



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Sport and Recreation**

### **WEST COAST COWAN AFC CASE STUDY**

West Coast Cowan Amateur Football Club are the pace setters in terms of sports clubs using social media. The club uses well known social media such as Facebook and Twitter, but is also on LinkedIn, Picasa and YouTube. They even outsourced the construction of their website, which is integrated with their social media accounts as well. They started using social media about five years ago and consider it the quickest, easiest and most efficient way to keep in touch with their members. It is also used as a forum for “banter” between teammates, recruiting new members and alerting members to important events and dates for the club.

**Isaak Dury** is one of the people responsible for WCC AFC’s online activities and he answered a few questions about how they went about establishing their internet presence and maximising it’s potential. Isaak’s question for people involved in running sports clubs is: “why **wouldn’t** you be using social media?”

- **When did WCC start using social media and what were the motives behind it?**

We started using social media about five years ago, back when very few of our members were on Facebook, the crux of it is that it's a free medium, that allows you to connect to your supporters, the real question is why wouldn't you use social media?

- **What goals are you trying to accomplish through the use of social media? How is social media helping accomplish these goals?**

We have already started to accomplish feats through social media which quite frankly may not have happened otherwise. A great example is our thirds side, which is typically a group of guys that value the socialising over the football. At the start of the season despite many phone calls and emails we couldn't rally a side together; instead we formed a private Facebook group, and started some banter up. From not having a side in Round One we moved to having too many players by Round 3 and we ended up making the finals. All arguably thanks to Facebook.

- **How did it affect the culture of the club?**

It only improves the culture, it provides a forum for banter, a place to exchange photos, to improve friendships, and we’re really extending on what our club already provides on top of building great

community minded citizens.

- **Do you think it is a worthwhile pursuit for clubs to establish a presence on social media?**

I think the term “worthwhile” underplays the importance of social media; it isn't only for the young members of your club. Facebook users are split 50:50 between under 25 and over 25 year olds in Australia. It's arguable how these two groups use Facebook, but needless to say it's a form of interaction that needs attention and I feel is critical to clubs, where broadly speaking participation levels have recently been dropping.

- **What are the difficulties of having a social media page, if any? Have any controversies been encountered?**

I think keeping the banter and discussion going is the most important factor, keeping it clean and having a heavy handed approach to inappropriate language and photos is a must, as long as you explain to the user why you are deleting the photo they are usually understanding. I think we're lucky in that we have a great group of guys and girls that understand the philosophy of the club and what we stand for and maybe more importantly what we don't stand for. So they end up self administrating to some degree. We initially had our own forum on the website but took it down, as we would rather it be on Facebook, where users can only post under their real names, not aliases.

- **What advice would you give to others attempting to establish a social media presence for their sports club?**

It costs nothing, so there is no real barrier to entry, set it up and reserve the Twitter or Facebook username you need. If nothing happens on it, it's no loss. Second step would be to link all of the mediums together so as to reduce the workload. Third step would be to delegate and hand the keys over to a responsible personality at the club. West Coast Cowan formalised a position on the committee for all media, including website and social networking.

West Coast Cowan AFC set an admirable example with its use of social media. With it they have improved the clubs' culture and membership numbers, as well as the quality and quantity of communication between team mates and friends within the club. And all this cost the club nothing but time, so as Isaak Dury asked, "why **wouldn't** your sports club be on Facebook?"

Visit [www.clubsonline.dsr.wa.gov.au/social-media](http://www.clubsonline.dsr.wa.gov.au/social-media) for more information on using social media to promote and grow your club.

