

Taking ownership by Stuart Fuller (@theballisround)

Just how important is a name? Consider this. We are all part of a movement, a community that aims to bring the ownership of our clubs from the few to the many. We want to create a community asset, put the club at the heart of the community and the community at the heart of our clubs. We want to be community-owned, we want to actively engage with the community and ultimately, have the words Community Football Club at the end of our names.

A name is important. But when it comes to that community and the role they play within our clubs, few consider them to be 'owners'. Many will be referred to as members – in fact SD themselves refer to clubs as members, whereas others may be called constituents, shareholders or even comrades (I may have made that last one up!). But by definition they are owners. Our supporter-owned model means that the supporters are the owners (and in most instances, owners are supporters). So, should we refer to everyone who is part of the community club then as an owner?

Down at Lewes CFC we very deliberately founded our constitution based on an ownership model where every individual had an equal share as an owner of the club. Owned by the fans, run by the fans, for the fans. In board meetings we have a 'swear' jar for certain words, one of which is 'members'. Whilst we are a football CLUB we are not a CLUB defined by a football team and so we have never felt that member, shareholder, constituent or comrade describes the engagement we want. We want our community to feel that they are part of something special and the word 'owner' sums that up perfectly. When someone signs up with us they get an owners badge (the word owner is the only consistent part on this year after year), a card that displays their owner number and an ownership certificate, rather than a share certificate. On the cover of every home match programme is a statement that says Lewes CFC is owned by xxxx and 1,300 others) with the xxxx being a randomly selected owner.

There's no proof that calling someone an owner instead of a member has any material effect on the success of a club, its effort to engage with the community or ultimately progress but if clubs want to make their fans feel part of that success and see progress, giving them ownership through one simple word may just make a small difference. The greatest journeys start with the smallest step and this may just be that step.