



Sport and Recreation Alliance case study

A winning partnership – how teaming up with the IoD to deliver board training proved a great success



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Programme objectives:

The Sport and Recreation Alliance (the Alliance) exists to enable its members – the 300 plus national governing and representative bodies of sport and recreation in the UK – to run efficiently and increase participation in their individual sport or recreational activities.

A core part of the Alliance's mission is to support and equip its members to adhere to governance best practice. This has been achieved through the development and implementation of the Voluntary Code of Good Governance (a sporting equivalent to the FRC Corporate Governance Code). The Alliance provides governance support to many of its members to help them adhere to funding requirements set out by the sport funding agencies – mainly Sport England and UK Sport.

One of these requirements is the need to appoint independent, non-executive directors on to boards to ensure that all sport organisations become more modernised, open to change and business minded. The Alliance's key projects therefore, has been to ensure that aspiring new directors are adequately trained to know what is expected of them before taking on a directorship in sport. Following the launch of a board directors programme, it became clear that it wasn't only aspiring directors that could benefit from the Alliance's expertise and support – it was also existing board members from within the sport and recreation sector.

// Sallie Barker, Interim Chief Executive of the Sport and Recreation Alliance said:

"The Institute of Directors' business expertise combined with the Sport and Recreation Alliance's knowledge of the sports sector has resulted in this unique and hugely popular training course for professionals looking to update their director skills or break through into sports leadership.

"Having already trained up around 60 professionals in 2013, we're looking to build on this success in 2014. We also believe that we have a key role to play in getting more skilled women on boards this year – there is a lot of untapped talent out there and recruiting the best is what sports are now aiming to do."

Solution:

As a result of the Alliance's findings, its board skills programme was honed and developed so that on completion, both existing board directors from within sport and aspiring independent directors from outside of the sporting world could:

- understand their business and legal duties as board members
- understand how to operate in the sport and recreation sector
- understand what good board members in the sector look like and be able to put this into practice.

Working with the Institute of Directors was important to the Alliance in order to provide a gold standard of directors training to the sport and recreation sector.

The core content of the programme was developed by the Institute of Directors with the Alliance providing the essential contextual and practical sporting knowledge that ensures aspiring directors can apply their skills. The Alliance was also responsible for the overall packaging and marketing of the programme.

A main feature of the course is teaching the general role and responsibilities of directors and the board, which has been tailored by the IoD and is provided over one day.

Building on this, the Alliance, created a second day – taking the important learning points from day one and applying them to the sport and recreation environment.

// Mikkel Larsen, Governance Officer said:

"In 2013, 60 individuals attended the course. Feedback from the first two courses was hugely positive and helped the Sport and Recreation Alliance tailor the second day to make the overall experience specific for the intricacies of the sports sector.

"The course is now growing from strength to strength and the Alliance has learnt a lot along the way, which has resulted in the last course in November scoring an overall feedback score of 4.7 out of the possible 5.0.

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Testimonials:

// Jason Gardener MBE, who is a board director at British Athletics and a former Olympic, World, European and Commonwealth champion attended the course in 2013. He said:

"One of the first things I realised in my role as a board member is that a passion and love for sport isn't enough on its own – governing bodies like mine are dealing with millions of pounds of public and private money and need to be run effectively.

"The last few years have opened my eyes to the complexity of sport corporate governance, funding and development.

"To my knowledge there are no other courses around that provide business-specific board level training for sport, so when I saw that the Sport and Recreation Alliance had teamed up with the Institute of Directors to provide it, I grabbed the opportunity.

"I particularly found the corporate governance aspects of the course extremely useful and it made me realise that there is a lot that I needed to get up to speed with.

"I think lots of board directors, especially those new to board duties in sport, would be surprised at just how much more they need to learn to ensure their boards have effective corporate governance controls".

Results:

The first training course was scheduled in January 2013 and catered for 22 delegates. It was the first time that the Alliance had ever launched a programme of this nature and, as a highly technical and professionally delivered training experience, the course fees may have deterred some sports.

Fears were soon put to rest however, as a large influx of both aspiring and existing directors expressed their interest in attending the course. Waiting lists had to be created and a further two courses were scheduled in for June and November.

Next steps:

The course is growing in popularity and so as well as sending people individually on the two-day course, the Alliance now offers bespoke board training opportunities to individual governing bodies.

Working with the Institute of Directors, sports organisations can now get one-on-one training specifically for their organisation, for each and every board director, over the course of one day.

About The Sport and Recreation Alliance

The Sport and Recreation Alliance is a non-profit membership organisation for over 300 national governing and representative bodies of sport and recreation in the United Kingdom.

Members of the Sport and Recreation Alliance range from large fully professional organisations such as the Football Association (the FA), Rugby Football Union (RFU) and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to much smaller volunteer-run organisations like the Croquet Association, Long distance walking and British kitesurfing.

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