

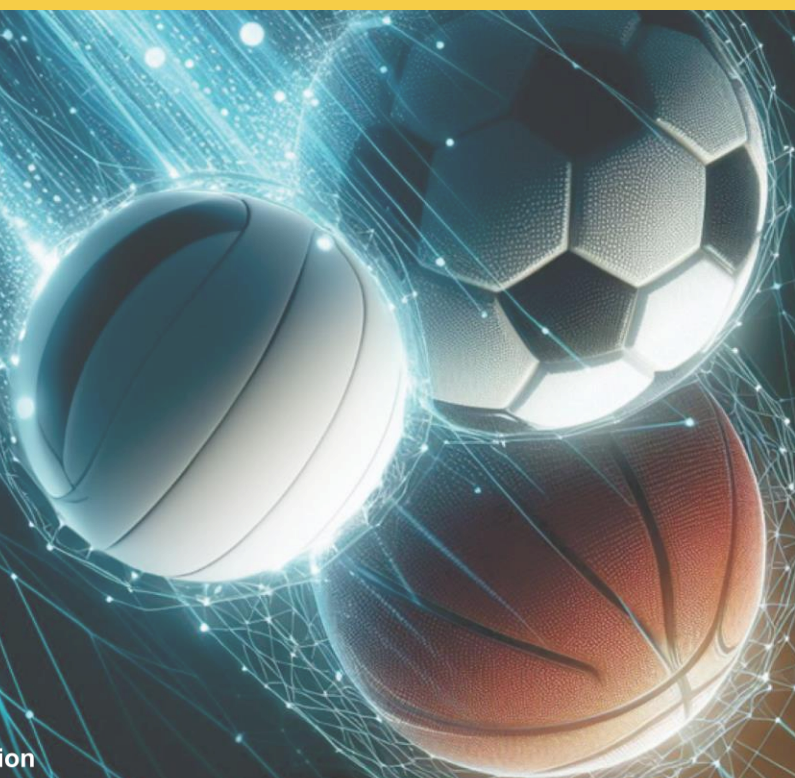


DigiRoot

Making sport clubs future ready

Managing the Digital Transformation in Grassroots Sports

*D2.3 - Report on expert panels on the
digitalisation of grassroots sports clubs*



Co-funded by
the European Union





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1. Introduction

The digitalisation of grassroots sports clubs is a crucial step towards modernising processes, relieving the burden on offices and volunteers, increasing engagement and reaching more members and new employees. This report presents the key findings and recommendations from two expert panels that focused on key aspects of this digital transformation: the selection of suitable software solutions and the implementation of effective digital marketing strategies.

1.1 Background

Grassroots sports clubs face numerous challenges when it comes to modernising and digitalising their processes. From managing membership data and booking systems to engaging sponsors and volunteers, the need for efficient and user-friendly digital tools has never been greater. As part of the first deliverable “Needs Analysis Report (D3)” a comprehensive survey was conducted among various sports clubs to identify the most pressing issues and relevant topics. The survey showed a significant interest in understanding how to select the right software and utilise digital marketing to increase club visibility and engagement. The top 10 topics with the highest score of interest are:

1. Sponsoring - Digital fundraising and sponsorship acquisition: 4.16
2. Member engagement: Attracting and retaining members: 4.13
3. Membership management tools: 4.06
4. HR - Recruitment and retention of volunteers for events: 4.04
5. HR - Recruitment and retention of trainers: 3.96
6. Software integration: Integration of various software tools: 3.94
7. IT law: GDPR compliance, cyber security and data protection: 3.82
8. Social media: Strategies for improving online presence: 3.78
9. Digital marketing: opportunities to expand reach: 3.77
10. Community building: Digital platforms to foster community: 3.76

Based on this, the first expert panels on two issues will meet at the end of the month:

1. What are the most important considerations when buying and selecting software?
2. What strategies can increase reach among the various interest groups?

