



Selling
Sports

WISE

step
ahead

GROWING THE SUPER FAN

Tips to generate income
through Supporters' Club



Partnering with the following sports businesses

CLUBS

LEAGUES

CONFEDERATIONS

ASSOCIATIONS &
FEDERATIONS

INVESTORS, OWNERS &
FINANCIERS

SPONSORS &
COMMERCIAL PARTNERS

SPORTS
BUSINESSES

to provide the following services

Business planning
and strategy

Governance and
organisational design

Benchmarking and
best practice advice

Financial budgets
and projections

Club licensing and cost
control regulations

Economic impact
studies

Financial and commercial
due diligence

Ticketing and
hospitality strategy

League and
competition
restructuring

Customer data
analytics
and fan surveys

Advice on the
development of
stadia and
training facilities

Customer data analytics
and fan surveys

in order to achieve the following results

Well informed
investment
decisions

Greater
commercial
income

Improved cost
management

Improved
governance
and risk
management

Superior
business
performance

Increased
matchday &
non-matchday
revenues

Higher ticket
sales, arena use
& attendances

New investment
and financing
possibilities

Introduction



Football, like every other industry, is product-based. The quality of a team's performance and its on-the-pitch triumphs are the products the public wants. The portion of the public that becomes addicted to a team's product forms the fan-base.

The success of every massily consumed product is in the repeat patronage of consumers. Smart modern businesses have learnt to focus on consumers in order to guarantee user satisfaction that evolves into repeat performance, and (hopefully) addiction.

No fan wants to support a losing team, just as nobody wants to keep using an unsatisfying product. A club's management cannot ensure productivity if they cannot fully harness revenue benefits that a vibrant fan-base provides.. Prospecting for supporters must go beyond just good team-play to the use of target-specific marketing plans that project the fan-friendly image of the team.

This book gives insight into the benefits of prioritising the promotion of a vibrant, revenue-generating fan club, and guidelines on points to note in nurturing a structured and interesting supporters club.

This book is primarily concerned with improving soccer business in Nigeria, and growing the sector into a viable business worthy of the attention, partnership and sponsorship enjoyed in other parts of the world. The ideas will work in any professional sporting environment.

The Super-Fan – Supporter or Fanatic?

A Customer buys your club merchandise. A Loyal Customer buys repeatedly (if it keeps appealing to him/her).

A Supporter cheers your team on, and shows goodwill.

A Fan is a die-hard follower who fights for the club's honour; (s)he buys anything and everything you sell; (s)he raves about your club, and sees him/herself as part of the team.

A Super-fan never leaves your club, or support another club against you. (S)he craves involvement, sees him/herself as an extension of the team... and believes (s)he has a stake in your brand.

Wouldn't you rather have a super-fan on your side?



Crazy Defines Them...

Fans are not rational creatures! They do silly things even children do not approve of, just to cheer on their teams: painting faces; dancing, chanting, collecting keepsakes, religiously going to matches, and exchanging off-the-field banter with the opponents' fans... these crazy ones outdo them all!



Man United fan, Karl Power, avoided security to file out with his 'team' in an Away UEFA Champions League match against Bayern Munich, impersonating Eric Cantona. His 'team-mates' humoured him, and let him have his day. Power was so much trouble for security that he was banned from Old Trafford!



Unknown South African boy invaded the pitch after watching Brazil thrash his team 5-0, just to hug his hero, Neymar. He was rewarded with pictures he will cherish his whole life, and a shoulder-lift by Neymar's team-mates.



Barcelona FC made no secret of wanting Thierry Henry. This eager Barca fan, Jimmy Jump, slipped past security at the beginning of 2nd half of UEFA Champions League semi-final in Villareal, and handed Henry a Barcelona jersey. The next season, Henry signed for Barca!

