

Harness the passion

Across Suffolk, enlightened employers are realising that being part of the London 2012 Games is good for morale and one of the best ways to engage your staff is by sponsoring an athlete



DAY in, day out, 'talking sport' is a way of breaking down barriers. It can make or break a sale or the relationship between a manager and his or her team. Undoubtedly sport enhances creativity and promotes sharing of ideas and with the biggest sporting event due on our shores next year companies are provided with an unrivalled opportunity to reap the substantial benefits of higher morale and team spirit.

In a major study, commissioned by professional services recruitment and talent management consultancy, Hudson, and conducted by The Social Issues Research Centre (SIRC) published in 2006, the impact of sporting success and failure on the UK Workplace was assessed.

It was found that sport - and conversations between staff and customers, managers and staff, men and women - can have a positive impact on boosting morale and improving mood, motivation and productivity in the working environment. In fact 63% of men and 52% of women said that sporting success (i.e. their team winning) has an impact on their approach to work; 47% women and 40% of men said that sporting success lifts their mood and makes them more productive in their jobs; A fifth of men said sport increases their motivation at work compared to 12% of women and only 3% said that sporting success is distracting and makes them less productive.

According to Steve Girdler, Director of London 2012 Activation at Adecco, the solution is to think ahead - and embrace people's passion for London 2012.

"The London 2012 Games are all about people and their desire to be a part of extraordinary events," says Steve. "It would be a mistake to react to that in a defensive way. It's important to encourage people's enthusiasm."

"London 2012 is certain to lift the national spirits," he concludes. "Handled well, it could be a big morale booster for your business too."

In Suffolk a group of leading businesses have seen the opportunity the Games presents to engage their staff and have aligned themselves to a local 2012 hopeful through the Suffolk SportsAid Foundation Destination Gold initiative.

'Destination Gold' is an innovative approach to use the excitement of the London 2012 Olympic and

Paralympic Games to raise money to support the most talented athletes in the county, including Suffolk's brightest 2012 prospects.

The initiative provides Suffolk companies and organisations with an opportunity to associate themselves with a world class athlete, to support them on their journey to 2012, engage their workforce in the excitement of the Games and play their part in Suffolk's Olympic and Paralympic legacy.

Participating companies, and their staff, officially 'adopt' an aspiring athlete and help them in their ultimate goal of representing Team GB, and Suffolk, at the greatest sporting event in the world - the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games - by raising money to help the athlete with the substantial costs associated with training and competing at the very highest level.

In return the business benefits from a fantastic motivational tool, including personal appearances from the athlete in question, a team building opportunity, as they follow the highs and lows of the athlete's journey, and the chance for staff to work together towards a common goal. In addition they benefit from incredible internal and external PR opportunities.

One Suffolk company to sign up to Destination Gold is Southwold-based brewing and leisure retail group Adnams.

"Adnams has 'adopted' two athletes through the Destination Gold project - triathlete Abbie Thorrrington and hand cyclist Brian Alldis. The Olympic and Paralympic Games present such a fantastic opportunity for businesses in the region and receiving regular progress reports from our 'own' Olympic hopefuls make the Games all the more real for Adnams employees," said Adnams' head of corporate affairs Emma Hibbert.

"Brian and Abbie recently held a masterclass for us in Southwold, giving a great insight into how they got into their sport and their progress to date. They also offered advice for those taking part in the forthcoming Adnams 10k on how best to prepare and train for the event."

There are still a limited number of athletes available for adoption. Contact Sonia Shellcot, Millriver Publicity and Suffolk SportsAid Foundation board member on sonia@millriver.co.uk.



Suffolk companies sponsoring athletes

- Abbecroft Leisure** Nicky Hunt (Archery)
- Adnams plc** Brian Alldis (Handcycling) & Abbie Thorrrington (Triathlon)
- Customer Service Direct** Helen Decker (Athletics - Marathon)
- Ipswich Building Society** Caroline Maclean (Wheelchair Basketball)
- Mark Harrod Ltd** Matti Mortimore (Athletics - Javelin)
- Prettys** Harry Martin (Hockey)
- Ufford Park Hotel, Golf and Spa** Joshua Tonnar (Rowing)

Did you know?

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- 47% women and 40% of men said that sporting success lifts their mood and makes them more productive in their jobs.
- A fifth of men said sport increases their motivation at work compared to 12% of women.
- Only 3% said that sporting success is distracting and makes them less productive.

ATHLETES: Above top left, Joshua Tonnar, above top right, Brian Alldis, far left, Nicky Hunt and, left, Caroline Maclean



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