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Commercial Director ECF Report ~ OCT 2015 ~Bob Kane

I have now completed a full year in the post (established April 2014).

In this first year I have tried to put in some basic systems so that the Federation might act in a more business-like manner.

I have consolidated all our membership and mailing lists and produced an opt in /opt out mailing system, members now receive regular emails. These emails contain a mixture of news, information and member benefits. The system reports how many emails have been opened, and which items have been clicked on. It also shows how many people have opted out of future mailings, I'm pleased to say that this is less than 1%.

A mailing system like this appeals to modern day sponsors who like to reach out directly to members. For example the Tradewise sponsorship is only possible because we can contact all our members as described above.

For the first time a database of chess clubs has also been created.

Sponsorship deals

Mind Sports International sponsored the official British Blitz championship ~ November 2014...(a contract guaranteed the prize fund) May 2015

Tradewise

I negotiated, setup and structured this contract. Hastings has been secured for two more years, funds are available to relaunch the Tradewise Grand Prix, FIDE tournaments and player development.

New in Chess.

30 free subscriptions for our new ECF Academy students.

Member Benefits

I believe it is important to provide benefits and incentives for our membership and have negotiated several interesting offers (chess film premiers, free Informators, New in Chess etc) all these are delivered to members' in boxes electronically.

Commission from the various new benefit schemes like Tradewise 64 insurance and Fred Olsen cruises can produce *substantial* revenue for ECF projects.

Servers

After recurring problems with our server reliability I investigated possible solutions. Together with Andrew Walker (Webmaster) we reviewed the various technical and cost options.

We decided against a cloud based solution because of security issues. We moved to a new supplier, all websites with the exception of the BCC have been now moved to the new provider. Reliability has been restored.

Communication and Image

A major initiative is to improve the overall image of English chess by improving our communications culture (see separate paper). A better image will improve access to sponsorship or renewed government funding.

ECF forum

- We are planning to change software and reduce the number of headings.
- Exclusive announcements have been posted on the forum.
- Policy documents have been uploaded for discussion.
- Directors have answered members' questions...
- New moderation terms will be added
- An ongoing project.

Twitter

Our social media manager Phil Makepeace has done an excellent job of covering most ECF chess events on the calendar (adult and junior). He also covers international events. He has gained over 900 additional followers for the federation Tweet @ecfchess

Many thanks to all those who contribute to our Twitter feeds.

Chess Moves

Password protection has been removed making our in-house magazine freely available. Chess and Bridge contribute several pages of chess news, which means we don't require a full time editor at present.

Website

Managed on a daily basis by our webmaster, the site has added several new features, including a signup box for our in-house magazine.

A new seniors' website has been created.

The Board would like a new site. At the moment we are in the early planning stage.

Publicity Manager

I am pleased to confirm that Mark Jordan has been appointed to this role. Mark is an active player and a regular contributor to BCM. He will work with the office, directors and managers to achieve a higher profile for chess in the media.

Advertising

New advertisers have been introduced. A regular advertiser provides chess content for "Chess Moves" as part of their advertising agreement.

Commercial Activities

In any organisation that starts a new directorate you can expect some new practises and procedures to evolve between directorships.

I view the commercial role as more than just producing revenue for the Federation, I think it is equally important to monitor overheads. It makes commercial sense to review all large contracts, putting in place additional commercial practices as required.

A simple policy to ensure value is to request three quotes when spending larger sums.

The Finance directorate recently held discussions with various people about our chess club insurance contract. In August I requested involvement and requested that three quotes be obtained to include one from Tradewise (our sponsorship partner).

I was informed that due to timescales this would not be possible.

I knew a budget was in place to purchase a new suite of computer equipment for the offices. I was surprised that this equipment suddenly appeared in September. I would have liked to have been involved in the purchasing process. I would like to have seen three quotes.

(Please note: The ICT/computing manager reports to me if we could fill the vacancy !)

I would like to see the Federation attempt to run its own weekend residential events. This would provide another service for our members and gain a higher profile for the Federation. It is possible that these events could be sponsored.

This simple idea is fiercely resisted by a number of colleagues on the board. The main reason given is that these events would conflict with the 4NCL.

Is the Board split? Yes it is. One camp embraces change and wants to help develop English chess in a controlled manner.

The other camp resists all change and wishes to maintain things as they are.

I hope Council will remind the Finance and Governance committees that they need to demonstrate a commitment to rigorous independence and due process.

May I take this opportunity to thank my team Phil M, Kay and Bill P, and our new publicity person Mark Jordan.