AKTIVE

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

TELLING YOUR CODE'S/CLUB'S STORY

OVERVIEW

How do potential players, fans, supporters, sponsors hear about your code/club and its activities?

In an increasingly busy world, codes and clubs need to be competitive on and off the field. It's about being relevant in your respective communities. To do this, it's important to understand the needs of existing and potential participants/members, know what your offering is and effectively communicate it using appropriate channels.

The purpose of this generic marketing and communications toolkit is to provide information and templates that will assist codes and clubs in developing and communicating their key messages to targeted audiences in an effective manner.

It is available for codes/clubs to tailor and implement as they see fit to ensure positive and manageable engagement.

CONTENTS

01.
WHAT IS MARKETING?
WHAT IS COMMUNICATIONS?
## AND WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

In the world of sport and recreation, marketing is the ability to talk about what makes your code/club unique and appealing to a target market or audience. It shapes who you are as a brand, differentiates what you do from others, and helps to deliver your unique value in a compelling way.

Some of the more popular and effective **marketing** methods include: websites, brochures, posters, promotions, advertising and event sponsorship.

Communications uses this information, as well as other material, to create relevant messages using targeted methods for different audiences. It is more of a two-way engagement, with examples including: editorial coverage in the media, social media, internal communications and engaging with stakeholders through communications such as newsletters.

To maximise opportunities, marketing and communications activities should be complementary – they should work together to get the best results. **They also require the same things that you give your sport – time, commitment and energy.**
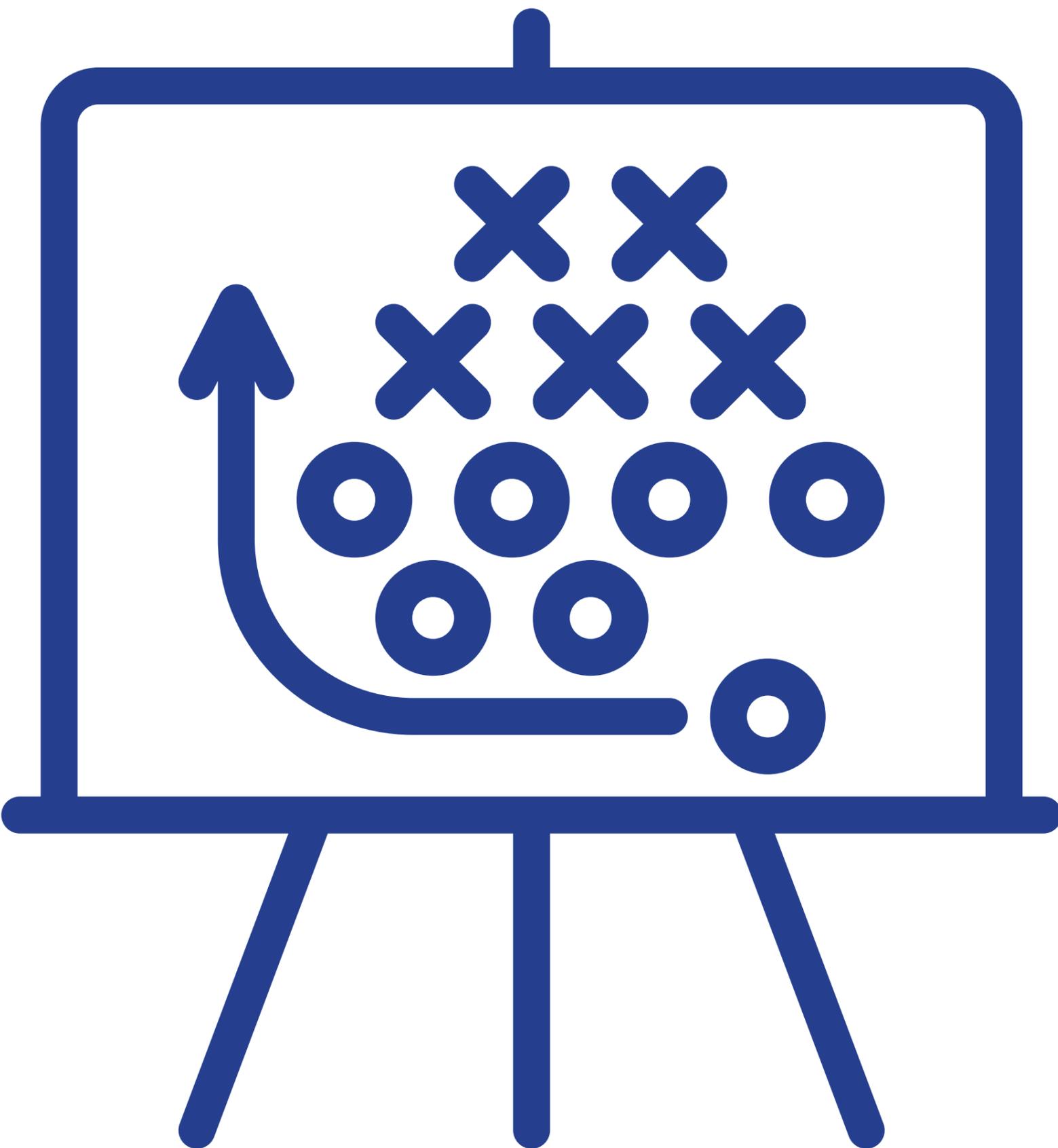
02.

