



Selling
Sports

WISE

**step
ahead**

CLUB IMAGE AS A MARKETING TOOL 2

Tips to improve Online Presence



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

In an era of global interconnectivity, and worldwide reach at the snap of the fingers, the lack of online presence of Nigerian club-sides is most disheartening. Club owners do not seem to prioritise web-presence, and it appears this may be due to their inability to see the benefits to being on the internet.

Web presence transcends the purpose of dissemination of information, and has become a veritable tool for high volume of commercial activities. A website is the club's online office, outlet and public relations tool, all rolled into one. A club's social media pages and handles serve as globally accessible customer service and customer engagement 'desks'... and these offices neither close for the day, nor are limited by time-zones!

The internet is the surest and cheapest means of reaching out to fans and the whole world. In recent times, issues that would have remained community gist have been known to go viral, garnering millions in 'hits'.
















This book provides information on various ways to take advantage of the internet, benefits of being online, and the immeasurable opportunities that make any argument against opening an online 'office' unacceptable.

Alternatives to developing a website from the scratch are discussed, as well as things a club can do with its site. All options for social media are also explored – from the customised high-value to the downright cheap but effective. A club needs not break bank to own a website, and ALMOST ALL social media platforms are FREE! A club serious about publicity, building goodwill, and complying with NFF Club Licensing Regulations, will gain from using this book.

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.

Who's the dinosaur?

Below is the result of a search for online presence of clubs in select leagues:

| League | Number of clubs | Clubs with website | Clubs on Facebook | Clubs on Twitter |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
|  EPL | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
|  TFL | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
|  Ligue 1 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
|  Ligue 2 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
|  La Liga | 20 | 20 | 18 | 20 |
|  Liga Ad. | 22 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
|  Serie A | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
|  Serie B | 22 | 22 | 22 | 21 |
|  Bundesliga | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 |
|  2. Bundesliga | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 |
|  Süper Lig | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 |
|  TFF 1st Lig | 19 | 16 | 18 | 18 |
|  RFPL | 16 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
|  RNFL | 19 | 19 | 17 | 19 |
|  PSL | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 |
|  NFD | 16 | 10 | 16 | 12 |
|  NPFL | 20 | 7 | 18 | 14 |
|  NNL | 32 | 8 | 26 | 13 |

The table on the left is the result of a search of clubs in the 9 leagues colour-coded below.

- England
- France
- Spain
- Italy
- Germany
- Turkey
- Russia
- South Africa
- Nigeria



The Nigerian affair



BEST ONLINE PRESENCE
The club maximally uses
The internet.

22

Clubs with multiple
Facebook pages.
This only leads to
confusion.



BEST NPFL CLUBS ONLINE
These clubs boast of averagely
Standard features, and seem
capable of improvement.



13

Clubs with wiki-stubs
or no information on
Wikipedia.



BEST>NNL CLUBS ONLINE
These clubs boast of excellent
features that meet global
standards.



29

Clubs with no
meaningful
information or
update on their
Facebook pages



WORST ONLINE PRESENCE
The club uses a blog site as
official club-site. Most recent
news/update was March
2013.



7

Clubs with little
or no information
on their websites
that the public or
media can use.

1

Club that offers information on, or
invites the public for, paid fan
subscription.

Why your club must be online

There is, in fact, only ONE reason a business needs to go online: It makes product advertising and selling so much cheaper and easier:

| Activity | Real-space | Online |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| News and updates | Newspaper, TV, Radio and sports magazines (if they choose to feature your team, or you own one). | Instant and global. Club website and social media pages, sports news blogs, email subscription. |
| Public feedback | Delayed. Subject to postal-mails and physical meetings in specified time and place. | By email/contact page/ instant chat/opinion polls/survey. Respondent needs not leave room. |
| Match ticket sales | Fan goes to store, or at the gates. | Fan book/buy online with ease. Home delivery, gate pick-up, e-ticket with authenticity-code optional. |
| Souvenir sales | In a shop, not accessible to all. | Anyone can shop and have delivered, or pick up at reserve points. |
| Information sharing | By post, or noticeboards in specific locations, not accessible to all. | By email, news feed, social media posts. |
| Managing fans and subscription | At club office and other designated venues only. | Convenient and automated fan club management, fees payment, etc. |
| Inter-club interactions | At club offices, requiring travelling, or posting letters. | By email, contact pages, etc. |

Your club is about to go GLOBAL! Make the best of it by getting a few things right... Make the most of your brand and corporate image (see **Club Image As A Marketing Tool 1**)... Use every opportunity to post team update... Encourage your staff, coaching crew and players to be frequently online, and to boost fan's confidence in the club... Respond promptly to comments and questions...