1.2 Objectives of the expert panels

Following the survey results, it was important for us to find out how experts view the two topics. We therefore brought together industry experts, association representatives and digital transformation specialists to provide insights and practical recommendations. We

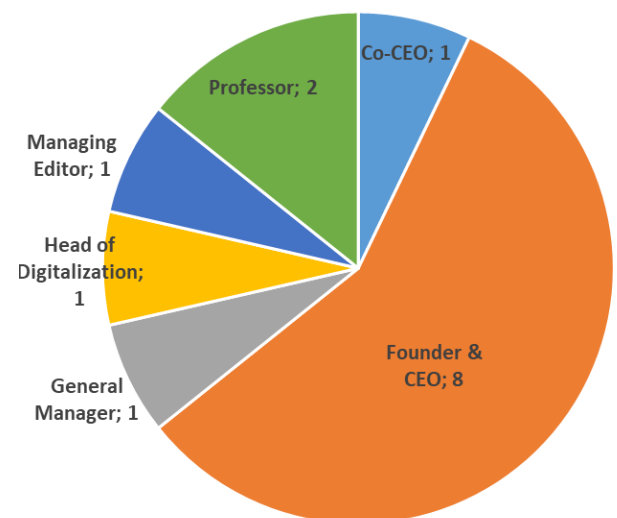
wanted to see which areas of the topics were relevant to them, how they would prioritise them and whether we could form clusters. We also wanted to find out what they would look out for during implementation, what challenges there are and whether there are already solutions that could be utilised. There were two large expert panels, each with ten experts, who discussed the following topics and summarised important findings:

1. Identify the key considerations for procuring software solutions that meet the specific needs of grassroots sports clubs.
2. Develop strategies for effective digital marketing to increase reach and engagement among members, coaches, sponsors and volunteers.

1.3 Setup

The workshops took place at the end of May (29th and 31st of May), with ten experts plus a moderator in each session. The backgrounds of the experts -14 in total- were quite diverse, ranging from founders and leaders of relevant grassroots software solutions to researchers in the field of club development, heads of digitalization from sports umbrella organizations, and sports media experts (see Chart). To include people from a wider area, the workshops were held as online sessions lasting two hours each. The moderator was from Transform Sports, a company focused on fostering innovation in sports with an emphasis on digitalization. The sections below summarize the main conclusions drawn during the workshops:

DIGIROOT Expert Roundtables



2. Workshop 1 : Software acquisition

2.1 Introduction

The first workshop on the digitalisation of grassroots sports clubs focused on the procurement and selection of suitable software solutions. The efficient use of digital tools is essential to optimise administrative processes in sports clubs and increase the engagement of members, volunteers and sponsors. This workshop aimed to create a sound basis for software acquisition by identifying and prioritising the most important issues.

2.2 Procedure

To ensure a comprehensive and practical approach, the workshop was divided into three central steps:

1. Collection and prioritisation of the most important topics for software acquisition:

Participants were asked to share their individual experiences and perspectives on the requirements and challenges of software acquisition. This information was collected and then systematically prioritised in order to identify the most relevant topics.

2. Identification of existing resources and potential:

Another focus was on recording and evaluating existing resources within the associations. Existing software solutions, technical expertise and potential synergies were analysed in order to obtain a realistic picture of the current situation.

3. Discussion of the greatest challenges:

In the final step, the experts discussed the biggest challenges that can arise when selecting and implementing new software solutions. Possible obstacles and solutions were discussed in order to prepare the organisations for typical problems and how to overcome them.

2.3 Findings

The aim of this workshop was to develop a comprehensive understanding of the aspects that require particular attention when purchasing and selecting software. The discussions and analyses led to valuable insights into which topics should be integrated into the decision-making process. Both strategic considerations and practical requirements were taken into account in order to provide the clubs with an optimal basis for decision-making.

Problem awareness and strategic approach

Create awareness: Identification and awareness of existing problems and challenges within the organisation

A crucial first step in software acquisition is to create a comprehensive awareness of the problem within the organisation. This includes identifying and understanding the existing challenges and weaknesses. Often, club members and managers are not fully aware of the problems caused by outdated or inefficient systems. It is therefore important to take a thorough inventory of the current situation. This can be done through internal surveys, feedback rounds or workshops where all those involved can contribute their views and experiences. The aim is to create a common understanding of the need for digitalisation and the associated benefits.

