

Personal Reflection on Work Placement at Derby County Football Club

Introduction

Over the course of my six week placement, I had the opportunity to complete a 30-hour work placement at Derby County Football Club, working every Tuesday for five hours in the marketing, commercial, community trust, and ticketing departments. This experience afforded me valuable insight into how a professional football club works and my growing understanding of the sports industry. While undergoing this placement, I developed key professional skills in areas such as time management, teamwork, problem-solving, and communication. I also came to appreciate the importance of marketing and community involvement in the work of sports organizations. The reflection will discuss my experiences, what I've learned, and how the insights I received will aid me in my future endeavours in sports management.

Time management was one of the most fundamental skills I gained during my placement. Under the condition that I worked on several assignments across various departments, the efficient use of time was essential in order to get work done properly within the given deadlines. Good time management is a crucial skill in any professional setting, as it allows individuals to complete their work efficiently and meet deadlines without unnecessary stress (Macan, 1994). I made it a point to always arrive 10 minutes before 10:00 am every Tuesday, which showed the dedication I have to my work and also my reliability. According to Claessens et al. (2007), punctuality and time management enhance productivity and improve an individual's professional reputation. These skills will be invaluable as I progress in my career, as meeting deadlines and being dependable are essential in the sports industry.

Working away from the placement with various professionals drawn from different departments improved my teamwork and collaboration skills. Effective teamwork is essential in sports organizations, as it allows individuals to share ideas, support one another, and work towards common goals (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). I worked together with the marketing team in the production of promotional materials, found out how ticket prices are determined for each game, and also helped Fan Hub with an open training session at Moor Farm. Experiences like these made me understand the importance of effective communication, active listening, and mutual respect among members of a team. Research has shown that successful teamwork leads to higher efficiency and better decision-making within organizations (Salas, Sims, & Burke, 2005).

During my placement, I faced challenges that demanded quick decision-making and problem-solving skills. For example, while helping out in a player signing session, I ran out of flags I was meant to give out but I found a way to get extra to keep giving out. These situations required me to employ critical thinking and offer solutions that appeased the customer. Problem-solving is a key competency in any professional setting, as it enables individuals to navigate unexpected challenges effectively (Jonassen, 2011). The other one that came into play was adaptability as I had changed roles a few times. Research suggests that adaptability is an important trait in today's dynamic work environment, as it allows individuals to respond to changes and new challenges efficiently (Pulakos et al., 2000).

Communication was paramount in the sense that it was my strength at Derby County Football Club. Interacting with other staff was significant. According to Mehrabian (1972), effective communication involves both verbal and non-verbal cues, making it crucial to be clear, concise, and professional in interactions. My placement reiterated for me the relevance of listening attentively and articulating one's message clearly which I have previously struggled with. Being able to continuously develop these skills will help enhance my career, as effective communication is a cornerstone of successful business interactions (Guffey & Loewy, 2015).

Working alongside the marketing team allowed me valuable insights into marketing functions for sports organizations and how a club uses social media. Sports marketing is a vital function in modern football clubs, as it enhances brand visibility, attracts sponsorship deals, and fosters fan loyalty (Shank & Lyberger, 2014). I also became aware of the role of data analysis in the marketing decision-making process. For example, understanding customer demographics and engagement patterns allowed the club to tailor its marketing strategies effectively (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The result was a further insight into sports marketing and its role in promoting business.

The commercial department plays a crucial role in securing sponsorship deals and managing revenue streams for the club. I observed how partnerships with local businesses and corporate sponsors contributed to the financial stability of the club and how essential it was to build those little connections. Sponsorship is a major source of revenue for football clubs, as it provides funding for operations and enhances brand visibility (Beech & Chadwick, 2013). Research indicates that successful sponsorship deals are built on mutual benefits and long-term relationships (Cornwell, 2008). This experience taught me the importance of and managing relationships in the commercial world of sports.

The ticketing department was another area where I gained valuable experience. I saw how prices were determined for each game and also saw how the staff interacted with the fans making enquiries both in person and on the phone. Providing excellent customer service is essential in retaining fans and ensuring a positive matchday experience (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2018). I learned the importance of patience, professionalism, and problem resolution when dealing with customer concerns. Research suggests that high-quality customer service enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty, which is vital for sports organizations (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

Conclusion

My six-week placement at Derby County Football Club was a wonderful learning experience that gave practical insight into the sports industry. I have developed important skills in time management, cooperation, problem-solving, and communication that would benefit my future career. Furthermore, I now know far more about sports marketing, commercial operations, community engagement, and customer service. The things I learned and the experiences I gained during this placement have only served to strengthen my resolve to work in the sports industry and further bolster my confidence in pursuing a career in this area. My intention is to apply these imparted lessons into whatever role I take on next, so that I may meaningfully contribute to the sports industry and grow even further with my professional competencies.

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