START WITH A PLAN

For the purpose of this toolkit, it is recommended to combine marketing and communications in one plan. A well thought out and carefully developed communications and marketing plan acts like a road map, showing the best routes to get to your destination.

PLANNING A PLAN

Before getting underway here are some tips to help with your planning;

1. BE REALISTIC

Think carefully about your objectives, approach and resourcing. Some strategies can be costly to implement and may not hit the mark.

2. TALK TO YOUR MEMBERS

Current members are a great group to tap into and shouldn't be forgotten! Discuss with them what sets your code/club apart, what it offers that is different, and the benefits, and what they would like to hear. This information can help form your key messages and are generally the aspects that attract new members and make people feel good about joining.

3. KEEP IT FLEXIBLE

An effective plan is flexible, allowing it to adapt to changing audiences, messages and activities.

03.
YOUR PLAN'S KEY INGREDIENTS

A communications and marketing plan for a code/club would contain basic elements including:

OBJECTIVES
These should be specific, measurable and achievable, for example: Increase membership, develop junior player numbers, increase overall participation and community involvement, increase enjoyment, raise funds, maintain loyalty or develop new programmes.

SITUATION ANALYSIS
A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) is helpful tool to understand your code's/club's current situation. A key aspect to consider at this point is the ever-changing demographics of the local population.

To help with your SWOT anaylsis think strength and weaknesses are internal factors to your code/club while opportunity and threats are external factors.

STRATEGIES
These are the tools/activities to focus efforts on the objectives. It essentially asks how you intend going about it. It's important to think about how the people you want to reach find out information – do they read, listen to the radio, use social media?

TIMINGS
Consider the timings, deadlines and key dates that need to be noted.

BUDGET
Ensure there is a realistic budget within your code's/club's capabilities. It may be wise to focus on low-cost or no-cost strategies initially.

EVALUATION
We love results in sport! Make sure you evaluate strategies to ensure they're meeting your objectives, for example enewsletter subscribers, social media engagement and media coverage. Some aspects may be easier to evaluate than others.

RESOURCES
If you'd like more information on how to develop a simple marketing and communications plan, please refer to the communications and marketing template plan included in this toolkit.

04.
WHO DO YOU WANT TO TALK TO?

Have you asked yourself this question? A code's/club's target market generally involves anyone who does or can have any affiliation with that code/club. This includes: players, coaches, volunteers, supporters, past players, prospective members, people who live near your clubhouse/facility/ organisation, people who would have a say in the fate of your club/organisation/facility, local media, local schools, local authorities and sports partnerships – such as other organisations working closely with your organisation.

WHERE TO START?
There are a couple of aspects to keep in mind when identifying your key audiences:

DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS
Everyone will have a different reason for being involved with your code/club. Put yourself in their shoes and ask people! Understand what it is they want from you, what expectations or issues they have that can impact the relationship.

PEOPLE FOR THE PURPOSE
Your target audience may change depending upon the objective you are aiming to achieve through your marketing and communications efforts, and based on specific communication tools you are using, for example you may decide to put together a brochure to reach potential new members. It's important to consider using different methods to target different groups of people.

YOUR BEST AMBASSADORS
A valuable audience are your own members! There are a number of ways you can capture their thoughts. One approach is to ask each member to fill in a questionnaire – a simple paper survey is fine, or if you have members' email addresses you can use free online tools such as surveymonkey. You could also hold face-to-face group meetings (called focus groups) with members and if appropriate other members of the community (for example local schools and community groups) to find out what sort of programmes, activities and information they want.