Clear vision: Development of a clear vision and strategic guidelines for digitalisation

Once an awareness of the problem has been created, it is essential to develop a clear vision and strategic guidelines for the digitalisation of the association. This vision should clearly define the association's goals and expectations with regard to digitalisation. This includes formulating concrete objectives, such as improving member management, increasing efficiency in administrative processes or increasing the visibility and reach of the organisation.

A clear vision helps to align all stakeholders towards a common goal and ensures that digitalisation is seen as an integral part of the association's strategy. Strategic guidelines should outline the path to realising the vision, including specific measures, responsibilities and timetables.

Pain points: Identification of the main problems and specific requirements within the organisation

Another important aspect is the precise identification of the main problems and specific requirements of the organisation. These so-called pain points are the areas in which the current systems and processes are failing or are not efficient enough. Topics such as the management of membership data, the organisation of events or communication with members and sponsors can play a role here. By identifying these pain points, specific requirements for new software solutions can be formulated. It is important to consider the specific needs of the association to ensure that the selected software fulfils these requirements and thus addresses the biggest challenges.

Overall, it is crucial that the organisation takes a strategic approach based on a deep understanding of the current problems and a clear vision for the future. By creating awareness, developing a clear vision and identifying the main problems, the association can create a solid foundation for successful digitalisation and the selection of suitable software solutions.

Compatibility and architecture

Interoperability: Ensuring compatibility with existing systems and devices for seamless integration

One of the key requirements when purchasing new software solutions is to ensure interoperability with existing systems and devices. Interoperability means that the new software must work seamlessly with the organisation's existing IT infrastructure. This applies to hardware, such as computers and mobile devices, as well as existing software, such as membership management and booking systems. Smooth integration is essential in order not to disrupt ongoing operations and to ensure that data can be exchanged efficiently and error-free between the systems. By carefully checking compatibility, duplication of work and data inconsistencies can be avoided, significantly increasing the efficiency and accuracy of club administration.

Preference for SaaS: use of cloud-based applications (software as a service) to minimise technical requirements

The use of cloud-based applications, also known as Software as a Service (SaaS), offers numerous advantages over traditional, locally installed software solutions. SaaS applications are flexible, scalable and can be used from any location with internet access. This not only minimises the technical demands on the association's local IT infrastructure, but also reduces the need for extensive IT resources and support. Cloud-based solutions also enable regular

updates and maintenance by the provider, which means that the software is always up to date and security gaps are closed. SaaS is therefore an attractive option for grassroots sports clubs, which often have limited IT resources, to drive digitalisation forward efficiently.

Device compatibility: Support for common operating systems and devices, as new equipment is often not available

Another important aspect when selecting new software solutions is device compatibility. The software should support common operating systems such as Windows, macOS, iOS and Android to ensure broad usability. As grassroots sports clubs often work with a limited budget and new equipment often cannot be purchased immediately, it is important that the new software runs smoothly on existing devices. This ensures that all members and managers of the club can use the software without having to make additional investments in new hardware. Device compatibility therefore contributes significantly to the acceptance and use of the new software within the organisation.

Overall, it is crucial that the aspects of compatibility and architecture are carefully considered when selecting new software solutions. By ensuring interoperability with existing systems, utilising cloud-based applications and supporting common operating systems and devices, the association can guarantee smooth integration and use of the new software. This forms the basis for successful digitalisation and a sustainable improvement in administrative and communication processes within the association.

User perspective

User-friendliness: Software should be intuitive and easy to use in order to promote acceptance among club members and employees

The user-friendliness of the software is a decisive factor for its acceptance and utilisation within the association. Intuitive and easy-to-understand user interfaces make it easier for members and employees to quickly familiarise themselves with the new software and use its functions effectively. Complex or confusing systems, on the other hand, can cause frustration and reduce willingness to use them. Therefore, when selecting new software solutions, great importance should be attached to a user-friendly design. This includes taking end-user feedback into account during the selection and implementation phase to ensure that the software meets actual needs and expectations. A user-friendly system can boost efficiency, increase job satisfaction and ultimately successfully drive digitalisation in the association.

