

My Progression.....

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Promotion is the most visible aspect of marketing and is the major focus for most sports clubs. Your promotional activities should be consistent, develop a distinctive image for the club and be different from your competitors.

About Marketing

Marketing can be defined as a process by which individuals and groups obtain what they want through creating, offering and exchanging products of value with others. The purpose of marketing is to make a sale. It is more than just advertising, publicity or sponsorship and involves:

- finding a market for your product or activity (people, place)
- making your product desirable to that market (promotion, position)
- exchanging your product with that market for something that you value (price)

All sport and recreation organisations undertake marketing, although they are often unaware that they are actually doing so. Listing your club in the telephone directory; placing information about membership registrations in the local newspaper; offering a discount on pitch hire prices to induce greater use of the facilities; or redecorating the club facilities are all examples of formal marketing activities. An example of informal marketing involves a person enquiring about joining a team in the club and the secretary being particularly helpful with providing the membership information over the phone. A mother of a prospective juvenile member watching a coach conduct a session with the children looking bored and not enjoying the session is a less positive example of informal marketing.

The marketing of clubs includes obvious activities like open days, advertising and events. But members and officials market the club whenever they take on their roles - often without being aware of it. A team in your jersey playing fairly contributes to the good image of your club, as does a chairperson who provides information about membership over the phone.

Benefits of Marketing

Increases membership base and sales

The biggest benefit of all. Well planned, effective marketing will help you understand your customer and the marketplace - and lead to informed marketing decisions to help boost your membership.

Enhances reputation

Your club's image is one of your most valuable products or assets. A good image, created through effective marketing, attracts new members, appeals to potential sponsors and encourages people to participate.

Is value for money

Rather than the 'scattergun' approach of printing flyers and delivering to every home in the neighbourhood, planned marketing helps you to identify the most appropriate and cost-effective approach for your needs.

Creates opportunities

Through strategic networking and relationship building with members and the community, your club could access new markets, sponsorship opportunities and form long-term alliances.

Raises awareness

Smart marketing increases your club's credibility within the community and helps potential members, parents and sponsors make better decisions on signing up or contributing funds and services to the club.

Marketing Concepts

Here are some important marketing concepts to help you identify and use target markets to increase membership, raise funds and attract sponsors for your club.

Market research: learn about your members

Market research should form the basis of all marketing activities. It helps you get to know who your members (and non-members) are – and why a person would want to become a member or attend an activity. It also helps you understand the environment you're operating in and about your competitors.

Market research can involve:

- Analysing existing information, like demographic data and research reports
- New research, where you develop surveys, hold focus groups or conduct interviews.

Existing information – where to look

Membership database

Your club should have an existing membership database. An analysis of this will reveal some basics about your customer and will also identify where new members are coming from. Also look for large groups of customers who have similar characteristics, live in the same geographic region or attend the same school, university or other organisation.

Registration figures

Check the registration figures over the last 12-24 months. Do the numbers differ for different age groups? Have the numbers fallen? Is it gender differentiated? Is it geographic?

Geographic area

Research your local area for colleges, schools, organisations, sporting grounds and other facilities that may support your club. This will give you general data on age groups, education, marital status, income and interests within the local area.

New Research – Ideas for your Club

Interview existing members

Find out why they joined your club. People join or not join for all sorts of reasons – social activities, the facilities, close to university or transport etc.

Interview lapsed members

Find out why members don't renew their registration.

Research other clubs

Talk to neighbouring clubs and recreation centres about their membership base.

Interview potential members

If your plan is to attract a different market, talk to potential members about what would get them to join your club or attend an event.

Market research helps define your target market(s).

Target market

Put simply, marketing your activities to 'everyone' is inefficient. Not everyone wants the same thing and not everyone is alike. You'll be wasting time and resources with this approach.

Target marketing focuses your marketing activities on groups of people (or target markets) most likely to become a member.

Target markets are essentially groups of people with common characteristics. Some simple ways target markets could be defined include address, sex, age group, occupation, education and interests. For example, children aged 5 to 12 years who go to school in a particular area could be a target market.

You can also more narrowly define target markets by using multiple or specific characteristics. This allows you to further focus marketing activities. For example, women under 40 years of age who are interested in Gaelic Mothers & Others.

So how do you select your target market(s)? Consider these factors:

1. Market research – builds a profile of your existing and potential members
2. Club objectives and strategy – often set out target markets
3. Club constitution - may define membership classes.

Remember, you are looking to define who are your current target markets – to help make your marketing strategies more effective.

But you are also looking for potentially new target markets – to grow your membership.

Competitors and market positioning

How you position your club's image and what it offers is important when targeting a potential customer or sponsor or producing an event.

Where your club stands compared to your competitors also helps a target market understand and appreciate the value and choice offered.

For example a person looking for a week night training schedule will compare a club's location, facilities, costs, reputation and time commitment with others in the area.

Here are some questions to ask to help position your club:

- How does your club compare with other organisations?
- What makes your club different from other clubs?
- What are parents looking for in an activity?
- What do participants want in an event?
- What would a potential sponsor look for?
- Does your club have the right image to recruit new members?