Please note, if you are using questionnaires, you must be aware of the Privacy Act. For instance, under the Act you are not permitted to give out personal information (including name and address) to anyone else, including sponsors, without the consent of that member. Information should be loaded on to a database and updated regularly to ensure you have accurate details for your members. It is important to be working with quality information.

THE PUBLIC PROFILE
All code participants/club members need to understand that the public image is an integral part of promoting your code/club. For this reason, it is important for everyone to understand that the public will be listening to and observing the attitudes of those involved in your code/club in all interactions. This is where a code of conduct for your organisation is important.

05.
WHAT ARE YOUR MESSAGES?

Key messages are a vital part of marketing and communications. They change depending on time, context and audience; however, it is helpful to have a template to work to.

CLEAR MESSAGES = CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Messages help focus communication. This is important as messages need to be communicated multiple times for people to take them on board. Given this, messages should be clear, concise and consistent:

CLEAR
Make sure key messages are free of jargon, devoid of technical language, and relevant. It is important to also be careful with numbers – they're a great measure but too many can overload audiences.

CONCISE
Practice to make sure you can deliver a key message in under 10 seconds. That might be all the airtime you get! By being concise you have more control over the message your audience hears. Delivering a long rambling answer can hand control to others as they may pick the words they think are most interesting, which may not be your core message. By saying less, you have more control.

CONSISTENT
Repetition is critical, and messages must be repeated numerous times if they are to sink in.

BUILDING THE HOUSE

UMBRELLA STATEMENT

CORE MESSAGE #1	CORE MESSAGE #2	CORE MESSAGE #3

EVIDENCE, PROOF POINTS, SUPPORT
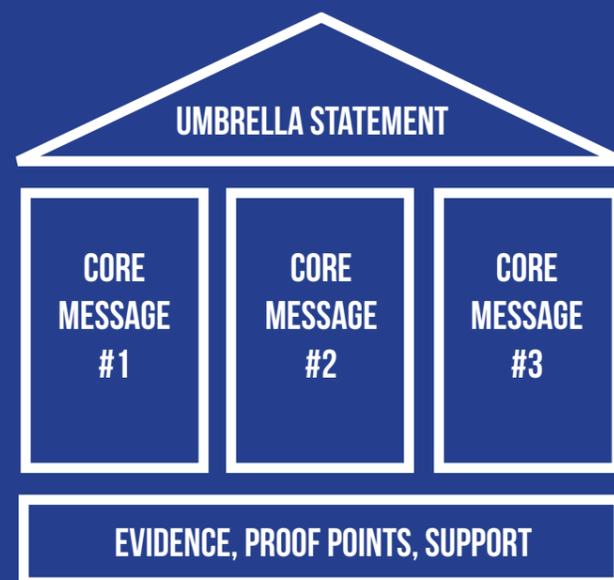
Message houses are a simple yet effective tool for helping keep messages focused across different channels. Three reasons to use this simple approach: structure, brevity and practicality.

The umbrella statement represents the key m.essages you would like to convey. These are supported by core messages that form the umbrella statement. The 'foundation' provides the facts, evidence, proof points or arguements that support the messages.

This process works best when a team develops the message house. Messages that are developed can be used in many formats, helping maintain consistency.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER
As you work through the process of developing your message house consider the following questions:

1. What are the most important things for people to understand?
2. What are you aiming to achieve?
3. What projects, initiatives and/or events are a focus?

REVIEW AND CONSIDER
As circumstances change you may need to update your messages, however it is important to ensure new messages still reinforce your overarching narrative.

Messages can also be tweaked depending on the audience; for example, if you are talking publicly or to a room of experts in a private setting. The latter group may expect more evidence and technical arguments. Regardless, messages should still support the overall position.

Linked together, key messages can build a complete story and can be used together or individually across communication channels.

06.
MARKETING:
TRADITIONAL & DIGITAL

There are a range of marketing options available to your code/club. It's a good idea to refer to your key messages and spend time exploring the benefits and limitations of the various marketing options before deciding the best ways to reach your target audiences.

GETTING STARTED

These ideas are helpful to consider when thinking about your marketing options:

• Identify your audience

• Understand what you want your marketing to achieve

• Determine what you can do on your budget and get approval where appropriate

• Remember, you can't please all the people all the time!

• Consider the seasonal nature of your code/club and what may maintain interest outside the core season

• Keep the look of your communications consistent, consider if your communications need to be in different languages and if you have an online presence, keep it up to date

Check in regularly to make sure resources aren't being used on something that isn't working – it's all about evaluation. If you're not getting results, consider other options.