Change management: support and training for members to reduce fears and promote acceptance

The transition to new software solutions can be a challenge for many association members and employees, especially if they have little experience in using digital tools. Effective change management is therefore essential to reduce fears and reservations and ensure a high level of acceptance of the new systems. This includes comprehensive training measures that provide users with the necessary knowledge and skills to use the software safely and

effectively. Regular training sessions, workshops and easily accessible manuals or online tutorials can be very helpful here. In addition, continuous support and an open ear for questions and problems should be offered to facilitate the transition process. Well thought-out change management promotes trust in the new systems and contributes significantly to the success of digitalisation.

IT security: ensuring data protection and the protection of minors

IT security is another key aspect from the user's perspective that must be taken into account when selecting and implementing new software solutions. Data protection and youth protection play a particularly important role here in order to protect the sensitive data of members and, in particular, young members. The software must therefore meet the highest security standards and be regularly updated to protect against cyber attacks and data leaks. This also includes compliance with relevant data protection laws such as the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) in the European Union. In addition to technical security measures, it is important to inform and sensitise users to security-related best practices in order to minimise human error. A secure IT infrastructure not only protects data, but also strengthens the trust of members and employees in the organisation's digital solutions.

Overall, taking the user perspective into account when selecting and implementing new software solutions is crucial to their success. By focussing on user-friendliness, effective change management and IT security, the association can ensure that the new systems are accepted and used by all members and employees. This lays the foundation for the successful and sustainable digitalisation of the association.

Financial and resource management

Cost awareness: Consideration of the total cost of ownership (TCO) when selecting software

When it comes to financial and resource management, it is crucial to carefully consider the total cost of ownership (TCO) of the software. This includes not only the acquisition costs, but also ongoing costs such as maintenance, updates and training. A comprehensive understanding of TCO helps to avoid unforeseen expenses and ensure that the software remains affordable in the long term. Through careful planning and budgeting, clubs can ensure that they get the best solutions at the most favourable conditions.

Subsidies: Use of grants and subsidies to finance digitalisation

Utilising grants and subsidies can provide considerable financial relief for associations. Various government and private programmes offer financial support for the digitalisation of associations. It is important to find out about available funding and apply for it. By making targeted use of these funds, the association can reduce the financial burden of digitalisation and make the necessary investments without placing too much strain on its own resources.

Long-term investment security: Selection of reliable providers to ensure long-term investment security

Choosing a reliable provider is crucial for long-term investment security. It is important to carefully scrutinise providers and assess their reputation, support services and long-term stability. Trustworthy providers not only offer high quality products, but also ongoing support and updates to ensure that the software meets the changing needs of the organisation. Thoughtful selection reduces the risk of bad investments and ensures that the association can build on a solid technological foundation.

Implementation challenges and sustainability

Clear transformation processes: Structured and step-by-step implementation of digital solutions

A structured and step-by-step approach to implementing digital solutions is essential to overcome implementation challenges. This means that the transformation process is divided into manageable phases, with each phase comprising specific goals and milestones. A clear roadmap helps to monitor progress and make adjustments where necessary. This methodical approach ensures that digitalisation progresses in an orderly and efficient manner.

Good communication: Transparent communication of goals and progress throughout the entire transformation process

Transparent and regular communication is a key factor for the success of the transformation process. Everyone involved should be informed about the goals, the current status and the next steps. This promotes understanding and support for digitalisation and helps to minimise misunderstandings and resistance. Regular updates and open communication channels help to ensure that all members and employees feel involved in the process.

Right team composition: Involving experts and relevant association members in the transformation process

The composition of the transformation team plays a decisive role. Both internal experts and external consultants should be involved in order to cover a broad spectrum of knowledge and experience. Relevant members of the organisation who know the needs and processes of the organisation well should also be involved. This mix of expertise and practical knowledge ensures that the digital solutions meet the specific requirements of the organisation.

Sustainability: Ensuring that solutions remain effective even in the event of personnel changes

Sustainability is another important aspect. The digital solutions must be designed in such a way that they remain effective even in the event of personnel changes. This means that systems and processes must be documented and easy to understand. Regular training and the creation of manuals or guidelines can help to retain and pass on knowledge. This ensures

that digitalisation is successful in the long term and works independently of individual team members.

