



HUNTER RUGBY

COMMUNITY & SPONSORSHIP
ENGAGEMENT PLAYBOOK



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

GLENN TURNER AM

DEAR HUNTER RUGBY CLUB,

In 2019 Hunter Rugby adopted a new 3 year plan. Covid interrupted implementation for 2 years but the whole of community engagement path Hunter Rugby is embarking on includes new participation programs that we expect will connect people to the game of rugby for life. There are on and off field programs and education pathways tailored to engage, recruit, transition and retain participants in our great game. However, we know that delivery of all of these programs can only occur through the life blood of rugby: the clubs. To this end Hunter Rugby has developed this Community Engagement Playbook. We anticipate the playbook will be helpful to clubs especially those for whom people, dollars and technology may be scarce.

We recognise that this first edition will require amendment with time and use. We welcome your feedback on its usefulness and where it can be improved. Only by your engagement, in all we are doing, will we see Hunter Rugby become a national benchmark for community rugby.



THE APPROACH

To ensure this resource is relevant for Hunter Rugby member clubs multiple data sources have been used from elite sports clubs, semi-professional organisations and the wider Hunter Rugby community. The purpose of this data range is to understand the methods and strategies installed at a professional level and investigate how such practices trickle down to a community-led club for the best chance of success.

This resource is designed to be flexible in creating a stronger and commercially successful rugby region to improve operations, performance, culture and administration.



WHAT IS THE PLAYBOOK?

Hunter Rugby has worked in partnership with local clubs, local organisation with a connection to the code and other local stakeholders to develop a guide to executing engagement activities. This resource isn't an arduous, long-form document that will take the season to read... it's designed to be digestible, with clarity on approach and ideas to help initiate best-practice engagement.

We know this can't be a one-size-fits all approach. Each club is different – full stop. Clubs have varying needs, resources and capabilities. This playbook aims to provide rounded advice and ideas – helping clubs make a start and engage with their community.

The outcome of this is growth. The biggest opportunity for Hunter Rugby clubs lies in new audiences and those not playing or watching rugby. This playbook is centralised around this opportunity.

AN ENGAGED RUGBY COMMUNITY BUILDS:



AWARENESS



GOODWILL



SPONSOR GROWTH



INTRINSIC VALUE



CLUB STRENGTH



POSITIVE MESSAGING



RESPECT



CLUB PROSPERITY



OPERATIONS.

SUMMARY

Your club is the glue for your rugby community. The overall goal of this playbook is to help define what your club can do to make it stronger both on and off the field. The activities suggested in this playbook are to act as guard rails to assist your club in deciding on where it needs resources both monetary and non-monetary.

1. SET YOUR CLUB'S MISSION & GOAL.

Just write it down. Share it with committee members. This makes it real.

2. BUILD AN ORGANISATION CHART

Start somewhere. If you can set your structure you'll be surprised how quickly the rest will follow.

3. GIVE YOUR CLUB EVENTS MEANING AND PURPOSE

Elite sport admin staff state fan attended sports must cater for non-sporting audiences to grow their club engagement from professional to community levels. If you can't do it all, do one really well. Make it the event on the calendar everyone looks forward to.

4. FUNDRAISE WITH A GOAL, TRACK WHAT WORKS AND ENGAGE THE WHOLE CLUB

Highly engaged clubs make everyone accountable. So, allocate each grade/team to take turns in managing the fundraising component at home games. Look at what has worked in the past and increase efforts.

The main points from the research conducted illustrate the need for a simple yet directed effort to enhance the operational performance that flows on to commercial growth and community engagement.

5. DELIVER OVER AND ABOVE VALUE FOR YOUR SPONSORS

Research suggests managing sponsorships one year in advance and locking in long-term agreements with regular reporting enables stability. Professional sporting clubs ensure the sponsor is always in the 'know'. Communicate regularly. Sponsors must be treated like gold. Keep them engaged.

6. TREAT YOUR GAME DAYS LIKE AN EVENT

Your audience pay to attend, offer value and make sure they come back next time. Start small with game day strategies and build up to larger investments.