It's also important to consider previous experience, for example what your code/club has done previously; its success or otherwise; the budget for activities; and the time and skills required.

PUTTING A PLAN IN PLACE

There are key aspects and questions to consider when drafting the marketing elements of a plan:

WHAT
• What are you trying to achieve with your marketing?
• What is your budget?

WHO
• Who are you targeting?
• Who is going to do it from your club?

WHEN
• When should you be marketing?
• How much and how often?

HOW
• How are you going to market your club?
• What mediums will you use?

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions – it's all based on your organisation and what you're looking to achieve. In many cases, covering these elements will be sufficient for a simple marketing and communications plan.

MARKETING OPTIONS

In the past, many sport and recreation clubs and organisations have focused on using traditional marketing techniques, such as ads in local newspapers or sending out leaflets and flyers. Today, there is a much greater focus on digital marketing, including using the internet to spread the word, social networks, mobile apps or websites. In many cases, a mix of traditional and digital marketing can be most effective:

LOGO AND SIGNAGE
It sounds obvious but ensure your logo is on your letterhead, signage and other marketing tools (including online). It should also be used at registration days, presentation days, competitions, promotional events and on any paid advertising.

ENEWSLETTERS
The ever-popular electronic newsletter can help advertise your code/club, promote events, send competition updates and share general news. To be most effective, such communications should be concise, regular and available online. It's also valuable to consider how people can subscribe to enewsletters – suggestions include via the website, social media, and signing up at events and/or through competitions.

WEBSITES
This is a simple and powerful way to let people know what your code/club can offer, as well as provide regular updates, a calendar of events and meetings, membership information and contact details. It's important to keep it updated, interesting and feature plenty of pictures. It's also a good idea to link to related sites where appropriate.

SPONSORSHIP
This is a great way to raise revenue and the profile of your code/club and of the organisation that is sponsoring you.

POSTERS, BROCHURES, FLYERS
This collateral can be used to outline services, events, competitions, fees and contact information. There are also various places that can be used to distribute this material including local community notice boards, supermarkets, libraries, recreation centres and schools.

07.
MEDIA: PRINT, RADIO, TV, ONLINE AND MORE

Media relations is potentially the most cost-effective means of promoting your code/club and its activities. If it's handled poorly, it can be damaging, however generally a well-considered proactive communications effort can be beneficial for your code/club.

The media is our interface with a range of audiences – and with today's media networks and the speed at which information can travel, a story and/or issue has the potential to be far wider reaching than ever before.

From a sport and recreation perspective, media engagement can significantly raise your code's/club's profile, help with fundraising efforts and advertise activities and events.

WHAT MAKES NEWS?
You may think what makes news is straightforward – here are some ideas to keep in mind:

KEEPING IT LOCAL
Local media are interested in local news, or news with a local aspect, because it may increase their listening audience or readership, and therefore their advertising influence - it's worth noting that the news media generally survive financially on advertising. Local media includes publications like the North Shore Times, Eastern Courier, Western Leader and The Aucklander.

THE VALUE OF ADVERTISING
Some media regard placing an ad and offering a story more positively.

WHAT MAKES NEWS
Journalists are not interested in reporting on events/stories that are too commercial. Furthermore, what you consider to be news, a journalist may not.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EDITORIAL COVERAGE AND ADVERTISING
What journalists write is called 'editorial coverage' – you have no control over the content of editorial coverage. Advertising is space that you pay for and you control the message.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
This is an effective and simple way to engage the media and community if the topic is relevant to your code/club.

MAKING THE CONNECTION
Looking to connect with the media? These tips may assist:

SLOW AND STEADY
Good relationships with media build up over time, and usually start at a local level.

BE PATIENT
Every day, reporters get hundreds of e-mails, dozens of phone calls, and stacks of 'high-priority' overnight packages - almost all of them are ignored as journalists are simply too busy to respond to, much less look at all the incoming pitches they receive.

GET PERSONAL
A personal visit to the editor, chief reporter (of a paper) or news editor (of a radio station) for a briefing can start things well. The best step is to make an appointment and go with something (but not a huge amount!) to leave behind; this may include a club/organisation profile, summary of points on an issue, a brochure and/or calendar of key events/games.

BUILD AN UNDERSTANDING
Ask about deadlines for news and copy, the usual length of a story and types of photos that the media can use, and the names of the reporters on relevant 'rounds' - in other words get to know how they run their business.

