

CASE STUDY

EFFECTIVE MARKETING, PROMOTION AND MEDIA COVERAGE

LEVEL 3 SCHOOL GAMES FESTIVAL CASE STUDY BLACK COUNTRY

INTRODUCTION

The School Games Festival held in the Black Country took place on 6 July 2011 at three locations; Aldersley Leisure Village, Wolverhampton Grammar School and Albert Road Lawn Tennis Club. 1,250 young people participated, representing 89 schools, mostly from primary and secondary schools, although 20 special needs young people represented five special schools. The festival featured over ten sports including: volleyball, rugby union, table tennis, athletics, netball, multi skills, cricket, basketball, badminton and two disability sports: boccia and wheelchair basketball.

The festival organisers had ensured that the event encompassed a celebratory atmosphere with children involved in a co-ordinated dance routine during the opening ceremony. VIP dignitaries from the local area were invited to attend the School Games festival alongside Olympic Gold medallist Denise Lewis.



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CO-ORDINATION

The local organising committee (LOC) included representatives from schools, Wolverhampton City Council, the English Federation of Disability Sport, a National Governing Body for sport, the local County Sport Partnership (CSP) and school sport network, and a professional football club trust. This group ensured that the School Games were planned using existing networks for schools and sport, which helped increase the speed with which the Games were organised.

An aim for the 2011/2012 academic year is to encourage a greater number of independent schools to participate in the School Games. To this end a headteacher of an independent school will be responsible for encouraging more independent schools to compete in School Games activity.

Young people played a crucial role in the organisation of the School Games, helping to shape the overall delivery of the programme. In particular a student at Streetly School who also represents Youth Sport for Life helped to organise the School Games whilst also being a presenter during the opening ceremony.

MARKETING AND PR

Attempts to partner with local organisations were made to help widen the scope of publicity around the area. One such method was to try and engage with professional football clubs and to utilise their marketing expertise and profile. The Albion Foundation a group linked to West Brom Football Club obliged and undertook all the School Games media, providing the necessary contacts and also writing and submitting press releases. In addition the foundation organised the Supporter to Reporter programme which provided young people with the opportunity to perform journalistic duties on the day allowing them to gain experience in this field. A visible TV presence during the festival also helped to create a professional approach to the Games adding to the importance of the event in the eyes of the participants and spectators.

The overall ethos of the School Games festival in the Black County was to market the event as a celebration rather than a competition in the aim of creating an inclusive, memorable and inspiring environment for all participants. T-shirts were purchased for all participants to wear during the event. The cost was significant but it was important because it promoted the event and created a visual identify for participants. A high profile opening and closing ceremony seen by an invited VIP delegation helped to raise the profile of the event in the local community. This may help to create greater engagement and partnership working which will facilitate the overall size and scope of the event in the 2011/2012 academic year.

All the School Games Festival events were filmed, and posted on the Black Country School Games TV Channel. This provided an area for participants, parents and school pupils to watch the competition, creating an

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external facing site for others to discover what the School Games encompasses. The channel features links to various sports allowing people to watch a number of different activities. Each video is also linked to Facebook and Twitter so that the video can be posted to social networks increasing the flow of School Games information to people. Live updates were also provided via social networks during the event. Overall this is an excellent method to showcase the event to a greater number of people and increase the profile of the event.

DELIVERY

Partner organisations contributed very effectively to the activities in the Games. In particular, the CSP contributed a lot of officer time as did one officer from Walsall Sport and Leisure Services. Other organisations such as the Albion Foundation and Hadley Golf Club contributed significantly. All School Games events rely enormously on the commitment of headteachers to value sport competition and the dedication of support teachers, especially PE teachers, in making sure that young people are enthusiastic about the events, keen to participate, and turn up on the day!

Half the spectators surveyed at the Level 3 event were willing to volunteer at future School Games events, so they represent significant potential for volunteer help.

YOUNG PEOPLE OUTCOMES

There is no doubt that the large majority of young participants enjoyed the School Games. Some secondary school students were interviewed in focus groups, whilst others completed a survey. The things they liked were representing the school and playing against other schools. They described the experience using words like "fun" and "exciting" and when asked to describe how they felt afterwards, all the survey respondents suggested "happy" and all but one suggested "a sense of achievement/pride". They all wanted to participate in more sports competitions in the future.

These positive feelings were backed up by spectators (largely parents) at the Level 3 events, some of whom were surveyed. They all enjoyed the event, and rated it with a score between 8 and 10 out of ten – half of them gave it full marks. Complimentary remarks were made about both the large scale of the events and how well they were organised. Half of the spectators surveyed said that they felt more positive about school sport as a result of the experience. The views of the other half had not changed, typically because they had always been enthusiastic about school sport.