

The Relationship Between Athletics and Business: Using Management Tools to Guide a Team Captain to Success

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Abstract:

This research project creates a guide for newly elected team captains. The guide is created by analysis of management tools used when new managers are hired. A structured framework is presented for team captains that can be directly translated to business management skill. This project is comprised of three sections. The first section is a literature review of material available on the relationship between athletics culture and business culture. This section identifies which qualities are common between these cultures, validating there is a relationship. The second section is the feedback from interviews conducted with managers. The feedback was based upon hiring techniques, and preparation and training methods for new management hires. The final section is a creative section and describes the strategies coaches and team captains should use to prepare for the new position. This section is the compilation of the literature research; the knowledge gained through the interviewing process; and years of personal experience.

Section One: The transferability of qualities between athletics and the business world.

Specific qualities are represented in both athletic culture and business culture. These qualities can be directly transferred from the athletic arena, to the business environment. The qualities learned from participation in sports will improve and enhance performance in the workplace (Liu, Srivastava, & Woo, 1998). Section one will be an analysis and cross-reference of literature available on the identification of athletic culture qualities and literature available on the identification of business culture qualities. The specific set of qualities and skills consistent between athletics and business will be determined.

This section is needed in the verification of the relationship between athletics and business. It is important to determine the qualities that lead to success in athletic culture and business culture. Success in sports is determined by an individual's ability to learn, master new skills, and improve total performance; these attributes are present in all facets of life (Burton, Gillham, Weinberg, Yukelson, & Weigand, 2013), including the business world.

This is a review of the literature available on the subject of athletics and business transferability. The following is the specific set of qualities which have been identified of having the transferability attribute.

Leadership:

The first transferable quality is leadership. Athletic leadership is represented by the team captain and business leadership is represented by managers and executives. Two types of leaders have been determined- those who are task oriented and those who are expressive and socially oriented (Kent & Todd, 2004; Loughhead, Hardy, & Eys, 2006).

Two important qualities found in the majority of research include being an inspiring communicator (Basefsky, Post, Maxwell, & Turner, 2004; Holmes, McNeil, & Adorna, 2010) and possessing integrity (Basefsky et al.; Tait, 1996). Another predominant quality in the literature is respect; an athletic team captain must have respect for teammates and coaches, while also being a respected individual (Kent & Todd, 2004; Holmes et al.). Other leadership qualities include having great passion for achieving the team mission (Basefsky et al.; Tait, 1996) and having a determined work ethic in all aspects of life (Holmes et al.; Kent & Todd, 2004; English, Manton, Sami, & Dubey, 2012)

Cohesiveness:

The next transferable quality is cohesiveness within team members. Members of a sports team, and members of a business team/department must interact with diverse individuals, while ensuring the team members complement each other and cooperate with each other to

achieve team success (Bon, 2009; Hanson, C., 1996; Holmes et al.). When working together, teammates must become cohesive in the training, instruction, and social support. To strengthen cohesiveness, leaders must not act in an autocratic behavior (Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Additionally, both athletic teams and business teams help to make individuals find a place of belonging (Marks, 1987). Teammates and co-workers need to work as team players to share responsibility, without necessarily having authority (Marks, 1987).

Competitiveness:

The third quality in athletic culture that has transferability to business culture is competitiveness. Athletes are competitive in nature and are taught that once success is achieved, it is important to not become complacent with the individual's or team's current performance (McNutt & Wright, 1995). In business, this competitiveness will lead to achievement of the utmost best work ethic for the individual; therefore, leading to the team with the best work ethic, which ultimately leads to overall business success (Holmes et al.). Furthermore, when faced with failure, the team is not content with the result; they will analyze the problem and figure out how to handle the situation differently, and how to improve the overall performance (Greenberg, & Sweeney, 2005). Additionally, quick problem solving leads to living successful lives (Tschohl, 1999) in athletic culture and business culture.

Mental Toughness:

Mental toughness is the fourth quality that is transferable from athletic culture to business culture. This psychological toughness is comprised of five major themes determined by Butt, Weinberg, and Culp (2010). The following chart displays the theme found by Butt et al. and examples of each major theme.

