

Water Polo Marketing Communications Plan



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2. INTRODUCTION

Following the Water Polo Conference held on 6th September 2009 a number of issues and concerns were raised regarding the current method of communication used both internally and externally for Water Polo. This covered the messages sent within the water polo community (clubs, coaches, players, volunteers) and those communicated to the public and media.

A Marcomms strategy was requested to help realise the following key outcomes:

- Promote the sport of water polo
- Promote opportunities for people to become involved in water polo
- Utilize the water polo community to help develop and grow the sport
- Identify and utilize communication tools to deliver appropriate information to all stakeholders.
- Ensure communication channels between the water polo community, facility providers and British Swimming are developed and maintained.
- Make use of the recent success of the elite teams
- Maximise media coverage in both local and national press

3. BACKGROUND

The London 2012 Olympic Games provide a perfect platform from which to increase awareness around water polo both in terms of the elite athletes and opportunities to become involved in the sport at all levels.

The elite teams are performing well, especially the women's team who won the European B Championships earlier this year, helping to generate more interest around the sport: Press releases surrounding the men's and women's elite teams' tournament results have been sent out to both regional and national media with positive feedback. A number of articles have appeared on the BBC website and there have been some mentions in the national press.

The 'Water Polo' area of the British Swimming website is out of date and under-developed. A lot of useful information can be found on the site such as club information and the domestic competition calendar however it is 'hidden' in sub-sections

Athlete log books from 2007 and development updates from 2005 remain on webpages with no updates since. This clearly shows that the website has not been, and is currently not, used to its best ability.

The whole of the British Swimming website is due to be re-designed in the coming months but alterations to the current water polo section could be made now before the switchover.

A comprehensive database of email contacts is required for water polo (athletes, coaches, volunteers etc.) to aid communication channels. All updates regarding the sport (e.g. structure changes, new developments, volunteering opportunities, events etc.) can be sent to the necessary audience(s) this way.

There are a number of areas that need to be addressed through the introduction of revised structures, programmes and initiatives. Marketing and communications techniques can be employed to enhance the awareness and take-up of these through the utilisation of emails and the British Swimming website.

- Addressing the number of volunteers actively involved in water polo. For the sport to function well there need to be volunteers willing to help at clubs and in schools to grow the sport. This includes the retention of current volunteers and attracting new ones and utilising the support of friends and family and current coaches to fill positions and help 'train' new volunteers.
- Developing an element of water polo to be taught by swimming instructors in their lessons. Informing instructors, schools and facilities how this can be done, local water polo coaching courses etc.
- The introduction of Mini-polo! (a basic version of water polo aimed at children under 11 years old) has been successful and is played in schools and clubs around the country, however the skill base required to move from mini-polo! to water polo is deemed too great causing a low take-up rate for water polo. It has been suggested that a transition phase called 'Cadet Polo' be introduced to bridge the skill gap. If this is to go ahead marketing and communications tools need to be used to communicate information such as training for coaches, where to play, equipping clubs to provide it etc.
- Developing the sport at grassroots level is vital if water polo is to grow. For this to happen the sport needs to reach those that would not normally get the opportunity to play and schools provide the perfect opportunity to reach a lot of children.
- Informing schools about creating their own water polo club – how to get started, where to find coaches/coaching courses, local facilities, testimonials from other schools etc...

4. OBJECTIVES

The following key objectives are identified:

1. Promote water polo as a fun, active, team sport.
2. Maximise the number of players and coaches at all levels.
3. Develop links between schools and clubs.
4. Highlight the work being undertaken by British Water Polo to prepare athletes for 2012 and beyond and raise the profile of Britain's water polo talent.
5. Raise the awareness of the sport of water polo amongst the media and general public.

5. STRATEGY

Segmentation and targeting

Water polo hopes to attract as many people to the sport as possible. This doesn't just include players but also coaches, volunteers and spectators. As such it is necessary to identify the different publics in order to adopt an approach appropriate for each audience.