Basic features of a club website

As stipulated in the NFF Club Licensing Regulations, the following basic features should be present on any club website (Note: many other 'great-to-have' features abound):

- Club news and features
- Fixtures and results
- Player and coach profiles
- Club information (map, stadium location, contact details)
- Club history
- Merchandising and ticketing information (or online portals)
- Club Membership information
- Community initiatives and activities
- Sponsor logos and links

SO MUCH MORE

Clubs should maximise their online presence by branding ALL sites and social media pages, and interlinking ALL online presences using URL links, and media mentions.

This helps to increase:

1. Number of pages that lead to your website
2. Traffic to your website
3. Search engine visibility
4. Brand visibility and awareness
5. Followership of the public

If your web developer is not interlinking your web and social media pages, you ought to insist on it.



Types of website development

CUSTOMISED SITE

A website built from scratch. Usually consumes time, effort, and requires keen designer and developer input.

Pro:

1. You will have a website rich in features and automation, subject to your project brief.
2. Your website will meet international best standards (I hope developer is that creative).

Con:

1. Will be more expensive. Usually between N500,000 and a few million Naira (depending on features).

TEMPLATE SITE

A website derived from an existing template. These templates are either sold by a third-party developer business, or by social media platforms such as **Wordpress** or **Blogger**. Ensure templates come with Content Management Systems (CMS), or the developer builds one into them.

Less work is done here, but developer still needs to be creative in order to deliver a world-class website, with appropriate branding.

Pro:

1. Cheaper and faster to build.
2. Adequate for most of a club's online visibility requirement.
3. Little creativity required of the designer/developer.

Con:

1. Restrictive, as templates are set.

NOTE:

Some clubs use the social media page (especially Facebook) as their official websites. This is neither advisable nor professional. You have no control over availability of site and content archiving... A social media platform has a set template that cannot be reconfigured at will... Besides, no self-respecting sponsor will take such a club seriously.



Web presence your club must have



Official Web-site

High-tech or simple; it must be appealing, user-friendly and informative. Make sure it is *www.yourclub.com/net*.



Wikipedia

The most versatile, updated online encyclopedia. Comes to mind after Google search, and very visible on all search engines. It is free, and can take as much info as you can give.



Facebook

Most-used social media platform. Great for interacting with fans and the public. In case you have opened various pages, stick to the most recent and ask Facebook admin to merge older pages.

Alt: *Google+, MySpace, Hi5*



Twitter

Great for sending short messages (micro-blogs or tweets) or links to club's site and other interests. Fast to use.



Flickr

Upload pictures of club activities. To save archiving space, just use as your picture gallery, and provide link on your official website.

Alt: *Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, Photobucket*



Youtube

Great for storing videos, snippets, TV programmes and camshots of your club without paying for large space. Link to your official website.

Alt: *Vimeo, Dailymotion, Metacafe, Veoh*



LinkedIn

Now, you are getting serious about business! The only reason you want to go here is to link up for business. Set up a company page, then get all club staff to set up their personal pages. Not for the half-hearted.

Alt: *Plaxo, Ryze, Xing*

TIP: Maximise your club's online visibility by linking these site and pages...

Doing it the right way

Unfortunately, most websites are commissioned by people/groups that actively look for ways to pinch pennies and cut corners, usually because they think online presence matters little, or the public may not be paying attention. Like everything else in life, you reap what you sow. If you want to get it right though, you must be particular about the following:

DEVELOPER/DESIGNER

You must ensure that your web developer is:

1. Proficient in graphic designs, and good with automation.
2. Committed to adding value to clients. Check past projects. Listen to how he amends your brief. If he just accepts what you give him, he is likely of no use.
3. Creative. How does he/she go about solving technical problems?
4. Reliable. Does he/she work to set standards, or seek to surpass them?
5. CMS-savvy. This ensures that once the site is finished and delivered, a trained tech-novice can work on it to update

information with relative ease, using administrative rights. A developer that does not offer CMS is setting the client up for a life-time of unhealthy dependency.