7. OFFER MERCHANDISE AND MEMBERSHIP

A return on investment is achieved through highly desirable items or value-rich packages. If a customer/member perceives it to be of value, then you've done enough. Ensure your packages appeal to all audiences (men, women, children).

DEFINE YOUR PURPOSE. SET YOUR ROADMAP.

PURPOSE

Set the north star for your club – the “why you exist”. This will give each of your club members and volunteers – along with the playing group – clarity on why they do what they do.

Example: “We exist to champion community rugby, and create connection through a successful club operation – on and off the field.”

OUR BIG BOLD GOAL (THE VISION)

What does your club look like in 5 years? If your club was to reach an ultimate success point – what does success look like? This sets the roadmap keeping everyone working toward a common goal.

Example: “xxx Rugby Club is a financially sustainable, competitive tier one club with divisions in women’s, juniors and seniors.”

GOLD

Engage a consulting facilitator and set a workshop with your committee to tease out a rock-solid purpose and vision. For facilitation support, you may look to engage a business like: [spyrdz.com.au](https://www.spyrdz.com.au)

SILVER

Where resources and volunteers are harder to come by... just write something down so it’s real. If you put it on paper, save it, and tell someone about it, it becomes real.

[See template.](#)

**TIP: JUST WRITE IT DOWN. SHARE IT WITH COMMITTEE MEMBERS.
THIS MAKES IT REAL.**

BUILD A STRUCTURE. GIVE IT CLARITY.

ORGANISATIONAL CHART

The best way to map out your club resources and ‘share-the-load’ is to develop a club structure. This gives a clear picture of the roles and positions people can fill.

GOLD

Look at the functions of your club and build them into a tiered organisational framework. Give each area of the operation a support network and a team leader that reports to the secretary / president. This ensures succession and accountability.

[See template.](#)

SILVER

In many cases, clubs don’t have volunteers lining up at the door ready to help. So set a refined structure with the key operations functions on your club. E.g. finance, game coordination, engagement.

[See template.](#)

JOB DESCRIPTION

People need direction and need to know expectations. Especially volunteers. Descriptions of roles and responsibilities can help secure and retain volunteers.

GOLD

Map out detailed job descriptions, line of reporting, and expected time commitment for each role.

[See template.](#)

SILVER

Time is in short supply for volunteers. If an in-depth structure isn’t achievable, detail the top 5 expectations of the role and time required.

[See template.](#)

**TIP: START SOMEWHERE. IF YOU CAN SET YOUR STRUCTURE
YOU’LL BE SURPRISED HOW QUICKLY THE REST WILL FOLLOW.**



EVENTS

PURPOSE

We're in the entertainment game – not just sports. Meaning each game day is an event held for players and spectators. Therefore it requires planning.

KEY PILLARS

- Who / When / What / Where / How. (*Define these subjects*)
- Communicate and promote the event.
- Everything is online – get tech-savvy. If it's ticketed, ensure your platform is LIVE and capable of purchases.
- Communicate information to guests regularly. Recommended at least 3x times.
- Manage your suppliers / helpers / volunteers. Communicate and keep them accountable.
- Plan a runsheet.
- Set up early and follow your run sheet. This is your event bible.

Use this Event Runsheet Resource

TRY THESE EVENT TICKETING SITES:

EventBrite: eventbrite.com.au

TryBooking: trybooking.com

ELITE SPORT ADMIN STAFF STATE FAN ATTENDED SPORTS MUST CATER FOR NON-SPORTING AUDIENCES TO GROW THEIR CLUB ENGAGEMENT FROM PROFESSIONAL TO COMMUNITY LEVELS.

IDEA

GOLD

Club Ball – use your club venue or book a venue in your town centre. Ticket the event, get an MC and speaker, fundraise through auctions and sporting memorabilia.

Themed Game Days / Events – Choose your theme and get everyone involved. Ticket if necessary and deliver the basics well. If multiple make them unique i.e. Club Colours Day, Ladies Day, Retro Day, International Night, etc. Hold them regularly.

SILVER

Sponsors Day – Invite all sponsors to a catered VIP home game and provide value with over the top gratitude and thanks for the support.

Family Day – Engage families, juniors, partners and the non-traditional rugby fans. Consider other activities, e.g. jumping castle / face painting / HT mini-game or kicking competition during the 1st XV match, children of players for guards of honour for each match.