Figure 1:

Major Theme	Example
Performing Under Pressure	Coping with adversity, step-up under pressure
Being Motivated	Drive to succeed, refusal to give up
Positive Psychological Attributes	Confidence, task focus
Being a Hard Worker	Pushing beyond limits, outworking others
Anticipation Skills	Anticipating

As seen by the examples, mental toughness is very important in the athletic arena as well as the workplace. An athlete must be educated in the above major themes and in turn, an employee's knowledge and performance against these themes contribute to their success in

business (Butt et al.). An individual must be mentally tough enough to understand that business is not personal (Holmes et al.).

Commitment:

Furthermore, the fifth transferable quality is commitment. An environment is created where players have to make a personal investment in the team and truly believe it is their team (Fletcher, & Arnold, 2011; Paradis, Martin, & Carron, 2012). Additionally, successful business employees need to have a total investment in their work team and company (Fletcher et al. 2011); which leads to better performance. Committed, passionate, and cohesive teams are more competitive (Paradis et al., 2012.).

Coaching:

The sixth quality that is transferable between athletics and business is coaching. When being a part of a sports team, the team members learn coaching skills which can be transferred to the business field. Four major concepts that relate to coaching are personality, motivation, teamwork, and communication (McNutt & Wright, 1995). Coaching also focuses on improving performance by building self-esteem, focusing on problems not personalities, using reinforcement to share behavior, and actively listening (McNutt & Wright, 1995). A team member in the role of a team captain acts as a liaison between the coaching staff and the players, which teaches them valuable communication skills (Loughead et al.) Coaching assists in helping others examine their strengths and weaknesses (Liu et al.). Understanding their motivations teaches valuable insights on improvement (Fleetham & Griesmer, 2006).

Implications:

Some implications have been found throughout the research. The first shortcoming is the qualities of sports culture will differ dependent upon gender; successful male and female athletes interact differently, lead differently, and communicate differently (Holmes et al.) Additionally, the literature on the transferable qualities between athletics and business is limited, so the preceded six qualities are derived from cross-reference of athletics articles and business works; which could have an skewed the set of results. Another implication is that this comparison study has focused on team sports culture, rather than individual sports culture; therefore, the skills and lessons taught in team sports versus individual sports may differ.

Section Two: Interviews with Managers on New Manager Preparation and Training

It is important to have an understanding of the methods of preparation and training given to new management hires. Section two is comprised of three interviews which have been conducted with managers from various corporations. The interviews were conducted in order to understand these strategies and methods manager uses to prepare and train newly hired management employees.

The interviewees include:

- Phil Gillig Associate Director of Retail Operations at Mondelez International.
- James Sarsfield IT Operations and Services Manager and Braskem America.
- Gary Schmidt Human Resource Manager at Mondelez International.

The interviewing process was comprised of one phone interview with Robbiparo and three online interviews with the remaining interviewees. The following are the specific guidelines given in the onboarding process of managers.

Success Factors

The first questions in the interviews were on the subject of discovering a qualified employee for the position. These questions were based on the initial qualities the manager looks for in the applicant's resume, and the qualities the manager looks for in the interview process.

One common quality mentioned by all interviewees was leadership. Gillig looks for leadership examples in academic situations, as well as in other activities such as extracurricular activities. He stated, "Leadership is tough to teach later in life, so examples shown by age 22 are a good sign (that the applicant is well prepared for the position." He continued to explain that the ability to form effective relationships is crucial. (P. Gillig, personal communication, February 19, 2014).

Another important quality is work ethic. Work ethic is important because as the workplace and business changes from day to day, the company needs a manager who is willing to change and has the ability to "ramp up as needed" (P. Gillig, personal communication, February 19, 2014).

Additionally, another quality is having the technical skills for the position. Sarsfield is from a sports background and looks for people with technical experience. He gave the analogy, "In sports I would equate this to looking for a player with specific skill. If you need a tight end in football, he needs the basic skills for that position before you can consider the other qualities" (J. Sarsfield, personal communication, February 14, 2014).

While in the interview process the managers look for other qualities that they believe a successful manager should have. Mondelez follows a behavior-based interview approach that attempts to ascertain how the candidate has exhibited the desired competencies in prior experience. This is used because it is predictive of how they will practice those competencies in the available position (G. Schmidt, personal communication, March 16, 2014).