Important information on implementation

Balanced approach: combination of detailed planning and pragmatic implementation

Successful digitalisation requires a balanced approach that combines both detailed planning and pragmatic implementation. Thorough planning helps to set clear goals and recognise potential challenges at an early stage. At the same time, it is important to remain flexible and react pragmatically to unforeseen problems. This approach makes it possible to combine theory and practice efficiently and to organise the transformation process smoothly.

Modular entry: start with low-threshold, modular options to help clubs gradually switch to more advanced systems

A modular approach makes it easier for clubs to tackle digitalisation step by step. By starting with simple, easy-to-implement solutions, clubs can quickly realise initial successes and build confidence in the new systems. These initial modules can later be supplemented with more advanced systems, allowing for continuous development and adaptation to growing needs. This step-by-step approach reduces risk and facilitates the acceptance of digitalisation.

Best Practices: Learning from the best practices of other clubs and accepting mistakes as part of the learning process

Learning from the best practices of other organisations can provide valuable insights and guidance. By adopting successful examples and best practices, clubs can benefit from the experiences of others and utilise proven strategies. At the same time, it is important to accept mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. Every challenge offers the opportunity to learn from it and develop further. An open error culture promotes innovation and continuous improvement.

2.4 Conclusion

The first workshop on software acquisition for grassroots sports clubs provided valuable insights and concrete recommendations on how to successfully implement digitalisation. The experts emphasised the importance of a strategic approach, ensuring compatibility, focusing on the user perspective, effective financial and resource management as well as considering implementation challenges and sustainability. Careful planning and pragmatic implementation, supported by modular onboarding options and learning from best practice, are seen as key to success. The insights gained in the workshop provide a solid foundation for driving forward the digitalisation of the association's work and achieving positive results in the long term.

3. Workshop 2: Digital marketing for sports clubs

3.1 Introduction

The second expert workshop on the digitalisation of grassroots sports clubs was dedicated to digital marketing. The aim was to develop strategies for increasing reach in order to target specific groups such as members, sponsors and the employee groups of coaches and volunteers. It was recognised that reaching these different stakeholders requires different approaches depending on the group. The workshop focused on identifying the best communication and marketing strategies and determining the most effective platforms for each target group.

3.2 Overview of the topics and initial prioritisation

The workshop began with an overview of the central topics of digital marketing and an initial prioritisation. The participants dealt intensively with the aspects of communication, marketing and sponsorship in order to develop well-founded strategies for involving the various interest groups. Particular attention was paid to the topics of recruitment and the use of social media in order to effectively reach the various target groups.

Central questions of digital marketing

The participants identified the central issues of digital marketing for sports clubs:

1. **How do we reach the right target groups with the right platforms and tools?**
 - One of the most important challenges is selecting the right platforms and tools to address the specific target groups. The effectiveness of digital marketing depends heavily on how well the channels and methods used are tailored to the needs of the respective groups.
2. **Which key interest groups need to be reached?**
 - As part of the workshop, the most important interest groups to be reached by the digital marketing strategies were identified. These include members, sponsors, coaches and volunteers. Each of these groups has different needs and expectations that need to be taken into account in the communication and marketing strategy.
3. **Which platform is best suited for which interest group?**
 - Choosing the right platform for each interest group was another key point of the discussion. It was analysed which platforms were best suited to reach and engage the respective groups. Specific recommendations were developed for sponsors, members, coaches and volunteers (e.g. for events or board activities) to maximise reach and engagement.

The in-depth discussion of these issues enabled valuable insights and practical recommendations to be developed to help the organisations strengthen their digital presence and effectively reach the desired target groups. The workshop provided a solid foundation for

the development of customised marketing strategies that are tailored to the needs of the various stakeholders.

