

## ENGAGE! - How Clubs Can Win With Football Supporters (Supporters Direct) – No 1

### New Publication from Supporters Direct

Supporters Direct have recently published a guidance document titled *“ENGAGE! – How Clubs Can Win With Football Supporters”*. The guidance was written and researched by James Mathie and Andrew Jenkin of Supporters Direct. It has also had a number of valuable contributions from people working to enhance supporter involvement including Roger Ellis, Kristine Green, Peter Lloyd, Stuart Dykes, Ashley Brown and Nicola Hudson.

To quote Supporters Direct:

*“The purpose of this guidance is to:*

- Identify the different ways supporters engage with clubs (and vice versa)*
- Highlight good and bad practice*
- Provide practical and effective templates and tools to help both supporters and clubs implement best practice*

*We hope these guidelines will be of benefit to both supporters and clubs.”*

We have put the document on our website in full and can be viewed [here](#). However, we will be featuring extracts from the guidance over the next few weeks. We hope that you will find the content to be of interest and the first extract is noted below:

#### *“INTRODUCTION TO SUPPORTER INVOLVEMENT*

*Many of today’s most successful clubs and particularly the longest established clubs have their origins in community organisations and enterprises such as churches, social clubs or factories. The vast majority of football clubs emerged from their formative years with names shared with towns, cities or areas of cities, and as such came to fulfil something of a representation role for large numbers of citizens from urban neighbourhoods.*

*While football in some countries retained this traditional member club structure, as interest in the game grew and better facilities were needed to be built and financed, many British clubs adopted the structure of private limited liability companies. Although typically the change in club structure was motivated by a desire to protect the founders and officers of the clubs from personal liability, it had the effect of creating shareholders who had greater power and influence than their fellow supporters, changing the dynamic of these clubs.*

*Although at most clubs legal ownership has passed to a smaller number of investors, supporters are often seen as the moral owners of clubs, with far greater connection, commitment and advocacy than people have with other businesses.”*

*“Many football clubs are the lifeblood of the community, and serve as a hub to many players, volunteers and spectators every week.” - Sport England’s Property Director, Charles Johnston*

*“While players, coaches and even owners change with increasing frequency, supporters remain loyal to the colours they proudly wear. Because fans are the reason football exists at all, their voice has to be heard and fans have to help shape football’s future.” - UEFA*

#### *“SUPPORTER INVOLVEMENT: WHY DO IT?*

*Successful supporter involvement goes some way to achieving a bridging solution, retaining a worthwhile connection for the supporters and the club despite the club’s legal status often technically operating for the few (shareholders) not the many (supporters).*

*Having a suitable system of supporter involvement in place is undoubtedly beneficial for both supporters and clubs. Successful businesses can spend significant sums consulting their customers, the insight this feedback can provide is hugely valuable to their long term sustainability and growth.*

*Football fans hate to be considered as customers and it's detrimental for them to be treated solely as that, they have absolute allegiance to their club and can be advocates that any other business would die for. For clubs, it clearly makes good business sense to embrace the willingness to engage and welcome what most businesses would consider being incredibly valuable customer feedback.*

*Greater supporter involvement provides the potential for a club to better understand its supporters and to better leverage those relationships in furtherance of its financial, social and community objectives.”*

We hope that you found the above to be of interest and gives an insight into what forms the basis of supporter involvement in football clubs. We will feature further extracts from the guidance over future weeks and look forward to receiving any comments you may wish to make on [enquiries@bwfcst.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@bwfcst.co.uk)