The first interview highlighted quality is interpersonal skills. To be successful in sales management careers it is important for managers to have a sense of humor and an ability to build rapport (P. Gillig, personal communication, February 19, 2014). Schmidt also looks for interpersonal skills during interviews; he says “the candidate must be able to interact capably up and down the continuum of people they will encounter” (G. Schmidt, personal communication, March 16, 2014).

Additionally, Gillig looks for intellectual horsepower. He explains this as the measured both in terms of grades, as well as, “real world” skills. Having this balance is very important and makes for successful managers (P. Gillig, personal communication, February 19, 2014). Sarsfield elaborates on the intellectual horsepower in that he looks for people who are intelligent and can think on their feet. He finds it important for an applicant to adapt to changes in new technologies and methodologies quickly (J. Sarsfield, personal communication, February 14, 2014).

Management Guidelines:

The next section of interview questions is focused on the time period when an applicant has been recently hired as a manager. The questions give an understanding of the preparation practices and the training practices given to these newly hired managers. These questions include what type of training and preparation given to recently hired managers, the job shadowing experiences, and orientation training sessions.

In consensus of all interviewees, the management guidelines will vary greatly dependent upon the management role. There are different training methods for different departments. For example, Sarsfield does not use job shadowing in his technical IT field, while Gillig and Schmidt use job shadowing in their sales and retail field.

A major training method for Mondelez is the job shadowing experience. They use these to show how managers interact with each other. Gillig states, “We lay out specific expectations and in turn ask the employee what their expectations are both the position and from their direct supervisor” (P. Gillig, personal communication, February 19, 2014).

Another training method at Mondelez are online tutorials, but are used mostly on an as needed basis. Mondelez also has individualized training sessions, as well as, classroom training

installments for entry level managerial positions (G. Schmidt, personal communication, March 16, 2014).

Furthermore, Schmidt elaborates on the training method of Learning Paths. He explains that “For all of our positions, we have devised “Learning Paths/On-boarding Plans” that outline the essential elements of the particular position, maps out the chronological progression to attain these elements, and notes milestones that need to be achieved.” This follows the 70/20/10 approach which believes 70% of experiential learning is on-the-job, 20% is via job shadows and mentors, and 10% is training-based. “That said, without guidance, the on-the-job component can be daunting so we attempt to pair that approach with the other two aspects (shadows/mentors, learning path) in order to provide a road map” (G. Schmidt, personal communication, March 16, 2014).

At Braskem America, Sarsfield explained that leadership training is provided to all new management hires. Additionally, these managers are trained in the company’s fundamental belief system. The fundamental belief system is the way in which company culture is based upon. Additionally, the company is based on entrepreneurial culture. The training for managers focuses on developing and enhancing leadership qualities and not procedural tasks. Through this culture, “each manager is challenged to operate their department as though they were running their own business.” Additionally, the managers are taught to guide and mentor their employees to make good decisions and execute their individual roles effectively (J. Sarsfield, personal communication, February 14, 2014).

Team Building Activities:

All of the interviewees have mentioned that an important management role is creating team building activities. Their managers are involved in in-office and out-of-office activities, as well as, community philanthropy and community involvement. The last section of questions in the interviews pertained to these relationship building activities planned by the managers.

In order to create a team atmosphere within the company, Mondelez has quarterly manager exclusive meetings. Along with this, they use weekly conference calls for managers which are led by Senior Leaders (P. Gillig, personal communication, February 19, 2014). These calls address all constituents that drive the business within that market. Additionally, along with the quarterly meetings, Schmidt explains that Mondelez conducts two region-wide meetings each year. Furthermore, there are ad hoc gatherings for projects, recruitment, and interviewing (G. Schmidt, personal communication, March 16, 2014).

Similarly, Braskem conducts manager exclusive meetings. These meetings are focused on leadership and goal developments. At these meetings, managers from different parts of the

company collaborate to review processes and set business strategies (J. Sarsfield, personal communication, February 14, 2014.)

Another important factor in team cohesion is the utilization of the company intranet. This provides managers with talking points of emphasis to insure there is consistent messaging throughout the entire company (P. Gillig, personal communication, February 19, 2014)..