3.3 Increasing reach and targeting groups

The survey revealed that topics such as increasing reach and targeting groups were rated particularly positively. In the area of communication and marketing in particular, various aspects were emphasised that are crucial for successfully addressing the various target groups. Here are the key findings and recommendations for addressing members:

Members

Understanding memberships: Centralised collection of information about members in order to address them individually and avoid wastage

A sound understanding of memberships is essential in order to address members effectively. This includes the centralised collection and management of membership information. By collecting and analysing data, personalised messages and offers can be created that take into account the individual interests and needs of members. This reduces wastage and increases the likelihood that members will respond to the communication.

Distinction between new and existing members

It is important to differentiate between new and existing members and to adapt communication accordingly. New members often need more information and support to find their way around the association and feel welcome. Existing members, on the other hand, benefit from updates, new offers and events that strengthen their loyalty and commitment to the association. Both groups can be optimally supported and motivated through targeted communication.

Utilisation of internal influencers and regional marketing

Internal influencers, such as committed members or club ambassadors, can play an important role in member communication. They can increase engagement and reach through personal recommendations and positive testimonials. In addition, regional marketing should be used in a targeted manner to address the local community and make the association's activities visible. Local media, events and partnerships can help to raise awareness of the organisation.

Visibility through a well-designed homepage and an integrated club app as a digital channel

A professionally designed website and an integrated association app are key elements of digital communication. They serve as information and interaction platforms that are accessible to members at all times. A user-friendly and appealing website and a versatile app offer members an easy way to find out the latest news, take part in events and get in touch with the association. These digital channels contribute significantly to increasing visibility and building an active member base.

Trainers and volunteers

Skills development through digitalisation as an incentive to reduce workload and generate additional revenue

Digitalisation offers trainers and volunteers the opportunity to develop their skills and grow professionally. Online training courses and digital certificates can incentivise people to acquire new skills that not only make their work easier, but also open up additional sources of income. Through the targeted use of digital learning platforms, organisations can offer their trainers and volunteers access to high-quality educational resources that promote their professional and personal development.

Bureaucratic relief to create a better working environment

Another important aspect is the reduction in bureaucracy through the use of digital tools. Automated administrative processes and digital communication tools significantly reduce the time spent on administrative tasks. This creates a better working environment in which trainers and volunteers can concentrate on their core tasks. The use of software solutions for member management, training planning and event organisation can optimise inefficient workflows and increase employee satisfaction.

Recording the skills of members and promoting volunteer management

The targeted recording of members' skills and interests is essential for effective volunteer management. Digital platforms make it possible to create detailed profiles of members in which their qualifications, experience and preferences are recorded. This makes it easier to find suitable volunteers for various tasks and projects and to utilise them optimally. Systematically promoting and recognising volunteer work helps to secure the commitment and motivation of members in the long term.

3.4 Use of digital platforms and media work to approach and recruit people

Digital platforms and targeted media work are effective tools for approaching and recruiting coaches and volunteers. Social media, club websites and specialised volunteer exchanges offer a wide range of opportunities to draw the attention of potential volunteers to the club. Through appealing content, regular updates and personal success stories, clubs can communicate their commitment and values and thus attract new members. Utilising online marketing strategies and targeted campaigns can significantly increase reach and make recruitment more efficient.

Overall, these measures help to optimally support coaches and volunteers, develop their skills and promote their commitment to the organisation. Digitalisation not only increases efficiency, but also creates an attractive and supportive environment that strengthens the loyalty and satisfaction of coaches and volunteers in the long term.

Sponsors

Reach increase and performance monitoring (KPIs)

One of the main requirements of sponsors is the transparency and measurability of the results achieved. Digitalisation enables clubs to efficiently monitor and present the reach of their activities and the performance of their sponsorship measures. Key performance indicators (KPIs) help to measure and analyse the success of sponsorship partnerships. Data such as reach, engagement and conversion rates can be recorded and analysed in real time to provide sponsors with detailed reports on the return on investment (ROI). This transparency strengthens trust and promotes long-term partnerships.

Commission-based sponsorship and the creation of arguments that sponsorship is more than just goodwill

Sponsorship should not just be seen as a form of goodwill, but as a strategic partnership that benefits both parties. By introducing commission-based models, clubs can show sponsors that their investment delivers tangible results. Successful sponsorship measures can be rewarded with commissions, which increases motivation and emphasises the added value of the partnership. It is important to provide clear arguments and examples that demonstrate how sponsorship contributes to brand awareness, customer acquisition and increased sales.

