

“Nigeria Football League”

Road Map for the Repackaging
and Repositioning of the
Nigeria Professional Football
League under an Autonomous
Management Board

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Mission Statement

- To repackage and reposition Professional Football in Nigeria in line with the International best practices for the benefits of all stake holders i.e. The FA, The Players, Administrators, Fans, Corporate world, other interested parties and to further stimulate and strengthen the overall development and progression of Football in Nigeria etc.

Vision Statement

- To establish a Professional Football League that will be the best in Africa and comparable to the Leagues in the developed countries in terms of professionalism, infrastructure, sustainable structures, organization, management, commercialization and other international best practices standards that will guarantee the sporting, professional, moral, economic and financial expectations of all stake holders among others.

Objectives

- To repackage and reposition the present premier league in Nigeria and professional football generally.
- To create a monster and the most visible brand in Nigeria that all corporate bodies will be proud to associate with.
- To completely commercialize football in Nigeria in line with what is obtained internationally.
- To create an enabling environment that will assist in job creation and poverty elevation in Nigeria as well as strengthen the peaceful co-existence and tranquillity among the entire citizenry in the country.

Goals

- To contribute to the development of Football and Sports generally in Nigeria by setting the standards in the area of Sports Development and Management.
- To further enhance and strengthen the integrity and respectability of Professional Football in Nigeria.
- To open a window for Corporate and Products brands to leverage the abundant goodwill available through sporting activities.
- To through this process enhance the medal prospects of Nigeria at international events.

Background

- Organized football in Nigeria started in 1945 when Nigeria was affiliated to FIFA but on amateur basis and semi professional level.
- Professional Football started in Nigeria in 1992 with the establishment of the professional league.
- However, ever since the commencement of the professional football, not much progress has been made in terms of having a truly professional league due to various factors which arises either from the action or in action of all the stake holders i.e. the NFA, the Club owners, the administrators, the Players, the Fans etc
- Among the factors that mitigated against the positive development and professionalism of the league as envisaged includes among others lack of qualified man power, inept administrators, over reliance on government, politics, drain on quality players as every Tom, Dick & Harry is going abroad, inconsistency and of course finance.

Background cont' d

- The foregoing resulted in the retrogression of the league instead of its progression for obvious reasons.
- To this end, the present Minister of Sports saw the need to critically look at the overall management of football in Nigeria with the view to putting it back on track and setting the foundation for its continuous development hence a committee was set up to look at the present structure of Football in Nigeria vis-à-vis what is obtained internationally and make suggestion.
- Accordingly, this write up is being prepared with the aim of providing the blue print for the repackaging and repositioning of the Professional Football League board which is the bedrock of development of Football anywhere in the world.
- The league is envisaged to be managed under an autonomous league management board as an affiliate of the FA as obtained internationally.
- The FA role will be to serve as the regulating authority to ensure strict compliance to the stipulated laws, discipline, security among others while the league management board will be in charge of organization, management and commercialization of the league in line with the highest professional standards.

The Package

- To provide the blue print and/or road map that will assist in the establishment of an effective, efficient and commercially driven Premier Football League in Nigeria under the management of an autonomous League Management Board.
- To through this write up, set the benchmarks and core policies in both management, sporting and commercial terms and indices, that will drive the establishment and the eventual sustainability of the league.

Mechanics

- Secure take off Funding
- Training and capacity development for all stake holders
- Enhance existing infrastructure at all levels to meet minimum international standards
- Set an effective management and administrative procedure that will ensure the complete professionalization of the league in line with international best practices
- Bring the league and the brand to top of the mind awareness
- Expose the league and the brand nationally and internationally
- Leverage on branding and promotional opportunities
- Aggressive marketing to secure sponsors and partners
- Partner with other corporate citizens and service providers
- Leverage on the awareness and visibility to establish an aggressive licensing and merchandising scheme



Process

Tactic 1 – Take- off Funding

- Funding will certainly be required so as to put in place the necessary basic infrastructure as well as provide working capital for the effective take off of the league.
- Therefore, a study should be undertaken to effectively ascertain and estimate the potentials and viability of the league from the financial terms, job creation (from all sectors involved with the game), poverty elevation, image of the country etc.
- With the above data at hand, a powerful lobby group under the minister of sports should be set up to work on the Government so as to convince the Government on the need and desirability to support the establishment of the league (financially, morally and legislatively)
- The finance to be sought from Government might either be in the form of grant and/or a soft loan to the league board payable within 10-20 years.
- Modalities for the management and disbursement of the funds shall be clearly spelt out and must be under the league management board and the NFA.
- The Stock Market is a veritable source of raising funds for the league. With the cult followership of football in Nigeria and the growing awareness and confidence on the stock market, the league shall be able to attract investors in millions thus raising billions. Eventually it is imperative the league shall be taken to the stock market.
- It is noteworthy to state here that a minimum of N20 -30b might be required.