To motivate the employees in the sales environment, Mondelez has an extensive incentive and awards program. Additionally, the company provides managers with numerous examples of motivational tools that have been successful throughout the years (P. Gillig, personal communication, February 19, 2014). Schmidt states, "Our Company has increasingly shifted our assessment process away from results and toward the "how" components that enable the results. Part and parcel of the "how" is leading, motivating, and inspiring their respective teams." In addition to these roles, points of emphasis include the ability to identify and develop talent (G. Schmidt, personal communication, March 16, 2014). Additionally, Braskem promotes its managers to motivate the employees. Braskem has numerous levels of recognition for all employees to reward accomplishments and performance. This recognition comes in many forms, ranging from gift cards and pizza parties to significant financial rewards and acknowledgement in global company publications (J. Sarsfield, personal communication, February 14, 2014.).

From a community involvement standpoint, Mondelez provides a Women's Sales Council (WSC). This features two region leads, four market leads, and 18 team captains. The WSC consciously promotes the development of females and provides networking opportunities that focus on career development. This has grown to become the focal point for Mondelez's community involvement activities. Additionally, the Multi-Cultural Sales Council has recently been launched. This group has an ethnic minority focus in terms of culture, retention, recruitment, community service, and promoting awareness (G. Schmidt, personal communication, March 16, 2014).

Braskem also has a focus on community involvement. In the regions its facilities are located; the company provides many events to promote safety and sustainability from a global standpoint. Sustainability is a very important aspect of the Braskem culture. Braskem and its employees strive to promote sustainability within the company, as well as in the community (J. Sarsfield, personal communication, February 14, 2014).

Section 3: A Guide for Newly Elected Team Captains.

This document is intended as a reference for newly elected team captains and coaches of University Division I athletics interested in preparing for being a team captain. It provides guidance in approaches, lessons, and situations transferred between management and athletics. If further information is needed, please contact Alexa Sarsfield, at apsst17@mail.rmu.edu.

For the Coach

It is very important for a coach to be a facilitator to the team captain. This will enable to the team captain to be better prepared for his or her new position. The relationship between the team captain and the coach is very important for the team chemistry. A coach being involved in the team captain's preparation and training will strengthen this relationship and help to ensure the team finds success.

Creating a Shadowing Experience:

A mentoring experience for newly elected team captains will provide them with the opportunity to learn about the day-to-day activities the team captain position entails. Participating in a mentoring and shadowing experience will enable newly elected team captains to become familiar with the position characteristics and expectations, as well as the responsibilities of the position. This will also facilitate the captains to understand the skills needed to be successful as a team captain. Learning the experiences and strategies of former team captains will give new team captains the opportunity to get a jump start with the knowledge and skills needed for success.

Providing Training Sessions:

- **Expectations:** Each coach should have a meeting with their team's newly elected team captain to explain all the expectations for the position. This can include practice and game responsibilities, team building responsibilities, and fundraising and community involvement goals.
- **Communication:** A coach should also stress the importance of good communication skills. Communication is an important factor for any team member and especially the team captain. It is essential for a team captain to have very clear verbal and nonverbal communication. Additionally, it is important to have clear and appropriate technological and social media communication. Some vital communication sources for teams are now through technology. These include, but are not limited to:

- Facebook groups
- Facebook team pages
- Google calendars
- Twitter team accounts
- Texting groups
- Email groups
- **Leadership:** A coach should also provide the newly elected team captain with the leadership skills that will lead to team success. This will help the team captain to improve on his or her current leadership skills, while also broadening his or her horizons to establish new leadership skills and strategies.
- **Other Ideas:** Other training sessions a coach could provide a team captain with include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Conflict resolution
 - Fundraising
 - Team building activities
 - Team athletic motivation
 - Team academic motivation

Conducting an All-Captain's Seminar:

This type of training involves the individual coach of the team and additionally the entire athletic department. It would be beneficial for captains of all sports teams to have a seminar together. It would also be beneficial to have former year's team captains attend the seminar to interact with the new captains and share their experiences. The seminar would be three hours in length. The event could be divided into three sessions including: Meet and Greet, Leadership Development, and Personality Analysis.