Use of ChatGPT to create sponsorship packages and matching platforms between clubs and sponsors

Modern technologies such as ChatGPT can help clubs to create customised sponsorship packages and find the right sponsors. By analysing data and preferences from both sides, ChatGPT can develop personalised offers that are precisely tailored to the sponsors' needs and objectives. Matching platforms based on artificial intelligence facilitate the search for suitable sponsors and improve the efficiency of acquisition processes. This saves time and resources and increases the likelihood of successful partnerships.

Bundling several clubs to create a more attractive offering

Bundling several clubs can create a more attractive sponsorship offer that provides greater reach and more diverse advertising opportunities. Through co-operations, clubs can put together joint sponsorship packages that offer sponsors a broader target group and more visibility. These synergies make sponsorship more attractive and can attract larger and more diverse sponsors. At the same time, the participating clubs benefit from the shared resources and increased cooperation.

Establishment of a sponsor club/network for exchange and as a contact platform for local entrepreneurs

Setting up a sponsors' club or network provides a valuable platform for local entrepreneurs to exchange ideas and network. Such networks enable sponsors to exchange ideas with each

other, pursue common interests and discover new business opportunities. Regular meetings, events and networking events promote dialogue and cooperation between associations and sponsors. This strengthens relationships, creates trust and offers additional added value for sponsors.

These targeted measures enable clubs to optimise their sponsorship strategies and build long-term, successful partnerships. Digitalisation plays a key role here by enabling transparency, efficiency and personalised approaches that meet the needs of both clubs and sponsors.

3.5 Linking target groups, interest groups and platforms

The second session of the workshop focussed intensively on linking target groups and interest groups with the appropriate platforms. The discussion centred on the following key questions:

1. **How do we reach the right target groups with the right platforms and tools?**
2. **Which key interest groups need to be reached?**
3. **Which platform is best suited for which interest group?**

These questions were crucial in order to develop effective communication and marketing strategies tailored to the needs and preferences of the various target groups.

Members: Utilising existing social media platforms and building a unique presence

In order to reach members in the best possible way, the participants recommended using existing social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. These platforms offer multiple opportunities to communicate regularly with members, inform them of news and events and encourage their engagement. Building a unique and consistent presence on these platforms is essential to create a strong community and strengthen member loyalty. Specialised groups and forums can also be set up to encourage interaction between members and create a sense of belonging.

Trainer: Approach via job platforms and social networks

Specialised job platforms and social networks were identified as particularly suitable for approaching and recruiting trainers. Platforms such as LinkedIn and Xing make it possible to search specifically for qualified specialists and approach them directly. In addition, job adverts can be placed on industry-specific job boards to increase reach and find suitable candidates. The use of networks and communities within these platforms makes it easier to receive recommendations and attract qualified trainers to the organisation.

Volunteers: efficient outreach via digital channels and local partnerships

Reaching volunteers efficiently requires a combination of digital channels and local partnerships. Platforms such as VolunteerMatch or local volunteer exchanges offer a good opportunity to reach out to potential volunteers. In addition, social media can be used to

draw attention to volunteer opportunities and promote engagement. Local partnerships with schools, universities and companies can also help to recruit volunteers and build long-term relationships. Regular events and information sessions in the local community also increase awareness and willingness to volunteer.

Sponsors: Relevant platforms for sponsorship objectives include digital assets such as websites, social media, club apps and newsletters

Approaching sponsors requires the targeted use of various digital platforms. Professionally designed websites that present the values and activities of the organisation serve as an important source of information for potential sponsors. Social media and club apps offer additional channels to advertise sponsorship opportunities and increase reach. Regular newsletters can be used to inform sponsors about current projects, successes and planned events. These digital assets make it possible to clearly present the added value of a partnership to sponsors and build long-term relationships.

By specifically linking target groups and interest groups with the appropriate platforms, sports clubs can optimise their communication and marketing strategies and effectively increase their reach. The approaches developed in the workshop provide a solid basis for addressing the various target groups in a targeted manner and promoting their involvement.