THE LOCAL CONNECTION
If you're speaking to a local group or having a local event, send a media release or even an email to let local media know. You can always follow up with photos and a short brief.
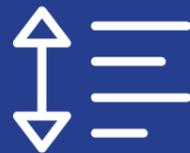
BE THERE
Where appropriate, be accessible to the media and answer questions directly (i.e. talk in 'sound bites') – if journalists know you're accessible and a good interview, they'll tend to call you rather than testing out an unknown source when they're on a tight deadline.

TOP TIPS FOR TALKING TO THE MEDIA

Know your message and know your audience.

Keep it short – 400-500 words is ideal, especially if you are also including on social media.

Make sure headlines are punchy and not too long.

Find a unique angle – think outside the square when telling your story; is there a better way I can showcase this?

Don't be afraid to highlight good news – if you don't tell the story, maybe no one will!

Keep your introduction (first paragraph) in the present or future tense, not past tense.

Get the important information in early; people tend to skim-read a lot so don't bury the good stuff at the bottom.

Make sure spelling is correct, particularly names.

Use quotes if they add something to the article – it may be a statement from a coach or player.

A picture paints a thousand words so make sure pictures are high resolution and fit with the story – you may also want to consider a photo opportunity; that is, to get media to your facility/club to take pictures. It is worth noting that 'action' shots are preferable over 'posed' shots.

08.
SOCIAL MEDIA:
THE ONLINE WORLD

It's easy to set up a Facebook page however there is more to it than that!

Social media is a commitment and takes time to build a following. It can add a more informal, personal touch to your communications and marketing and create a strong online community. Generally speaking, social media is accessible, quick, cost-effective and user friendly – before setting up accounts with every social media platform available, have a think about what options are right for your code/club.

SETTING THE STAGE
There are some important questions to consider before building your social media profile:

1. How does your code/club want to use social media and what do you want to achieve?

2. What social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn) are most popular with your target audiences (for example members, players, parents, sponsors)? They may be different for different membership categories.

3. Who will administer your social media profile? It may be helpful to have an agreed number of people dedicated as 'admin' on a page to share the load – it's imperative these people following the agreed code of conduct and organisation's messages.

Social media provides excellent communication tools, however there are risks in the online world. This can include cyber bullying, causing offence and exposure to inappropriate content.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY/CODE OF CONDUCT
Developing a Social Media Policy/Code of Conduct is an important step to being safe on social media. As members/representatives of a code/club, we are by default ambassadors and therefore always have an association with this code/club even when online. Accordingly, people may feel that your opinions are reflective of your organisation even if this is unintended.

So, what does this mean?

This association doesn't mean that you can't hold an opinion or express freedom of speech on social media – even if it is related to the work that your club/code is doing. However, the following code of conduct (next page over) is helpful to apply to mitigate risk that can impact to your organisation – please also refer to further resources for an example.

SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT

1. THINK OF YOU
No one wants to be seen as a bad person. It is easy to find one another on social media and this is becoming increasingly easier as time goes on. You don't want what you post on social media in a personal capacity to come back and bite you in a professional capacity. Posting online is essentially chiseling into stone – even if you edit or delete the post.

2. THINK OF OTHERS
Just think that what one person might find funny is potentially another person's insult. Be courteous and respectful of other opinions that people may hold. We aren't all robots off a production line!

3. THINK OF YOUR CLUB/CODE
To reinforce, people may feel that your opinions are reflective of your club/code even if this is unintended. This is particularly relevant for RSOs and clubs with employees. If you do wish to express your opinions of the work your club/code is doing in any capacity, you are welcome to. However, you should firstly identify your connection and include a disclaimer along the lines of "The opinions expressed are my own and not those of club/code."

MAKING THE MOST OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Once you've established the best social media approach for your code/club, there are some tips on how to maximise its effectiveness:

KEEP THE CONVERSATION FLOWING
Stimulate the conversations between the code/club and the people important to your club, whether that's your members, volunteers, players, supporters, parents or sponsors.

INTEGRATE COMMUNICATION
Social media should complement other communication tools to increase the quantity and quality of communication.

RAISE THE PROFILE
Put links to social media in the newsletters, emails and other communications. The more exposure people have to your social media platforms the better!

GET THE MESSAGE OUT
Social media is an ideal tool to remind members of social events, cancellations, ground closures and training: because so many people visit their social media pages so regularly, making it an easy way to get a message out to a wide audience quickly. It's also recommended to put this information on your website as sometimes people are not able to access social media at work.