Tactic 2 – Comparative Analysis

- In order to achieve the desired results, four (4) major football leagues around the world shall be selected where on the spot comparative analysis and studies will be undertaken so as to serve as guide and with the view to replicating their success in Nigeria.
- In this regard, the English Premier League, the Argentine Premier league, The Egyptian league and the South African Professional Soccer League shall be studied.
- A team comprising the Head of the Premier League, The Consultants and other stake holders shall undertake a tour of the above countries with the aim of critically studying their leagues in terms of organization, management, professionalism, commercialization among others.
- The tour shall includes meetings with the top FA and league executives of the countries, club owners and administrators, top coaches and players, match officials, top marketing and media consultants, top sports journalist.
- Where possible technical support agreements shall be signed.
- Upon completion of the tour a report on the findings shall be prepared.

Tactic 3 – Capacity & Continuous Professional Development

- Professional Training Programs shall be organized for all stake holders so as to abreast them with the current method of running and managing football, financial regulations, marketing and sponsorships etc.
- These training are to be undertaken by experienced international consultants and FIFA instructors and other experts.
- The training shall be for Club Presidents, administrators and managers, coaches, referees, supporters club chairmen, sports writers etc.
- This training program will be a continuous process (every quarter) and therefore only those that have passed through the training program will be allowed to manage clubs, officiate or coached teams as the case may be.
- License and certificates issued by the FA based on this training program will be a pre-requisite for any party to be involve in a decision making capacity position in the league. Moreover minimum educational qualification will be set as well.
- Purpose made self training materials such as manuals, videos, CD ROMs will also be produce and constantly updated so as to assist all stake holders to constantly keep developing their knowledge
- Seminars and Conferences will periodically be organized.

Tactic 4 – Club Licensing System

- A Club licensing system will be introduced that will prescribe the minimum criteria that a club must meet before it can partake in the Premier league.
- The national club licensing regulations will define the minimum quality of standards in five main criteria categories: sporting, infrastructure, personnel and administration, legal and financial. These criteria must be met in order for a club to be admitted to play in the Premier League.
- The license system will seek to set the minimum criteria in terms of issues like Infrastructure, security, players welfare, administrative standards and quality/qualifications of personnel that can manage clubs, the legal status of clubs, the financial strengths of clubs and financial management standard and procedures among others,
- Accordingly, a National Club Licensing Manual will be prepared and distributed to all the stake holders and it will be reviewed annually.

Tactic 4 – Officiating

- Fair, efficient, effective and consistent officiating is the key to the success of any league in the world.
- Thus a standard and guidelines in line with the international best practices must be set up to ensure the independence, security (both professional, personal and financial), and welfare of match officials is guaranteed and strengthened at all times.
- Prescribing standards and criteria for the match officials that will officiate in the premier league in terms of professional (sporting/personal) and educational qualification, integrity, mental and fitness alertness etc.
- Continuous professional development standards which will involve training and capacity development.
- Selecting a select group of match officials (not more than 50) that will officiate the premier league. Any referee that falters or fall short of the requirements will be demoted to the lower leagues while the best from the lower league will be promoted to the premier league. This will provide incentives for referees to perform at all times.
- Payment of match officials indemnity to be done directly by the league board instead of the present practices of clubs paying for such. A sponsor to be found for referees.
- Any contact accept in the course of duty to be banned between match officials and the clubs officials.

Tactic 5 – Other Strategic Policies

- In order to enhance and strengthened the quality and standard of the league and to guarantee the welfare, motivation and the continuous professional development of all stake holders in the league, some definite and strategic policies should be introduce which shall includes the following among others:
- Establishment of a Nigeria Professional Footballers Pension Fund.
- Establishment of a Players Basic Educational Development Scheme (BEDS).
- Establishment of a world class FA Training Academy.
- A stake holders forum will be organized every quarter where both representatives of all stake holders (the FA, the league board, Club officials, Match Officials, Players, Fans, Sponsors and Partners, Security Agencies, Stadium Managers, Sport writers and other interested parties etc) will meet to rub minds and evaluate the progress and direction of the league with the view to ensuring standards are maintained and constantly enhanced as well as discuss and sort any common problems or hitches.