The Observer
observerug



@ArsenalFC fan & father of 5 loses
in #betting to a @ManUtd fan who in
d staked his car
r.ug/index.php?opti... #Uganda

Retweet Favorite More



Nov 13

According to Ugandan newspaper, The Observer, Arsenal fan, Henry Dhabasani, lost his house to friend, and Man-U fan, Yagi, in a bet that saw Man-U win Arsenal 1-0. If Arsenal had won, Yagi would have lost his Toyota car – and his WIFE!

158+

Professional/semi-professional clubs owned or co-owned by fans & supporters clubs worldwide



Portsmouth became the largest fan-owned football club in England, after the Pompey Supporters Trust (PST)

successfully gained possession of Fratton Park in April 2013.



Mighty Jets FC is the only Nigerian pro club owned by supporters, and one of two in Africa. The other is Jean d'Arc FC of Mali.



In Germany a majority control by a single entity (person, or company) is not permitted by the league, and is the German law for clubs. The law suggests a registered club should have minimum 7 members. The league requires that either a club, or a limited company which is controlled by a club with 50% + 1 vote can get a license to participate in the German first or second league. In the lower leagues, it is required to be a club.



SV Austria Salzburg; F.C. Spartak Varna; F.C. Spartak Varna; 1874 Northwich F.C; Enfield Town F.C.; Pusamania Borneo F.C.; Hapoel Katamon Jerusalem; F.C. Haifa; Jeanne d'Arc FC Bamako; Górník 1979 Łęczna --- Though these Clubs are leagues and worlds apart, they share something in common. They were all started by supporters and fans who were not happy with clubs they originally supported.

The Profitability of a Fan-base



2013-2014 Financials

Revenue **€302m**

Tickets & Match-day incomes **€120m**

Retail sales and Licensing **€18m**

Income from ticket, match-day and retails as a percentage of total revenue **45.7%**



2013-2014 Financials

Revenue **€488m**

Tickets & Match-day incomes **€88m**

Retail sales and Licensing **€1.7m**

Income from ticket, match-day and retails as a percentage of total revenue **18.4%**

Above are some figures of what some soccer clubs made from their fan-base...

Football clubs with the highest average annual shirt sales from 2009/10 to 2013/14



1,580,000

Real Madrid



1,490,000

Manchester United



1,190,000

FC Barcelona



945,000

Bayern Munich



875,000

Chelsea FC



825,000

Arsenal FC



805,000

Liverpool FC

Every manufacturer craves public addiction to their product. Football clubs are no different. Here are key benefits of cultivating a robust fan-base:

Shirt/kit sponsorships

Corporate organisations thrive on promotions and advertising. Sponsors are advertising clients willing to pay for the right to slap their logo/product on your club's jersey. A club that sells quality replica jerseys with a large fan-base can tap into this opportunity to become 'sign boards' for such companies, like PSG does for Emirates Airline, and Manchester United does for Chevrolet.

Other sponsors

Really successful clubs do not have enough space on the club's jersey to put up every sponsor's advert. Also, a major sponsor might just pay enough to avoid sharing shirt-space with others! Other sponsors still want to identify with the club, and are usually content to place their adverts in club bulletins, brochures, and around the stadium, club house, and anywhere else your fans are likely to notice them.

Replica and souvenir sales

A club can sell replica jerseys to their supporters. The retail sales volume of the club's branded products drives sponsors' interest.

Match tickets and match-day sales

Apart from all the non-game related income avenues above, fans can buy up season's tickets in advance. A club can rent out shop/vendor outlets to sellers of refreshments (or have a subsidiary/sponsor that sells), and also display their wares for sale to spectators.



Cultivating your Fan-base



Your club's supporters can be your cash-cow, your '12th man' on the pitch, your club's lifeline, or your worst nightmare! Fans may be crazy, irrational followers, but they do it for a reason – they believe they are part of your club, and hope for the club's well-being. They will hail management's choice of a coach and boo the coach 3 consecutive losses later.!

