50+ men who want to enjoy their cricket and a good day out. It doesn't have to as elaborate as this version, which takes place next in Harrogate in 2020.

Anytown Got Talent: Get local people (talented or not) to perform one evening at your club. Award prizes and have a laugh!

Car Boot Sale Blaydon RFC £9 per car. Full on Sunday so Wednesday version is now also running



The 5 Is - how best to find, develop and deliver initiatives that make a real difference to your cricket club



1. Insight

Not all ideas work everywhere. There is a difference in demographics, rural or urban and your club's reputation and reach to name a few, so be honest and objective in your assessment of what will work and not work for your club, in your area.

2. Inspiration

So go out there and learn from others in similar situations to yourself. There are several good ideas in this guide and also by browsing the Internet you can pick up some great ideas and then you select a shortlist

3. Ideas

It is always dangerous just to have one single idea, as you can become too focused on that idea and push it through, regardless of its viability. But if you are curious and out and about you will have generated enough ideas to select from

4. Impact

Now assess the potential impact that each of your ideas can have ie how much money you can make, the number of new players or volunteers or...then, of course, go for the one(s) with the biggest idea. That may not, necessarily, be the one you like!

5. Implementation

All these great ideas are not worth much if you can't implement them. I could organise a Danish smorgasbord at my rugby club because both my wife and I are from Denmark and mother-in-law came over to help out. Gala CC was very successful with their Ladies Lunches because of they a lady at the club which was very well-connected in the community

= Improvement

Immediately after your event, sit down and evaluate, in an honest and objective way.

Your clubhouse could be a source of income

Of course, the idea of hiring out your clubhouse to various Pilates classes or Slimming World sessions, but we have seen over the years that a bit of enterprise can help grow your income from the clubhouse.

Firstly, keep it clean and tidy - especially your toilets. There is little chance of becoming a favourite venue for wedding receptions if you do have run out of toilet paper - no, I am not joking!

Secondly, answer telephone and email enquiries. I know of one club where a couple of members who are retired answer the diverted 'phone calls from people who want to book the clubhouse for parties etc. Via The Cloud, they have a access to the bookings system and therefore can answer enquiries straight away.

I have personally experienced a number of occasions where my enquiries to a community sports clubs to hire their facilities for a workshop went unanswered. I hope that would not happen at your club?

Thirdly, your pitch/ground can also be used for sports days for schools and businesses and community festivals (Livingston CC are doing a great job maximising that aspect).

The more money you have the easier it is to get a grant

Very few funders will fund 100% of the costs of a project, so you will either have to secure funding from other sources, or even better, generate your own income.

I know from experience that grant funders are massively impressed with clubs that are able to put down a significant amount themselves, so if you have generated a good amount from your Bonfire Night, Beer Festival, Panto or whatever, you are much more likely to secure the final amount towards that new pitch or clubhouse.

Does your ground face a busy road?

Stenhousemuir CC does but until Steve Ollier got involved with the club, the club's location was not regarded as a potential asset.

Steve, a Sales Manager, spotted the potential for selling advertising hoardings facing the road and started approaching local businesses and the club now generates several thousands of pounds income every year.

Westquarter nursery secures financial stability through rental income

When Westquarter & Redding CC sold their previous ground and moved to their current home, Bailliefield, with a decent pot of money in the bank and some derelict farm buildings as their 'clubhouse'.

However, with interest rates at almost 0% the money in the bank was not generating a significant enough income, so the club decided to utilise a key asset: One of the derelict barns.

That was refurbished and it is now as a successful Nursery whose rent payments ensure that the club is financially sustainable.



Grow your club's income - be out and about

Be out and about - the more people you know in the community, the more people know about the great work you are doing, the more funding opportunities there open to you. I know of dozens and dozens of community sports clubs who have benefitted financially simply by being at the right place at the right time. BUT, and it is a BIG but, it really does help massively if you can demonstrate that you are a real hub for your community.

And finally.

From £ to £££££££

Run an Opportunity Audit

Get a group of people together, both from inside your club but also from your community, businesses and voluntary groups and using the 5Is model from above then discuss and decide

What should we do?

What can we do?

What will we do?