Tactic 6 – Commercialisation

- The most important factor that will mar or make the league is its commercialization as sustainable funding is the key to the league success.
- The league must be effectively and efficiently commercialized with the view to ensuring that enough revenues are raised to make the league self-sustaining and a profitable venture.
- To achieve the foregoing, the highest international and industry standards will be strictly adhered to, in terms of due process, transparency, other industry best practices.
- Accordingly, the league must use the services of highly skilled and qualified consultants with appreciable network and contacts in the commercialization of the league.
- Various steps need to be taken to ensure that the league is effectively branded, promoted and marketed with the view to generating maximal revenues.



Commercialisation Process

Step 1- Visibility

- Using all channels of communication, create a monster brand for the league which would give the corporate bodies the opportunity and confidence to leverage on this opening so as to enjoy the attendant goodwill associated with football in the promotion and marketing of their products and services as well as strengthen their corporate integrity and social responsibility.
- Bring the events and the league brand to top of the mind awareness at all times as a take out.

Step 2- Media exposure

- Generate enough press and coverage for the league - Launch event for the media (sports and general interest).
- Use all major media houses in Nigeria for coverage and get international mention and exposure on channels like Super Sport, CNN sport, ESPN, SABC etc.
- Select famous Nigerian football stars (past, present and future) to embark on endorsement drive for the league brand. Also get other internationally recognized footballers to become part of the project and probably endorse the league so as to strengthen its integrity. Splash these in the media both local and international.
- Have the Mr, President, Sports Minister, Chief Executives of the Corporate bodies, CAF and FIFA Chieftains etc Launch the league. Key insight here would be official backing for a socially responsible project by a Nigerian Corporate Citizen.

Step 3- Branding opportunities

- Leverage on the event- extend outdoor visibility using “famous footballers ” as models.
- Get rights for pitch panel branding, outdoor advertising boards, and general stadium branding.
- Produce top end SMGAs for the event, also mass produce low ends for fans all over the country.
- Produce the league branded sporting kits and souvenirs.
- Brand sport outlets such as gyms, sports clubs, sport shops with merchandising materials such as posters flexes, framed pictures, danglers, wobblers etc.
- Brand selected stadiums pan Nigeria with league branding materials.

Step- 4 Promotions

- Create promotional activities such as town storms, stadium, sports clubs & bars raids – Take out here would be to generate enough visibility below the line.
- Create radio and TV shows on prime stations pan Nigeria – Take out would be to strengthen the premier league and create maximum awareness on the league, its mission and vision and the opportunities for private sector participation.
- Generally enlighten all stake holders as to the need to support the league and the professional and moral demands on everyone to ensure the success of the league.

Step- 5 Sponsorship and Rights

- Secure Sponsors for the league through the sell of rights and partnerships.
- This will involve selling of the following sponsorship rights among others:
 1. Title Sponsors
 2. Official Co-Sponsors (at least 10nr)
 3. Official Broadcast Partner (TV Rights)
 4. Official Kit Sponsors, Car, Bank, Airline, Telecoms, Insurance, Drinks (Soft and Energy), IT, Technology, Newspapers, Radio Stations, Office Equipment, Hotels, Restaurants, etc
 5. Official Suppliers and partners etc.
- All deals are to be procured and sealed through an open and competitive bid process to ensure that the best deal is secured for the league and the entire process is credible and transparent and in line with international best practices.

Step 6 - Partnerships

- Partner with other essential service providers to smoothen the league success e.g.
- Airlines and Luxury Buses operators- Local and International as transport partners of the league.
- Hotels and Restaurants - To partner as the official hospitality partners of the league.
- Major sports kitting firms- e.g. NIKE, PUMA, Hummel, Adidas, Lotto, Diadora etc to partner as sporting kits manufacturers to provide for the kitting requirements of the teams.
- Generally, the partnership will be aimed at providing through sponsorships, consideration for travels, Hotels and Restaurants, Kitting for all the stake holders associated with the league including fans.

Step - 7 Licensing & Merchandising

- One of the veritable source of raising revenues is Licensing and Merchandising thus a secure and stable source of procuring and selling merchandising shall be established and continuously enhanced.
- Sign partnership and issue license to manufacturers to produce merchandizing such as replica shirts for all teams, other sports kits and leisure wares, house equipments, books, pencils, badges, towels, cuff links, ties, wristwatches, mobile phones, carpets, floor mats, mugs, plates and any other item that people use regularly and cherish must times etc.
- Establish through licensing and partnerships with the public (dealers and retailers) authentic, certified and official merchandising sale outlets throughout the country (at least one per local government).
- All merchandizing materials are to be sold through these authorize outlets to allow for efficient and coordinated monitoring so as to ensure fake products didn't get to the market and to boost consumer confidence that he is buying the authentic products at all times.
- Target here is to ensure that everybody and everyone in the country will have something useful to buy from the merchandize so as to guarantee that millions of pieces of merchandizing products are sold annually and the revenues accruing to the league is in Billions. With a population of over 120m, this is very feasible.