Old Boys Day – Invite your past players through social media and current players networks. Theme your club venue and decorate with memorabilia. Suggested addition of silent auction or fundraising through merchandise.

TIP: IF YOU CAN'T DO IT ALL. DO ONE REALLY WELL. MAKE IT THE EVENT ON THE CALENDAR EVERYONE LOOKS FORWARD TO.

FUNDRAISING

PURPOSE

Ensures equipment for training, investment in facilities and helps secure club prosperity. Understand your shortfalls in revenue and create a goal in fundraising and what opportunities exist.

KEY PILLARS

- Internally commit to your goal at the club AGM or similar.
- Leverage partner or sponsor networks and seek interest.
- Communicate the goal to the club. All stakeholders should understand the role they play in helping the club.
- Get the public involved. Game day raffles, silent auctions with merchandise or other – create the sense of urgency in your prize giveaways.
- Communicate through all of your channels (website, social media, match reports in local papers and request sponsors to promote within their business).
- Manage your costs to promote (if any), and track the method and funds raised.

HIGHLY ENGAGED CLUBS MAKE EVERYONE ACCOUNTABLE. SO, ALLOCATE EACH GRADE / TEAM TO TAKE TURNS IN MANAGING THE FUNDRAISING COMPONENT AT HOME GAMES.

IDEA

GOLD

Performance-based (gamified) fundraising – ‘Try for All’. Engage the community to support the team with pledges tied to performance.

1. Pick a performance metric – e.g. each goal kicked, try scored, etc.
2. Get everyone involved – post on social, announce regularly at the ground.
3. For every XXXX achieved \$XX goes to (communicate where funds will go).
4. Keep the tally and generate buzz on game day.
5. BONUS: Corporate partners join the pledge and match the donations made.

Integrate Smartphone Use – Create and publish QR codes on website, social media and promote with posters on game day to digitally enhance fundraising ideas (note any club mechanic/idea can be integrated here e.g. donate and win, bid on auction prizes, join 100-club)

SILVER

Tin Rattlers – Roster available club members and players to rotate through the day and communicate continuously throughout. Include collections at canteen / BBQ / Bar.

Round-Up Pricing – Round up the pricing for all product items (include F&B) to capitalise on the smaller purchases made on game day. Account for the difference and donate to fund.

100 Club – Create a \$100 membership tier where those receive a club membership and a ‘100 Club’ apparel item with majority of funds donated to club for investment / operations.

Sponsors – Engage sponsors and suppliers to offer their product as auction or raffle prizes during the day. Raffle run by club staff or sponsor present at the match.

TIP: LOOK AT WHAT HAS WORKED IN THE PAST AND INCREASE EFFORTS.

SPONSORSHIP

PURPOSE

A plan for your sponsors and demonstrated value guarantees player uniforms, food and drinks in the bar, goodwill in the community and prosperity for the club. The output of any plan should be simple and take the guessing out of what action to take next.

STRUCTURE

Tiers of sponsorship broaden the assets available to commercialise and expand the entry points of potential sponsors.

Examples are;

- **Gold** – Jersey (chest), field logo, banner signage, round naming rights “The (Business Name – Home Club) Vs (Away Club)”.
- **Silver** – Shorts sponsorship, Jersey (shoulder) goal post wraps, canteen signage.
- **Bronze** – Match programme placement, eDm sponsorship, website banners and logos.

The planning of sponsorship should not be overcomplicated yet cannot be ignored until too late.

RESEARCH SUGGESTS MANAGING SPONSORSHIPS ONE YEAR IN ADVANCE AND LOCKING IN LONG-TERM AGREEMENTS WITH REGULAR REPORTING ENABLES STABILITY. PROFESSIONAL SPORTING CLUBS ENSURE THE SPONSOR IS ALWAYS IN THE ‘KNOW’.

IDEA

GOLD

Match Sponsor – Offer sponsors the chance to name the home match of your round. The Round 3 “Business Name” (home) vs (away). Saturate all club assets with their logo, links to website and invite sponsor with VIP treatment on the day.

