Marketing and Promotion

Sport and recreation organisations need a basic understanding of why they should be involved in marketing and promotional efforts, how to get started and issues to consider when marketing and promoting an organisation, activity or event.

What is marketing?

Marketing is the process of matching a product or service with a 'market'. In a sport and recreation context, this means identifying the people that might like to be involved with a sport and recreation activity, club or event.

What is promotion?

Promotion is the process of bringing a product or service to the attention of the 'market'. In sport and recreation terms this is how to 'sell' an activity, club or event to interested people.

Reasons for marketing and promotion

Marketing and promotion are useful for a variety of purposes, including to:

- attract new members and retain existing members;
- attract or retain sponsors, volunteers, officials or spectators; and
- generate interest in an upcoming event, competition or social activity.

Where to start?

To help you get started with marketing and promotion, consider the following:

- Develop a clear marketing plan outlining the strategies and direction for any marketing and promotional activities.
- Be realistic about the time and resources available and what is likely to be achieved.
- Appoint marketing and promotion responsibilities to a committee member who can oversee the development and implementation of the marketing plan.

Five basic steps in developing a marketing plan

1. Consider what the organisation has to 'sell'. For most sport and recreation organisations this will be an activity, competition or special event.
2. Determine the target 'market'. Typically this involves selecting a group with particular demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, employment, location and income.
3. Be clear on what is wanted to be achieved through marketing and promotional activity. For example, does the club want to increase participation, membership or sponsorship?

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4. Determine the best way to reach the target audience. The key to success is understanding what the audience wants and tailoring marketing efforts accordingly.
5. Develop a timeline or action plan for when the various strategies will be implemented.

What is the best method for promotion?

There are many different options for promotion, and what is most effective depends on the situation, the product to be sold and the audience being promoted to.

Common mediums for promotion including:

- advertisements;
- a special event or activity;
- media exposure – newspapers, online, radio, magazines, television;
- social media;
- sponsorship;
- networking;
- brochures and flyers;
- newsletters and annual reports;
- questionnaires or surveys;
- a launch;
- public notice boards; and
- public speaking.

While the above list is a useful starting point, some of the best promotions involve media that have not been thought of previously. Don't be scared to be creative.

It is also important to review previous promotional strategies to see what has worked and how it can be improved. Similarly, it is worth considering what other groups do, particularly competitors.

What does 'image' have to do with marketing?

An area often overlooked in terms of marketing is the public or corporate 'image' of sport and recreation organisations. Everything done and said and everything people see or hear forms part of a corporate image.

Everyone involved with a sport or recreation organisation, from players to spectators, should be aware that their actions and behaviour may influence people's perceptions of the organisation or activity. If an organisation has a poor public image, even the best promotional campaigns are unlikely to be successful.

When considering what an organisation's public image is like, it is worth considering the following:

- How are public inquiries handled?
- How are complaints handled?
- How are umpires and officials treated?
- How do coaches treat players?
- How do people in the organisation look (uniforms or dress codes)?
- How do spokespeople come across in the media and public forums?
- How does the stationery and correspondence look?
- How is the organisation portrayed in the media?

How to get media exposure?

Combining a media release with personal contact will increase the chance of getting exposure. It is a good idea to nominate someone from the club as a media liaison officer, responsible for contacting the media and writing media releases.
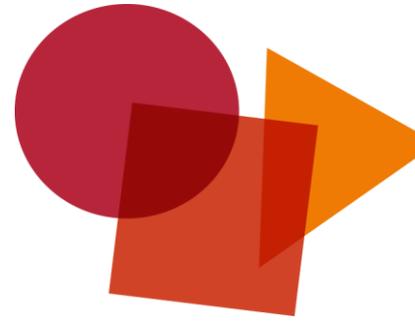
Have a dedicated media contact

Having a nominated person responsible for all contact with the media will enable that person to develop close links and working relationships with local media representatives and journalists. A personal approach to a journalist is much more likely to be successful than a general request or media release sent to a newspaper, television or radio station. A sound relationship will benefit both parties – organisations can seek media coverage when needed and the media have a reliable contact they can approach for stories or information.

Prepare media releases

Media outlets receive hundreds of media releases every day. Therefore, it is important to take some time to prepare a media release so it receives the attention it deserves.

There are various guidelines available to help people present media releases in a format that is attractive to the media. In general terms, media releases need to:

- present the most important information first;
- be concise and catchy;
- have an 'angle' or specific point of interest;
- use emotive but simple language; and
- focus on answering the questions of who, what, where, when, and why or how.

Write your own material

Rather than waiting for a newspaper or magazine to write an article, an alternative approach is to write your own. If an article is well written and contains the key information required by the print media it will have a good chance of being printed. Have a look at some existing articles written on the same subject to get an idea of the style, length and language commonly used.