HOST

You must ensure that your web hosting provider is:

1. Cheap. You want to compare prices and ensure that your budget for online presence is at barest minimum.
2. Consistent. Check the downtime info on a provider. It is important that your website is on ALWAYS.
3. Responsive. If your provider does not resolve your issues on time, you may need to change.
4. Value-added. Various providers offer loads of CPANEL additives that you may never need, but it is good to have them. If you have to pay 'something' extra for features, you may want to ask around if others offer it free (e.g. some providers give free mobile site applications).

Promoting the club website

You need to remind people to visit your club online often. Visits in themselves mean nothing to a club, but if there are no visits, there will be no 'conversions' (i.e. visitors who eventually do business with your club).

What you can do:

- Email/SMS blasts. As you garner contact details from visitors, send them periodic emails/SMS to inform them of an upcoming event, or direct them to an information on the club's site/pages.
- Newsletter/RSS Feed subscriptions. These let the public get periodic e-letters from your media desk, and also get automatic alerts of new posts on the club's website. **NOTE: RSS must be a feature on your website for a feed to work.**
- Facebook page likes. This is a way to know those who are interested in your club, and those you can send club-related messages directly to.
- Use the fan-zone on club website effectively to engage fans. For all but ONE Nigerian club website, this page is not functioning!

- Make use of all those micro-blogging opportunities Twitter has offered you. Tweets are most effective for linking to other sites/pages.

Now, for the expensive options:

- Invest in a club-branded Blackberry, Android and i-phone app that fans can download and use to keep up with club activities and info posted on the club site.
- Post adverts online (Google and Facebook Ads, blogs and forums).
- Post adverts in print journals (newspaper or magazine) as well. **Tip: To manage cost, arrange an advert partnership with the journal.**



Licensing Benefits

Developing a standard, user-friendly site will help your club comply with **Article 15** of the NFF **Club Licensing Regulations**. The section primarily affected is:

B.04 – CLUB WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

A compulsory licensing criterion. The club's website is one of the best tools for global promotion. It must be professional and easy to browse, if the club wishes to attract, engage and retain public interest. The club's social media pages and handles serve as globally accessible customer service and customer engagement 'desks'. All efforts must be made to ensure the pages bear similarity to the official web-site (see

Club Image As A Marketing Tool 1), and 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.

Suggestion: Visit a few social media pages of some major African and European clubs to get a few ideas.



Responsibility for a great online presence

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 **Media Officer** (in compliance with Article 12, Section P.01, Item 6(b) of NFF Club Licensing Regulations).

What are the deliverables?

- Develop a world-class website and social media pages.
- Ensure club's online presence is used as frequently as practicable to engage the public.
- Ensure fans' feedbacks are directed to appropriate officials, and that they respond in quality time.
- 'Crawl' the web, and search for sites/forums where your club is being mentioned to ascertain that those mentions are positive and consistent with the image your club wishes to portray. Give immediate replies, comments and observations on these sites/forums to instill public confidence (more on next page).

NOTE: The Media Officer's tasks must be spelt out and performance measurable. These tasks are not limited to above-listed points (see Club Organisation and Management).



Managing club's reputation online

Cover your flanks; but also your crotch!

In the fast-paced age of the internet, things can go wrong faster than one blinks. All you need is a disgruntled element to post something in one obscure blog or forum, and it spreads like wild-fire. One bad publicity can undo months of reputation-building and goodwill acquisition.

Why should you be concerned?

You want to grow your goodwill, and the fan-base. This sells your souvenirs, match-day tickets and fan club annual subscription. Like the players balancing attack and defence on the pitch, you must balance media drive and the attendant risks... Like the defender in a free-kick, you must guard the flanks as well as your own personal (sensitive) space.