Step - 8 Lottery and other Promotions

- Partner with the National Sports Lottery (NSL Lotteries Management Company Limited) – Lotto Nigeria to organize lotteries for the league week in week out.
- Partner with the Telecoms companies to organized promotional activities via SMS and phone calls, week in week out.
- Organize specific and periodic promotions with the twin aim of strengthening and stimulating awareness and generating revenues.



Other Parameters

Revenue Sources of the League

- Based on the foregoing the major identifiable revenue sources of the league includes but not limited to the following:
 1. Sponsorships and Partnerships Rights
 2. TV Rights
 3. Licensing and Merchandising
 4. Lotteries and Promotions
 5. Registration and affiliation fees
 6. Percentages from transfer fees and gate takings
 7. Revenues from seminars, conferences, training programs and other continuous professional development programs
- The foregoing if well harnessed and properly implemented has the potential to certainly raise revenues in BILLIONS of Naira annually.

Expenditure areas of the League

- The major expenditure areas of the league includes among others the following:
 1. Day-to-day running of the league board, salaries and emoluments and other exigencies.
 2. Branding, promotional and general marketing expenses.
 3. Organizational and/or coordinating expenses for matches, seminars, training programs etc.
 4. Percentage payments to clubs from the sponsorship, TV, lottery and merchandising revenues.
- From the foregoing and in consideration of the revenue sources vis-à-vis international standards its evident the expenditure can be controlled within revenues without compromising standards and efficiency.
- Thus the league will certainly be self sustaining and can declare surplus revenues (profits) year-in-year out.

Sustainability of Clubs in the league

- The Revenue sources for clubs in the leagues includes the following:
 1. Shareholders funds (funding & support from club owners and/or shareholders)
 2. Share from the league board revenues (Sponsorships, TV rights, Licensing & merchandising, Lottery and Promotions)
 3. Prize Monies
 4. Transfer fees from sale of players
 5. Gate takings and other Hospitality packages
 6. Sponsorship and partnership drive and other donations
 7. Other Investments.
- Notwithstanding the stringent standards that will be imposed on clubs that will participate in the league, it is evident that with good initiative and prudent management, the clubs could affectively harness the foregoing revenue sources to generate enough funds to be self sustaining in line with international standards.

Benefits to Sponsors and Partners

- To own a medium that will enhance and consistently sustain the awareness drive for the brand as well as its products and services
- To create overwhelming visibility for the brand.
- To strengthen brand offerings and promises.
- To create an enabling environment for interaction between the brand and consumers.
- To contribute to the development of sports in Nigeria and strengthening of peace and tranquillity as a responsible corporate citizen of the country.
- To build and further strengthen corporate integrity
- To leverage the abundant goodwill available through sporting activities so as to boost sales and revenues.
- To through this process enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Professional league and the NFA and thus the medal prospects of Nigerian teams at international events
- Tax Rebates and other concessions possibilities from the Government
- Contribute and strengthen the Economic, Political and Social development of the Country
- Identifying with and strengthening the greatest unifying factor for Nigerians

Benefits to the Economy (Nigeria)

- Job Creation (target at least over 1 million direct jobs and more than 5 million indirect jobs.)
- Wealth Creation
- Has positive impact on virtually all sectors of the economy
- Peace, harmony and tranquility among Nigerians
- Social and political gains
- Strengthening of Nigeria's good name abroad.

Next Steps

- Agree on Modalities, scope and elements for the take off of the league.
- Register the league as a Limited Liability Company with the NFA and the premier clubs as the sole owner though upon successful take-off, the league could be taken to the stock market and converted to a PLC with opportunity given to every Nigerian to be a share holder as well as generate enough revenues to keep the league in good financial standing.
- Appoint Board Members and League Secretary.
- Agree on the structure of the league management board – a lean, highly professional and technology driven structure shall be put in place to guarantee efficiency and effectiveness.
- Appoint Consultant\ Agency
- Agree on timing and rollout.
- Agree on budget.
- Action.

Resource and Contact

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Notes



Thank you