



## Advancing Collaboration with Road Runners Club of America

### Approach to Collaboration

Our organization is designed to facilitate collaborations between our members and businesses that support and engage in the running industry. One such business segment are the Performing Rights Organizations (PRO). When music is played at an event, it is considered a “public performance” and a music license must be obtained in support of the artists that created the music. At the request of some of our larger members, like the Chicago Marathon, we negotiated a simple and cost effective group music license service — that includes certain legal components — with the performing rights organizations BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc), the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), and Global Music Rights (GMR). The service developed was a first-of-its-kind in the running industry and simplified an otherwise complex process of acquiring a license to play music.

From a bystander’s standpoint, some may think running events and performing rights organizations don’t seem like a natural collaboration, but this example is within the scope of what running events are doing around the country (playing music to create a fun atmosphere) and was a natural fit for our organization.

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## Application of the 9 Considerations for Collaboration

### Build Trust

Trust is essential when we facilitate collaborations that involve music. We had to build trust with our members and performing rights groups. Today, we can say we've been doing this for several years and we have great relations throughout the community.

This year has been tough for all organizations involved – due to a lack of events, there's no money going to performing rights organizations (PRO). Our track record of trust is what keeps our collaborations strong, even when we encounter disruptions.

### Have a Vision

Before COVID-19, different event industries had their own space and didn't cross over. Due to this disruption, everybody's in the same boat and we're seeing more collaborations across festival organizers, concert organizers, and race directors. We're all coming together to figure out what best practices look like and how we can safely bring people together.

### Seek to Assure the Success of Your Collaborators

In regards to our music example, we have an obligation to pay the fees for licenses each quarter, but it's an opportunity to check-in as well. Every once in a while, a performing rights group will ask us to confirm whether or not an event has paid the necessary fees. Since some races prefer to work with us instead of renewing directly, we're able to verify and report — but it all goes back to building trust so they feel they can come to us in the first place.

### Take Stock

We have a youth program that we provide for free. We only charge a fee for postage because we can't cover that cost. School districts will contact us to ask if they can distribute the

programs to all of the schools in their area, and we're happy to provide information without requiring anybody to give us lists, counts, or data in return.

Given our positioning and what we do, we realized there are some benefits that others could acquire if we're willing to share our assets. Instead of simply holding onto our assets, we wanted to expand what we're able to do by getting young people engaged in running.

### Start Small

Going back to our music example – there are multiple performing rights organizations. We started with one that was sending the harshest legal letters and began a dialogue, commenced great discussions, negotiations, and eventually developed an agreement with them. The insight we gleaned from the first process enabled us to move onto the subsequent groups. We started small, built trust with one group we wanted to prioritize, and slowly moved onto other groups.

### Fail Fast, and Build Rigorous Feedback Loops

One of the biggest pieces we offer in our industry is liability insurance. We have a volunteer medical piece for doctors, nurses, and EMTs that volunteer at races. We've built up our infrastructure and we've been able to add new insurance policies in addition to the systems we had in place.

Recently, we started a cyber liability policy. Due to COVID-19, we've shifted our focus to virtual events, and their biggest liability is cyber. Insurance and event management go hand in hand, but they're also two very different business entities that we've been able to pull together to provide services. When we started looking into music, we realized we already had the infrastructure. We started small, added in pieces as the industry evolved, and once the music came along, we were able to adapt.

## Take a Portfolio Approach

We fleshed out our portfolio by starting with insurance. We soon realized we had an infrastructure that could drive more projects and services for our members.

## Consider Non-Traditional Partners

Our work with music serves as a prime example of considering non-traditional partners. We started by understanding our business, understanding the needs of our customers, and then finding the right partners to help meet our needs.

## Keep Your Donors Apprised of Your Collaborations

In our annual report, we try to highlight our activities to show what we're doing. We're constantly sharing our success stories and like to share the feel-good stories as well.

## Future Collaborations

An ideal collaboration for us would be working with school districts around the country to get youth running in a fun, informal way. We'd love to have that type of relationship on a much larger scale.



Jean Knaack,  
Executive Director

## About the Organization

Founded in 1958, the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) is the oldest and largest national association of runners and running organizations dedicated to growing the sport of running. They champion the development of community-based running clubs and events that serve runners of all ages and abilities in pursuit of health and competition.

**Disclaimer:** All participants were interviewed about past collaborations through the framework of the 9 Considerations for Collaboration. Naturally in some organizations, not every one of the considerations are applicable to their circumstances.

**Credit:** This article was composed by Rachel Romana Liu.