3.6 Realisation and challenges

The implementation of digital marketing strategies in sports clubs requires overcoming various challenges. These challenges must be recognised and addressed in order to successfully drive digitalisation forward.

Lack of resources and unrealistic expectations regarding the scope of sponsorship

A common problem is the lack of resources, both financial and human. Many clubs have limited budgets and are unable to invest in extensive marketing campaigns. In addition, there are often unrealistic expectations regarding the scope and quick results of sponsorship measures. It is important to set realistic goals and utilise the available resources efficiently. Clubs should take small, incremental approaches and focus on cost-effective measures in order to make gradual progress and retain sponsors in the long term.

Coordinated approach and responsibilities within the organisation

Another important aspect is the need for a coordinated approach within the organisation. There is often a lack of clear responsibilities and a structured approach to implementing digital strategies. It is crucial that everyone involved, from board members to volunteers, has clearly defined roles and tasks. A well-organised team with clear lines of communication can make implementation much easier and ensure that all activities are aligned with the common goals.

Technical expertise of employees and volunteers

The technical expertise of employees and volunteers is another challenge. Many organisations have members who have little experience with digital tools and platforms. To close this gap, training and continuous education are necessary. Clubs should invest in training that teaches how to use digital marketing tools and strategies. In addition, the recruitment of tech-savvy volunteers or collaboration with external experts can help to strengthen the technical expertise within the association.

Integration of regional and supra-regional structures

The integration of regional and supra-regional structures represents a further challenge. Organisations must ensure that their digital marketing strategies have an impact both locally and nationally. This requires careful planning and coordination to ensure that all measures are harmonised and communicated consistently. Collaboration with regional and national associations can help to achieve a broader reach and capitalise on existing networks.

Utilisation of existing solutions and pilot projects

It was emphasised that existing solutions and pilot projects should be used to benefit from the experience of others. The German Sports Card and counselling services provided by associations are examples of valuable resources that can support clubs. These existing solutions offer proven approaches and practical assistance that make it easier to get started with digitalisation. By sharing experiences and best practices, clubs can learn from the successes and failures of others and adapt their own strategies accordingly.

Overall, implementing digital marketing strategies requires careful planning, overcoming specific challenges and utilising existing resources and expertise. With a coordinated approach and a willingness to continuously improve, sports clubs can expand their digital capabilities and sustainably increase their reach and impact.

3.7 Existing solutions and application examples

Some proven approaches and solutions were presented as examples of successful digital marketing. These include virtual fields and transaction-based sponsorship, which offer innovative ways of attracting and retaining sponsors. Club advisory services provided by associations and pilot projects support clubs with practical advice and tried and tested methods. Platforms from national and regional sports associations offer additional resources and tools to improve the digital presence and marketing of sports clubs. One aim of DigiRoot will be to pool and make these available.

3.8 Conclusion

The workshop led to several important findings and recommendations. Firstly, the importance of individualised targeting and the use of influencers to effectively reach specific audiences was highlighted. Secondly, participants emphasised the need to use all digital channels and devices such as mobile phones, smartboards and PCs to ensure maximum reach. Thirdly, the importance of good data management and strict compliance with data protection regulations was emphasised to ensure the trust of members and partners. Finally, fostering collaboration and exchange both within the organisation and with external partners was seen as crucial to success.

In conclusion, the participants emphasised the need to continuously work on developing and adapting digital marketing strategies. The use of new technological possibilities is of central importance in order to achieve the club's goals and maximise its reach. By implementing these findings and recommendations, sports clubs can strengthen their digital presence and benefit from the advantages of digitalisation in the long term.

4. Final Conclusions

The report summarises the key findings and recommendations from the two expert workshops on the digitalisation of grassroots sports clubs. The discussions highlighted the importance of a strategic approach to software acquisition and the need for targeted digital marketing strategies to effectively address different stakeholders. By considering aspects such as resource management, technical know-how and data management, clubs can successfully drive their digitalisation forward. Continuous development and adaptation to new technologies will be crucial in order to remain successful in the long term and achieve the organisation's goals.