Junior Sponsor – Partner with a sponsor and ease the registration cost on parents to fund part or all of your Junior registration cost. Return value with appropriate business exposure across uniforms, posters, club assets, etc.

Club Assets – Commercialise the website, banner positions around venue, canteen, food and beverage, logo positions on uniforms.

See Template.

SILVER

Create 1 x package for sponsors and shop the package around to as many as possible. As entitlements will vary, ensure the sponsor earns an equitable share of available assets.

See Template.

TIP: COMMUNICATE REGULARLY. SPONSORS MUST BE TREATED LIKE GOLD. KEEP THEM ENGAGED.

MERCHANDISE & MEMBERSHIP

PURPOSE

Traditionally, your playing group are your members who receive merchandise as part of their fee. However, friends and supporters are not usually offered similar 'membership' options. Offering merchandise as part of membership delivers value immediately for the customer and in-turn opens a repeat purchase opportunity.

STRUCTURE

- Tier your membership with full-season, or a number of games and partner with merchandise item/s.
- Offer incentives for players referrals and membership add-ons.
- Work with your uniforms supplier for additional product options.
- Ensure the production timelines are understood.
- Create a members forum / environment on game day for members to mingle and integrate.

FROM RESEARCH CONDUCTED, ROI TARGETS ARE ACHIEVED THROUGH HIGHLY DESIRABLE ITEMS OR VALUE-RICH PACKAGES. IF A CUSTOMER/MEMBER PERCEIVES IT TO BE OF VALUE, THEN YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH.

IDEA

GOLD

Merchandise:

- Offer member specific products (hat, beanie, polo, hoodie).
- Incentivise membership with discounted game day pricing.

Membership:

- Allocate members benefits in seating/pricing/game day benefits.
- Communicate the offers and news to your members with thanks for support.
- Incentivise multiple year memberships with exclusive pricing / merchandise package.

SILVER

Merchandise:

- Stock merchandise on game day and offer at canteen / BBQ with package pricing.

Membership:

- Create a members pack with simple products and value add-ons (hat or key-ring) and cheaper F&B.

TIP: PACKAGE YOUR APPAREL AND PROVIDE A WOMEN'S OPTION.

GAME DAY & SOCIAL MEDIA

PURPOSE

An important aspect of a club's ability to promote and market itself to audiences. A day at the rugby should cater for friends and family outside of the operations of the matches. Publishing the experience and promoting on social media runs in tandem with this and should be managed by the same team / person.

Download TSC's Social Media Guide and Template

- For easy-to-use, free design, visit **Canva**.
- Those a little more savvy – try **Kickly** for team announcements, results etc.

GAME DAY

- Start small and see what works. Small changes to engage your attendees are easier to implement.
- Survey your audience and request their input into making a home match more engaging.
- Be generous. Giveaways, value-adds or discounts. Incentivise attendance with freebies or discounts. Aim for volume to recoup value.

GOLD

- Communication and music, guard of honour, Match MC, on-field presentations.
- Collect data and incentivise with giveaways.
- Theme venue for every home match. Decorate with signage, memorabilia or other to make an impact.

SILVER

Offer the public something for their attendance. Discounts for home fans at the bar, merchandise or next game's entry fee.

TIP: ABOVE ALL OFFER FANS/ ATTENDEES VALUE. MAKE SURE THEY COME BACK NEXT TIME.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Use high-quality imagery. Utilise someone who understands the platform and its function.
- Publish news and updates on home matches, milestones, event days, fundraising and sponsors and club relevant information.
- Be consistent.
- Be inclusive.

GOLD

- Integrate your events schedule to maximise your social media coverage.
- Aim to publish 3 x high-quality photos a week.
- Tag sponsors and promote businesses to add value.
- Share players posts and tag people to piggy-back their audience engagement.

SILVER

Publish the basics – a pre and post image/video for every game or club event.

TIP: WHEN IT COMES TO SOCIAL MEDIA, IT'S ABOUT BEING INTERESTING AND RELEVANT. DON'T POST FOR THE SAKE OF POSTING. OH... AND IF YOU'VE HEARD OF CANVA – THIS FREE DESIGN TOOL MAKES EVERY POST FEEL MORE PROFESSIONAL.