What to do:

- Periodic searches (type keywords in Google or Yahoo! Searches) to see who, and what, is said about your club. Use similar keywords/hash-tags in Twitter, too. Deal with any negative info immediately.
- Be present and punctual in discussion forums. Nobody goes back to read your response to a stale negative info. If you are a forum admin, NEVER be tempted to delete negative comments by others, but provide better, informed argument on behalf of your club.
- Respond promptly to emails and enquiries. If you do not give feedback, people will seek info elsewhere, or lose interest.
- Update web and social media pages frequently. Pay attention to comments from the public. Let your club management and the players be seen to be reachable online.



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
Read/download them at
www.wise.ng

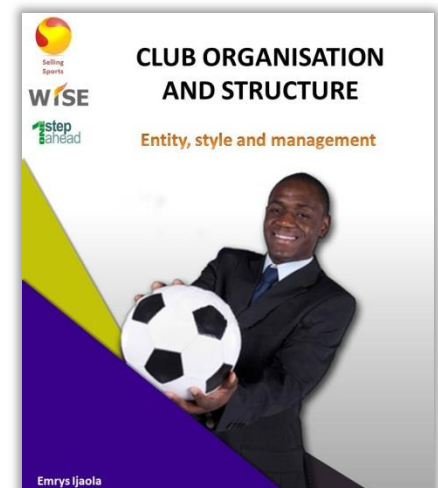
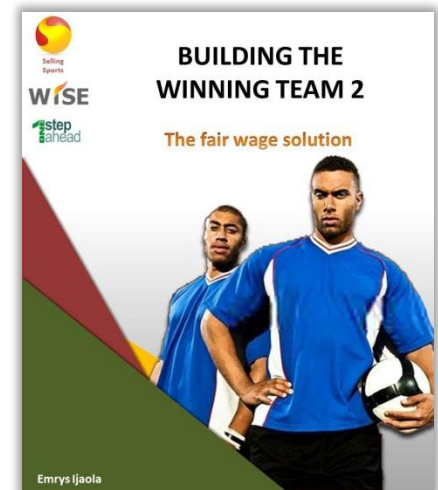
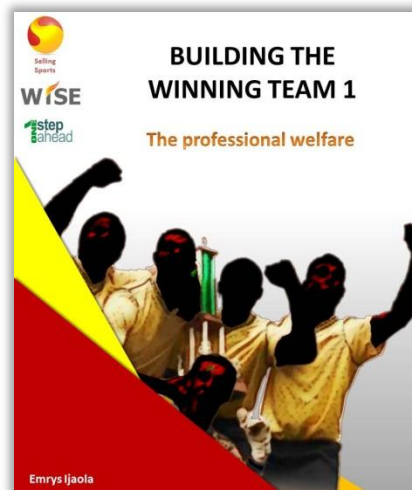
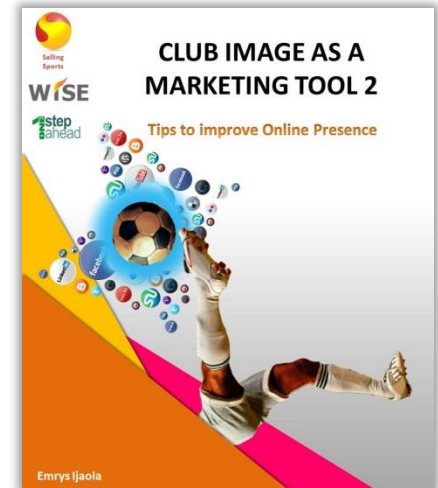
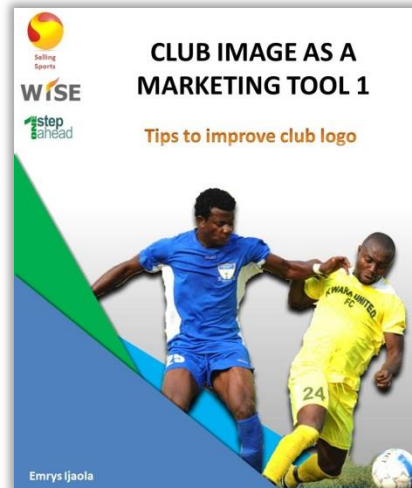
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Guidebooks from the author



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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