With these customers, feedback is usually instant, and management must be proactive in dealing with feedbacks, if the fan-base must increase. Here are a few tips:

Make your club sellable!

- Ensure your club is run in a financially viable and transparent manner. If fans see and like what you do with their money, you earn their trust. This is lacking in state-run clubs.
- Provide administrative leadership. When fans see properly organised club, it breeds goodwill and empathy.
- Make your club look beautiful. Pay attention to details. Get a good logo; set up a user-friendly, neat website and social media pages. Engage designers to develop good kit concepts. Nobody likes wearing 'ugly'.
- Beg! Beg!! Beg!!! Solicit for paid membership for your supporters club. Tell the public why they should join. Beg them on phone, internet, and all media at your disposal. Be in their face! It is called "marketing".
- Give incentives to capture public interest. Give discounts for long-term ticket purchase, or family ticket purchase, or family kit purchase. Give out freebies on home match days. Conduct trivia and sweep-stakes.
- Ensure your players deliver on-field to boost supporters' pride. Nobody wants to identify with a losing team.



Spectators at a soccer match in Onikan Stadium, Lagos, being 'whipped' into line by a policeman on a horse.



Sell Fun; not Football!

- Given technologic advancement, one needs not go to a stadium to enjoy a soccer match. Television ensures you can watch live events in far-off countries at little cost. Spectators need to be interested in coming to the stadium. Look for what interests your target-market and make it a part of your club's tradition.
- NPFL mid-week matches are played in the afternoons, when folks are at work. How do you fill the stands like that? The league ought to have better security and logistics to enable playing under klieg lights after office hours. Then clubs can offer supporters soccer as fun ways to unwind after a hard-day's work.
- Invite fans to club functions and engagements. Encourage interactions with players online and offline. Set boundaries, but let fans know they can be part of the team.
- Focus on the kids. With some inexpensive social/community activities your club can make children influence their parents to 'love' their favourite club.
- How easy is it to get to your home-ground? If travelling to watch home matches is one horrendous experience, only those living nearby will show up. Arrange with transporters (who may also be fans) to offer easy transport to match venues. Encourage branches of fans club to set up such arrangements.
- Major clubs have global fan-base that may never leave their country to watch a home-match. Like these mega clubs, encourage fan-base from everywhere and give them reason to still love your team. One sure way is to mix quality performance on-the-field with great packaging. Use online media to full advantage, and ensure it is easy to use your club's online store.

NOTE: Solutions to the points raised are covered in the following books:

- **Club Organisation & Structure**
 - **Club Image as Marketing Tool 1&2**
- Download FREE copies at:**
www.soccerwise.wordpress.com

Engaging your Fans



Make information very easy to access. Use club newsletters and magazines.



Track fans' database. Send birthday wishes and congratulatory messages.



Encourage fans to set up branches of the supporters club, based on guidelines.

Let fans feel special about going to home-grounds, dressed in team colours, with songs and chants.



Use link with businesses in the community to provide non-sport related opportunities for fans.



Ensure that community-focussed activities are entrenched in the team's season's curriculum.



Use business associations to create customer loyalty schemes, using vouchers and loyalty point counts.



Let key officers of the supporters club have access to club management, and (possibly) contribute to daily decision-making.

Licensing Benefits

Cultivating a fan-base will enhance marketability of your club. It will help your club comply with **Article 15** of the NFF **Club Licensing Regulations**. The section primarily affected is:

B.01 – BUSINESS, COMMERCIAL & PROMOTION PLAN

A compulsory licensing criterion (Item 1(e): The club must submit a written business plan that includes Commercial plans (long and short term).

B.03 – MERCHANDISING

To successfully sell your club's merchandise, you need customers that would buy. The surest way of ensuring consistent sales is by engaging a target-market that will buy your branded wares and will entice others to buy.

B.03 – CLUB WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

One of the best, cheapest and widest modes of spreading information, and promoting the image of your club is through your club online presence (see **Club Image As A Marketing Tool 2**).