- **Meet and Greet:** The meet and greet would be for all new team captains and past team captains to interact in a casual setting. This session would be over a meal. Athletes could share their experiences and their questions with each other. The captains would then be able to learn about the strategies of other team captains. This knowledge sharing will help individual captains better their performance as a leader and also will facilitate all sports teams to have successful leadership.
- **Leadership Development:** During this session the team captains will be informed of what leadership strategies are successful for athletes. The session will help to establish and improve effective leadership skills and help prepare captains for future obstacles and challenges. This will provide the team captains with good leadership for themselves and also how to promote leadership throughout the team. The different sections that could be analyzed are strategic planning, decision making, and conflict resolution.
- **Personality Analysis:** This would be a session that would help team captains to interact with other teammates who have similar or different personalities compared to themselves. Each captain attending the seminar would take a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). This indicator categorizes personality into 16 four-letter types. This letter types include: Extraversions versus introversion- an individual's means of

interacting with the world, sensing versus intuition- individual's means of gathering information, thinking versus feeling- an individual's means of processing information, and judging versus perceiving- an individual's means of making decisions(Achakul & Yolles, 2013). Each athlete would learn about the different personalities and what are the best strategies to interact and motivate each type of person.

For the Captain

There are many important skills for a team captain to possess. These skills can always be improved upon. A team captain must embrace these skills to be a successful leader because as Vince Lombardi once said, "The strength of the group is the strength of the leaders."

Leadership Styles:

In reference to "Primal Leadership," by Daniel Goleman, the following describe six different types of leadership. To become an effective leader team captains must be able to possess all of these styles of leadership and use them at the appropriate times (Leadership Styles, 2014).

- **Visionary:** This style is most used when a team needs to take a new direction. Its goal is to motivate people to achieve a new goal, such as a conference championship. These leaders communicate where the team is going and the team's goal, but not necessarily how the team is going to get there. This allows the individual team members to motivate themselves to achieve the goal and lets them be free to achieve the goal in a way that is best fitting for them.
- **Coaching:** Although you are not the coach of the team, it is important to help in coaching your teammates. This type of leader focuses one-on-one with individual players. This leader helps to develop the teammate's skills, showing him or her how to improve performance, and helping them to achieve their goals. Make sure not to overstep your position as a captain, but share your knowledge of the game and schooling with other players in order to help them succeed.
- **Affiliative:** This style emphasizes the importance of team work, and creates harmony for a team by connecting all the players. This leader helps to increase morale, improve communication, and confront any conflicts that are detrimental to the team. Make sure your teammates are motivated to work for each other, and that they will be more successful if they work as one. Affiliation to the team can be promoted with team building activities.
- **Democratic:** This style of leadership gets participation from your teammates and also creates new and better ideas by learning teammates' knowledge and skills. The group

also commits to the team's goals. This should be used at appropriate times because it is not time efficient and sometimes quick decisions must be made.

- **Pacesetting:** In this style, the captain needs to set high standards for team performance. This includes all aspects of being a team member including in practices, lifting, games, social events, and school work. As a captain it is important to lead by example and always do things to the best of your ability and then ask the same effort from everyone on your team. Make sure you do this in a motivating way, because some teammates may think they are failing if they do not meet your standards.
- **Commanding.** This is classic model of "military" style leadership – probably the most often used, but the least often effective. Because it rarely involves praise and frequently employs criticism, it undercuts morale and job satisfaction. Mr. Goleman argues it is only effective in a crisis, when an urgent turnaround is needed. Even the modern military has come to recognize its limited usefulness.

Motivating Others to Create Team Success:

- **Lead by example:** One way to motivate a team to perform at the of their abilities is to lead by example. A team captain must give 110% effort any day he or she steps on the playing field, court, or rink. The teammates will see this and will be motivated to perform at the same caliber as the captain does. Additionally, a team captain must ramp up as needed in a game. If there is a close match or emotional match, the captain must be willing to give whatever it takes to help the team find success.
- **Show passion:** Another way to motivate others on the team to create success is to be a passionate leader. There are five indicators of passionate leadership: commit honestly, make a clear case without being inflexible, invite real dialogue about their passion, act in support of their passion, and stay committed despite adversity and setbacks. If a leader has true passion, "the teammates will feel a deep sense of being led in a worthy direction by someone who is committed to something more important than his or her own glory" (Anderson, 2012).
- **Help everyone better themselves:** An additional way a team captain can motivate others is to help others grow and better themselves. A team captain should build relationships with team members and focus on them as individuals. This individual focus will show the team members that the captain cares about their individual goals and successes. One way to help out teammates is to spend extra time with them to help improve their game. A captain can come before or stay after practice to help a teammate improve. This time can also be spent academically in helping a teammate improve their grades.