- Water polo clubs and athletes
- Family, friends and supporters of water polo
- Schools, clubs and youth organisations
- Volunteers
- Pool providers
- Existing ASA members who may be interested in getting involved in water polo
- Media

Key messages

- Progress and results of the elite teams.
- Ways to get involved in water polo – playing, coaching, volunteering.
- New developments within the water polo community – coaching courses, funding opportunities, CPD courses, facility updates etc.
- The benefits of playing water polo – health benefits, social, fun etc.

Tactics / Actions

The following key activities are outlined below:

Website

Streamline the current information into more manageable and easily identifiable sub-sections:

- How to get involved in Water Polo section – clubs, mini-polo!, volunteering, coaching.
- Elite teams section created, to be maintained with tournament reports, information on London 2012, upcoming competitions etc. Athlete profiles to be updated.
- Links and information about NWPL and NWWPL.

Media department to be instructed re: relevant content for website and to write copy.

News updates and event information will be regularly posted to place the site as the central point for information on the water polo. These should include a combination of 'story' led features and information.

Publications

Utilise stakeholder publications to maximise awareness of and inform about developments within the sport and updates on elite teams.

Publications include:

- Swimming Times magazine
- Wavelength
- Regional ASA newsletters
- UK Sport newsletter
- Water polo club newsletters
- ASA/British Swimming event programmes

Swimming Times

Articles surrounding the elite teams should be included whenever possible to include athlete profiles, results, and other 'story' led pieces.

Features on exemplary water polo clubs should be put forward to the editor of the magazine as the basis for a human interest piece.

Press Releases & Press Coverage

Regular press releases will be distributed surrounding the performances of the elite teams and any major changes in the sport to keep local, national and international media informed.

Aim to maximise coverage through national, regional, trade and lifestyle publications.

Examples are as follows:

- **National newspapers:** Provide titles with regular press releases and look to sell-in features, such as personalities involved in the sport, preparing for London 2012 etc.
- **Regional newspapers:** Focus on titles with local athlete interest to secure coverage.
- **Lifestyle publications:** Look to sell-in a variety of features to publications such as FHM, Men's Health etc.

Realistically this is highly dependent on the success of the elite teams and the 'personalities' involved.

Communications within the water polo community

It is necessary to develop and maintain a comprehensive database of contact details for all involved and interested in water polo. With this information regular updates can be targeted at the right audience(s) and be received instantly.

This will form a vital part of the communication process surrounding the intended changes set to place within water polo over the coming year. Emails will be tailored to each target audience based upon the needs of the recipients and the information required. Copy to be written by the media department in conjunction with member from water polo.

Initiatives this can be used for include:

- Cadet Polo – informing clubs, schools, youth groups about the new game
- CPD/coaching courses – sent to clubs, facility providers and coaches
- Getting water polo into schools – detailing the benefits, opportunities to get involved, where to find a coach/coaching course etc.

AREA	ACTION	TARGET AUDIENCE	MANPOWER	COMMENTS
Website	Develop 'elite teams' section on website – update athlete profiles, tournament reports, London 2012	All water polo fans/athletes/coaches/media	BS Media Team in conjunction with Joanna Wray	
Website	Improve functionality of Water Polo section – make information easier to find, update/delete content etc.	Water polo community/wider public audience interested in water polo	BS Media Team in conjunction with lead from water polo for content guidance	
Website	Updates within water polo concerning re-structuring, coaching courses etc. to feature in 'Headline News' and/or in the water polo section.	Players/coaches/clubs/facilities	BS Media Team in conjunction with lead from water polo for content guidance	
Press Release	Press releases surrounding the results of elite teams and other developments.	Local and national media/water polo fans	BS Media Team	
Email communications to water polo stakeholders	Develop comprehensive database of all water polo stakeholders including clubs, coaches, players, volunteers and those with an interest in the sport	Water polo community	TBD	
Email communications to water polo stakeholders	Emails concerning updates, coaching course, club development etc.	Water polo community	BS Media Team and/or lead from water polo	
Swimming Times	Feature on inspirational/exemplary water polo club, player or coach	Swimming Times readers	Swimming Times Team with guidance as to appropriate stories from water polo	

