

20 January 2017

Volunteer writers wanted

Within Volleyball England, we are changing our approach to our content and communications. Previously, our focus was very much on reportage; facts and figures, heavily concentrated on the elite end of our sport.

This was the right approach for our strategy at that time. However, in line with the demands of Sport England, our strategy is now changing to be more focused on our core market of clubs, players and volunteers, regardless of what they play (Volleyball, Beach Volleyball or Sitting Volleyball), where they play or the level they play at.

The buzzword now is “engagement”. To properly engage with this enlarged core market, we need to produce content rather differently. There will still be some reportage but we want to augment this with opinion and insights, advice points, case studies, stories of achievement, debates on the big issues within our sport, downloadable resources and much more.

All of this needs to be done in a personable, conversational style, featuring plenty of first person content. Where previously we talked at our audience, we now want to talk with them. Our digital platforms need to become a forum for discussion. VE itself wants to be seen as more of a knowledge sharing hub; a centre of excellence. And on those occasions when we don’t have the expertise ourselves, we want to showcase the people in the volleyballing community who do.

In short, what we are shifting towards is more of a magazine style publishing mindset. If a piece of content will not be of interest to a sizable chunk of our volleyballing audience, especially the volunteers at our clubs up and down the country, then we shouldn’t bother writing it.

Adopting this mindset means being more journalistic in our approach to content. Reporting on the “what” will only get us so far. Exploring the “why” and the “how” is what we want to do now (more on that later).

Your sport needs you

With limited resources at head office in Loughborough, we cannot do this alone. Therefore, we are now appealing for volunteer writers in all our regions. Writing may be your hobby or your profession, you may be retired or recently graduated; it really doesn’t matter. What matters is having a decent network of contacts in your region, an eye for a story and an ability to write in an engaging and conversational style.



In return, we can't offer any financial reward (sorry!) but we can offer a by-line and some visibility (for those of you looking to build up a portfolio), the opportunity to profile the great work going on in your region and the chance to contribute to VE's new-look engagement strategy.

Some of you may already contribute content to both your region and to VE – but this will be slightly different. As our central editorial calendar starts to take shape, we'll have story ideas we'll want to throw out to our writer network. This might involve writing an entire piece from scratch or we may just be looking for a few soundbites to supplement something being written centrally.

However, what we're really keen on are your story ideas. Feel free to pitch us your story ideas; as many as you see fit. If we like the idea, we'll commission it and we'll promise to publish it on the VE site and to promote it via our digital platforms.

The content we're looking for

Returning to the earlier point about the type of story we are most interested in, we really want the story behind the bare facts and figures. We want the insights, opinions and advice which bring a topic to life.

Here's an example. January 27 marks the start of the 2017 This Girl Can campaign. For sure, there will be a factual piece in the VE plan, stating what the campaign is about and how we fully support it. However, we are also using this as the chance to start a mini-series of content on Women in Volleyball (not so much 'this girl can', as 'this girl already did').

This is an excuse to highlight inspirational stories from women across the volleyballing community. However, it's also a chance for those women to have their say on female participation in sport, the barriers which may still exist and what they think could be done to overcome them.

Example #2 comes from the HEVO community where we have a number of survey stats on people playing volleyball when in higher education. Yes, there's an interesting reportage piece on those stats but there is just as interesting piece on how clubs could tap into this market (as the stats show that a large number want to keep playing during the summer holidays and an even higher percentage are already expressing an interest in becoming a coach, ref or club volunteer) and the benefits of being linked into the HEVO programme.

Insights from the desk of the chief exec; views on the future of public sport funding; top five advice points for new club chairmen; a coaching drill of the week; what's the biggest danger of not taking safeguarding seriously; behind the scenes at a talent camp; how best to brand your club – these are the sorts of stories we are keen to publish more of.



Do you want to be part of it?

If you'd like to get involved, do please get in touch (communications@volleyballengland.org). To begin with, all we need to know is a bit about your writing background, the region you could cover and the types of content you'd be most interested in writing.

If this goes well, we will hopefully form a network of writers, within which we can constantly be bouncing ideas off each other for potential stories and features; maybe even videos and infographics. And needless to say, if this does go well, we're going to start producing content which our audience will actively seek out. The quest for more engaging content starts here.

Simon Griffiths (Interim Communications Lead, Volleyball England)