- **Award a game MVP:** Another way to motivate teammates is to create an incentive for the best performer. This can be used in practice and in games. The team captain and the coach can give an award to the most valuable player of that practice or game and award them with a small prize. The prize could be a ball that every MVP signs for the season, a stuffed animal, a t-shirt, or any other idea. This prize then can be passed from day to day to the best performer and hardest worker. This will incentivize teammates to want to be named the MVP; and therefore, always give their best effort.

Becoming a Balancing Act:

There is a high level of importance for team captains to be able to successfully balance all activities. These activities include, but are not limited to: sports, academics, social, health, family, and extra-curricular activities. A factor in becoming a balancing act is intellectual horsepower. The intellectual horsepower can be related to the sports world, in that a captain must find a way to be successful in the athletic culture, as well as in their academic culture. The challenge for athletes is that there must also be a balance between other activities as seen above. In order to keep balanced, team captains should not take on too many activities or spread themselves too thin. Additional strategies include “thinking on your feet,” adapting to changes, and adapting to different strategies

Communicating Effectively:

- **Verbal and nonverbal interpersonal communication:** All communication between captains, coaches, and teammates is very important to stimulate success for the team. Effective communication gives everyone involved a better understanding of situations and enables teammates to resolve conflicts, build trust and respect, and promote friendship.
- **Technology and social media communication:** There are many ways in which a team captain can communicate with teammates. One of high popularity is social media groups. These can make messages more efficient and make communication easier to distribute to the entire team. Some ideas for social media communication mediums include:
 - Facebook groups
 - Facebook team pages
 - Google calendars
 - Twitter team accounts
 - Texting groups
 - Email group
- **Be a liaison:** Team captains have the responsibility of communicating with their teammates, but they must also communicate with their coaches. Messages must be taken from the coach and announced to the team. Captains should ensure they have a strong relationship with both their coaches and teammates.

Planning Team Building Activities:

It is important to build a strong foundation for your relationships within the team. The chemistry of a team is important off and on the playing field and it is a team captain's duty to facilitate improving team chemistry. Team building activities are important because they allow for the formation of better relationships between team members, thus helping the team excel in practices and games.

Guidelines for Team Building Activities

- **Avoid cliques and include everyone:** Cliques become a problem with bullying and hurting individual team players, as well as damaging the team as a whole. Having cliques separates the team and becomes destructive. It is a captain's role to dissolve any cliques and facilitate the realization that cliques weaken the team all together.
- **Maintain out of season relationships:** Having relationships between team members is important to have both in season and out of season. Having team activities out of season brings team members closer and builds team camaraderie. The more activities the better.
- **Manage time wisely:** Team activity planning takes a great deal of time, effort, and cooperation. Work on event organization to help make the planning process go smoother.
- **Intermingle team members:** When doing activities, make sure that all members of the team get to know each other. Try matching younger players with senior players and matching people who normally do not hang out.

Ideas for Team Building Activities

- Create a texting or social media group in order to facilitate communication between team members. This is a casual way for team members to spread messages and talk to other teammates outside of practice. An example of this is to create a Facebook Group for team member's only.
- Organize a team lunch or dinner for all of the team to attend. This is another casual way for team members to get to know each other. The team dinner can be a home cooked meal or the team can go out to a restaurant.
- Support another school team by having the team attend the game together.
- Organize a community service project for the team. All team members can get involved in the community. You can host a fundraising event for a cause or do community service at a local organization.

Examples of Team Activities

- Sleepover
- Laser tag
- Bowling
- Mini golf
- Camping trip
- Amusement park
- Zoo
- Movies
- Secret buddies
- Scavenger hunt
- Obstacle course
- Team dinner
- Shopping trip
- Hold a kids camp
- Attend a professional sports game
- Volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club
- Volunteer at the YMCA
- Hold a book drive for the local library

Getting Involved in Your School and Community:

It is important for the team captain and his or her team to develop relationships with different groups around campus, as well as in the community. The team captain and team represent the sports program, the school and the community. The groups include the student body, campus organizations, the university, the community, and team fans. Try to organize events that include these different groups.

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