Ensure that these pages are used on a daily basis to interact with fans and the general public. Match previews, ticket

promos and sales, fan feedback, event announcements, and every other daily chats and tit-bits the club wishes to share with fans can be posted on the social media pages.



Responsibility for a Vibrant Supporters' Club

Who owns the work?

The responsibility for overseeing the development of an outstanding website, blog-site, social media page/handle, and ensuring the club's online reputation is intact, resides with the **Marketing/Commercial Officer** and the **IT Specialist** (in compliance with Article 12, Section P.01, Item 6(c) and (i) of NFF Club Licensing Regulations).

What are the deliverables?

Marketing/Commercial Officer

- Create a sellable brand for the club.
- Promote club's brand and solicit for fan club membership.
- Establish structures for branches of fan club world-wide..
- Supervise the activities of the IT Specialist to ensure online interaction with fans, and that online store is functioning.
- Source partnerships with businesses that will include opportunities for fans through loyalty schemes and non-sport opportunities.
- Grow the fan-base and drive match-day and commercial

incomes.

IT Specialist

- Set up outstanding website that includes web-shop, fan page and links to social media pages.
- Monitor the internet for information or feedback from fans and the public, and deliver to the Media Officer/Manager promptly.
- Update club information online, via SMS or emails/e-newsletter, as directed by the Media and Marketing teams, and approved by Management.
- Maintain and update adequate database of subscribed fans, their dues, bio-data and brand/ticket purchase patterns.
- Design and maintain a robust web-based tracking application to monitor fans' spending and loyalty.

Loyalty, Profitability and Control

The club's management requires a combination of People Management and Customer Care skills in order to succeed in establishing and maintaining a vibrant and growing supporters club. As with all good businesses, continued profitability can only be assured when risks are reduced to barest minimum, and existing ones are mitigated. Below is a list of a few possible risks involved in fan club management, and possible mitigants. This list is not to be taken as conclusive.

RISK	PRIORITY	MITIGANT
Membership dues and arrears not paid	Medium	Adequate follow-up on members. Adverse economic/financial changes may result in unpaid annual dues.
Loyalty scheme fraud	High	Adequate data management , audit and fraud detection policy should be in place. Database should have dual control, with restricted manual input.
Unruly conduct and hooliganism	High	Membership rules prohibiting violent conduct, and adequate security measures around home game venue and fan club gatherings should be put in place. Spell out disciplinary measures in club rules and enforce them.
Crowd control at match venue	High	Ensure all fans are educated on comportment and control, hospitality and personal security. Club to partner with police and stewards .
Data integrity and data-base security	High	Adequate data management , audit and fraud detection policy should be in place. Database should have dual control, with restricted manual input.
Fans' dissatisfaction with team or management	Medium	Allow for proper feedback and interactivity with public through Media Office. Provide responses to issues raised promptly. Encourage fans to hold meetings, and let club Public Relations Office participate. Sometimes, Management decisions do not align with fans' expectation. Management can either listen to fans or enlighten them on the wisdom of decisions taken.



FREE GUIDEBOOKS

We do not assume that every club owner wants or aspires towards glory, and business success, or that everyone will achieve the same level of result. However, for those interested, here are a few free research-based guidebooks for your use...

