

Case study: Bringing a product to life



Introduction

This case study reviews the process followed to develop, produce and orient county sports partnership (CSP) coaching leads to the *Impact Measuring Tool Kit*. It articulates that by understanding the challenges faced, considering how a product is developed and having a plan in place to communicate and orient Partners as to its use, it can have a positive influence on how successfully the product is received and used.

The process described is logical and transferable, in this instance leading to having a resource and supporting tools and processes that have been well received by users.

Background

Through the development of the Coaching System Support Network (CSSN), the demands of measuring the impact of the £1.96million investment from Sport England into coaching have grown. CSPs have been tasked with feeding back to Sport England by March 2013 to demonstrate the impact of the funding they have received on coaching within governing body of sport and talent agendas. CSPs often feel capable of identifying the programmes and initiatives they have developed with their Sport England funding, but few feel confident in going that one step further and answering the 'so what?' question: 'So what has been the impact of the programmes you have developed and what impact have these programmes had on the coaches and their participants?'

As part of sports coach UK's offer to CSPs, it was agreed that we would assist CSPs by leading on the development of an impact-measuring resource accompanied by training to support CSPs on how to use it.

Coaching leads within CSPs were clear on what they wanted: clear and tangible examples of what impact is; how it can be measured; and an understanding of the tools available to demonstrate it. However, there was a challenge in terms of timescales – CSPs needed this resource designed, produced and distributed yesterday!

The development process

The process involved having a need and stated demand for a resource, developing a clear understanding of the issue, demystifying the range of tools available, finding a fit-for-purpose solution, and identifying the most effective way to disseminate the resource.



The process in action

This section of the case study shows how the process detailed in the diagram was implemented.

Buy-in from Partners to develop a product

The demand for support from sports coach UK culminated at the County Sports Partnership Network (CSPN) conference, where CSP coaching leads attended an impact-measuring seminar. During and following the seminar, CSP coaching leads expressed the need for a resource to assist them in demonstrating the impact of their work. This plea was reiterated at the March 2012 Quarter 4 reporting meetings that took place with Sport England and sports coach UK.

Following the identified need, sports coach UK agreed to lead the development of an impact-measuring resource accompanied by training to support CSPs on how to use it.

Understanding the problem and the target audience

Sport England issued recommendations that each CSP should provide a combination of impact studies, tracking studies and good practice case studies. It was clear that CSPs did not feel confident to develop these reports without advice or guidance. Subsequently, sports coach UK's Research Team was brought in to meet the CSPs to understand their needs and identify what specific support they required in order to develop the necessary case studies and tracking studies.

Auditing existing tools and resources

Ongoing engagement opportunities between the Research Team and coaching leads identified the type of tools and mechanisms presently being used, and those required to measure and demonstrate impact.

At the same time there was an opportunity to find out and collate what had been developed by sports coach UK and other sporting Partners in this area.

Developing the resource

Armed with the knowledge of what the CSPs needed in order to develop their case studies and tracking studies, sports coach UK's Research Team was in a position to create a resource that was fit for purpose. As requested by the CSPs, the resource was to include guidance and advice, top tips, templates and examples. The resource needed to be practical, non-theoretical and user-friendly.

Communicating and providing support on using the resource

Crucial to the success of the resource was to provide CSPs with the appropriate support to understand and use it in the most effective way. In July and August 2012, sports coach UK ran five Partner training events around the country to introduce CSPs to the resource and provide the necessary training.

“**The *Impact Measuring Tool Kit* and training that was offered have been particularly valuable in understanding how to report my work back to Sport England. The work of my sports coach UK Coaching Network Manager in following this up has really helped to bring it to life.**”

CSP coaching lead

The informal nature of the sessions provided an orientation to the resource that was based on the specific needs of CSP coaching leads attending the training. In addition, electronic templates and tools were shared to make the resource easier to use and share.

“**The *Impact Measuring Tool Kit* resource is user-friendly, written in a great way, useful as a reference tool and easy to use when working with partners. I have also passed it to our Communications Team in the CSP, who also find it useful when writing case studies. In addition, I have used it with two sports, and golf has even used it to write a case study about its Inspire academy in Oxfordshire. It is a sports coach UK product that stays out on my desk.**”

CSP coaching lead

Lessons learnt

- When developing a resource, ensure the target audience is consulted on what they need from it.
- Providing support and training alongside the publication of a resource has been well received by coaching leads and has increased the likelihood of it being used.
- The principles of the development of the *Impact Measuring Tool Kit* can be shared across a number of work areas at different levels. A similar example is demonstrated through the Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) **Bringing Coach Development to Clubs** case study. Through understanding the challenges and needs of volunteer club coaches, a tailored package of support was developed, which included both a written resource and a practical workshop.
- Understanding that demonstrating direct causality between sports participation interventions and behaviour change is not realistic. However, it is possible to show **positive trends and relationships** between the two.
- The tools and mechanisms within the resource have long-term value beyond investment reporting. For example, when establishing new projects/work.

Future recommendations

- Pulling together and sharing surveys and interview templates that coaching leads have generated, will mean people don't 'reinvent the wheel'. This recognises that coaching leads have areas of strength, so could provide some real pearls of knowledge and resources to their counterparts.
- Tracking activities/interventions that coaching leads have more control over will allow data collection to be a smoother/easier process. There is nothing wrong with this.
- To provide support to consider the format and communication of the impact. Is a case study or impact report most useful to coaching leads, governing bodies of sport, funders and other Partners? Be keen to show what the network really does and can do.

Reference

Schultz, J. (2012) *Impact Measuring Tool Kit*. Leeds: Coachwise Ltd/The National Coaching Foundation. Available to download at www.sportscoachuk.org/toolkit