One piece of advice suggests you spend about 90 per cent of your time providing valuable content and 10 per cent promoting yourself.

ENGAGE, ENGAGE, ENGAGE
Update the pages regularly, keep in contact with members and make them aware of events, achievements and results. It's also a great preseason tool to raise awareness of registration and fee payment!

POSTING CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Below are a few rules and guides to follow to ensure you create engaging content on a social media platform. It is important to remember that all content posted requires further monitoring of comments, reactions or messages:

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS
For many social media platforms mobile is the first point of contact with their users. This means that a post's word count or character count should be short (140 maximum on Twitter and 5,000 on Facebook), catchy and engaging bites of information in plain language. Avoid the use of acronyms and have a conversational tone that is direct and to the point. It should be clear what you are trying to achieve with the post and how you want the audience to feel or do. Also, consider if it needs to be communicated in other languages.

Be mindful of how the audience may respond to the post and what comments may follow. If you are responding to a comment on behalf of your organisation, then it's helpful to sign off your messages with your initials.

IMAGES
Imagery is an extremely important tool for us to tell our story. Visually engaging posts are just as important as what we say. Imagery should be of quality, have context to the overall post and meet each platforms' guidelines. Also, make sure you have the correct permissions and rights to the image, as this may cause the image to be taken down.

VIDEOS
Videos are changing how we use social media and are becoming increasingly important to communicate our story or message. Videos should be shorter than two minutes – 30 to 90 seconds is ideal. Ideally videos should be posted directly into the social media platform when possible; if it isn't possible then uploading to YouTube first and linking across is the alternative.

Video that is posted should try have captions for accessibility purposes. Using tags that relate to the video content is a great way for more people to discover your video

HASHTAGS
Hashtags are a great way to have your post exposed to a greater audience, group multiple post together or use to support a campaign/message. However, the hashtag that is used should have context to the post, project and brand.

TAGGING
Whenever you are referencing to a partner or another organisation and they have a social media account on that platform then you should tag them. Any post you have shared, you should accredit the source when possible.

HOW TO RESPOND TO COMMENTS OR MESSAGES
As outlined earlier, whenever responding to comments or messages please sign off with your initials. It is also important to ensure that you are responding from the page account and not your professional or personal social media accounts. This is to ensure your privacy is protected as much as possible.

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING PLAN

ORGANISATION NAME	
PLANNING INPUT AND SIGN-OFF (IF REQUIRED)	These should be specific, measurable and achievable. Examples: To raise the profile of <club/code> and build an understanding of what we offer the community To increase/retain memberships by <measure> To raise funds <amount> for <initiative>

SITUATION ANALYSIS SWOT	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

STRATEGIES	

KEY MESSAGES	Refer to message house concept in toolkit

ADDITIONAL DETAILS OTHER ASPECTS TO DETAIL SUCH AS TIMINGS, BUDGETS, EVALUATION/RESULTS NOTED IN SCHEDULE BELOW	

OBJECTIVE	AUDIENCE	TARGET KEY MESSAGE	TOOLS/TACTICS/CHANNELS	TIMING	BUDGET	RESPONSIBILTY	EVALUATION/FEEDBACK MECHANISMS	ADDITIONAL NOTES

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING CALENDAR*

	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMEBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
PLANNING Work through planning exercise, including setting objectives and defining key messages.												
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT For example, identifying and engaging key stakeholders												
KEY MESSAGES For example, developing and reviewing key messages												
MARKETING ACTIVITY For example, brochure, flyer, poster, advertising												
MEDIA ACTIVITY For example, media release, meeting with media												
SOCIAL MEDIA For example, regular posts, competition												
REVIEW Put a regular review process in place to check activities and results												

* Calendar starts in July to align with initial workshop – can be adjusted as required.

LOOKING FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

There is a range of resources available to assist with the running of your club/code. Click here for the full range of toolkits.

HERE TO HELP

Your Regional Sports Trust/Organisations are also here to help – please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to talk through any of this material and/or assistance for your club and/or code.

MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT THE FOLLOWING:

aktive.org.nz >>
clmnz.co.nz/counties >>
harboursport.co.nz >>
sportauckland.co.nz >>
sportwaitakere.co.nz >>

Information in this toolkit is for guidance only and does not constitute formal professional advice. Where specific issues arise in your club/code, advice should be sought from the relevant expert(s) as necessary.

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