Read/download them at www.wise.ng

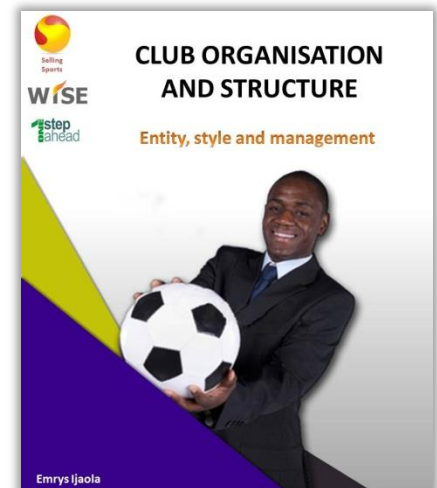
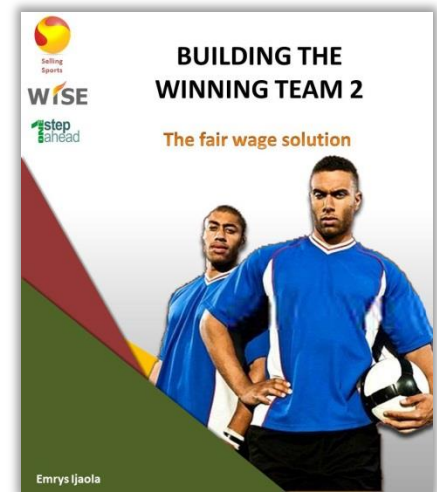
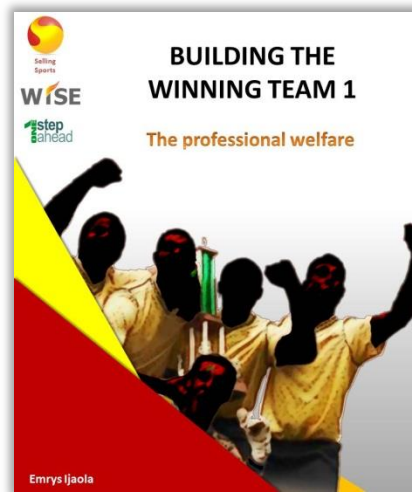
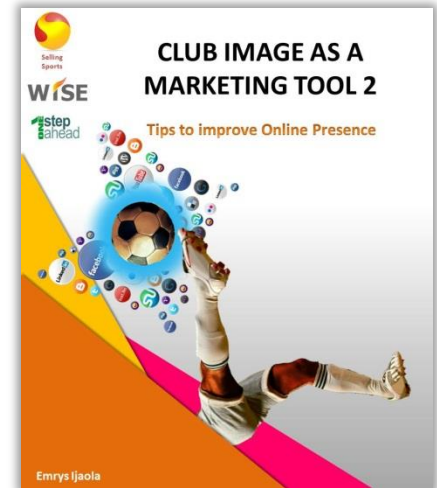
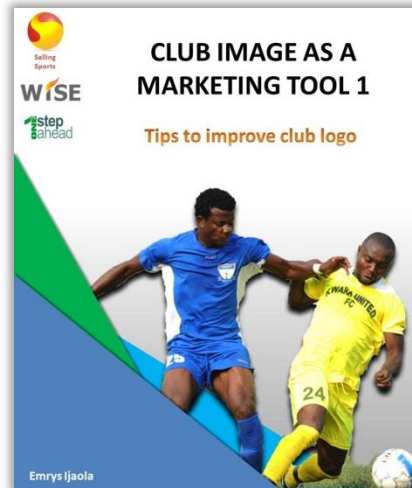
Contact for further enquiries and/or professional assistance :

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Guidebooks from the author



What's on our website

- Guidelines on football business
- Training e-books for academies
- Affiliated coaching courses
- Advanced management courses
- Player grooming courses
- Officials' workshops

Why I Do This:

I am a sports enthusiast, and also a director of a sports and entertainment business. I believe in the triumph of innovation, and usefulness of experience where it promotes growth. I believe in capitalistic pursuit of wealth, and that good financial returns is the just reward for innovation and growth. Having learnt a lot about how sports should be run professionally, I am motivated to share my ideas. I also appreciate the fact that not all clubs can afford to pay a consultant, or (as it appears) employ sports-business experts; and this is no reason for them not to benefit from a little knowledge of industry best practice, without the hassles of time-consuming 'fact-finding'.

I wear many caps. I am a research-enthusiast, business development specialist and designer, amongst other endeavours. I enjoy new experiences, and for this, I have been tagged an adventurer by some acquaintances.

Emrys Ijaola

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