Marketing mix (the 5 Ps)

Marketing involves a combination of elements, commonly referred to in marketing terms as the 5 Ps. The research on your target market, what your club offers and where it is positioned within the market helps identify your club's marketing mix.

1. **Product** - Having or producing a product or service required by others. This could be your sport, the club, the competitions, stalls or other activities on offer.

2. **People** - Customers or the people who use the services or products on offer. Includes your employees, volunteers and members.
3. **Price** - Pricing the product or service at market price. Includes membership fees and structure, discounts and the 'cost' of member's time.
4. **Promotion** - Ensuring the potential customers are aware of your product. This can be advertising, publicity, sponsorship, brochures, posters or personal selling.
5. **Place** - Where the product is bought. Includes where you train, compete (home and away) and other facilities on offer.

Marketing Plans

Today voluntary organisations are required to be more accountable and responsible than ever before. A marketing plan will help you, your members and funding authorities be aware of what you are doing and why. A well thought out and well-organised marketing plan is also a highly-regarded document for potential sponsors.

There are two types of marketing plans, strategic and tactical. Both link with your club's business plan, which sets the overall direction for the whole club.

1. **Strategic marketing plans** - Usually covers a three-to-five year period and is based on your business plan. Valuable for developing ongoing programs and is essential if approaching sponsors for large amounts of money, or commitments that last for more than one season or event.
2. **Tactical marketing plan** - This is an offshoot of a strategic marketing plan and is about real short-term actions such as ways to increase the number of club members this season.

Components of a marketing plan

Summary	<p>Sums up your overall plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a statement of your main aims and objectives • Advisable to write last
Table of contents	Helps readers find topics and information.
Introduction	Outline of what you plan to do.
Situation analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the club's current situation? • How do these facts affect the plan? • Usually includes a SWOT analysis.
Target market analysis	<p>Define your current market using the techniques in targeting your market. Headings in this section include demographics - age, income, gender, ethnicity, geographics and psychology/lifestyle.</p>

Problems and opportunities	<p>Use the results of your SWOT analysis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the club stay in the current market? • Can the product your club is offering compete effectively? • Are the current marketing mix strategies and tactics effective or should they be changed?
Objectives	<p>Use the SMART method to define your objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific – the more details about how, why and when the more successful the event or activity • Measurable – how do you know when you've succeeded? Can you measure its success? E.g. number of people signing-up, amount of funds raised, number of times people have inquired as a result of an advertisement • Achievable – ensure you have enough people, resources and time to perform the task • Realistic – are you able to reach your targets? Start with small objectives like increase numbers by 10% across the area or raise €1,000 at table quiz. • Timetabled – supply dates.
Marketing mix	Develop a marketing mix that will help you achieve your objectives. For most tactical marketing plans the emphasis will be on promotion.
Implementation and control	Describe how are you going to achieve each outcome, when it be done and who will be responsible for a particular activity. This can be done in a timetable or schedule format.

Evaluation

Make sure strategies are put in place to see if you have met your objectives. Some activities are easy to monitor, such as a membership drive, others will not be able to be evaluated until after the event. Collect copies of press clippings or media coverage, records of attendances at functions or competitions and any feedback your group receives whether it's positive or negative.

Example Simple Marketing Plan for a Juvenile Open Day

Marketing objective: To recruit 20 juvenile members by 10 April.

Marketing strategies	Cost of strategies
Arrange date and time of Open Day	-
Arrange activities/games at open day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free coaching 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Games/activities • Information desk (need welcoming volunteer and forms to record names/phone numbers of those attended) • Sausage sizzle (need volunteer) • Competition to collect names and contacts to follow up 	Sausages €25, buns €10, sauce €5
Develop a flyer advertising open day	Coloured paper €5, photocopying costs €10
Place flyer on local community notice boards including local shopping centres, library, swimming pool, etc.	-
Contact principals of local primary schools to place information in the school newsletter	-
Place information in the club newspaper offering a free soft drink for those who bring a friend who is not a member to the open day	Soft drinks €25
Write an article and provide a photo for the local newspaper focusing on a local juvenile who joined up at an open day and is now representing the county for example	-
Consider signage – banner to be placed on the club signage company fence on main street	Signage company donated banner and €70 for sign writing
Conduct the Club Open Day	-
Follow up those who attended but did not join up on the day	€2.50
Total cost = €152.50	

Actual memberships gained:

22 new members each @ €50 recruited = €1,100

Net profit for club €1,100 – €152.50 = €947.50

Promotion

Promotion, as mentioned above, is the most visible aspect of marketing and is the major focus for most sports clubs. There are several types of promotional activities you can use to promote your club.

Advertising

Advertising is paid information in the media e.g. newspapers, radio and television. The advantage is that you control what is said because you pay for the space or time.

As advertising costs money, it is wise to choose the most appropriate advertising method for your target market while taking into consideration the event or activity being advertised.

Here are some suggestions:

Local papers	The more popular place to advertise. Before you place the ad do some research. Find out who the typical reader is and whether they fit into your target market. Check with other clubs and organisations who have placed ads in the same paper about their response rates. You may find that while the club had a successful open day, not many saw the advertisement.
Newsletters	A less expensive option to the local paper. Check whether your target schools, university or local clubs publish a newsletter with advertising space. Find out from the local library if there are any specialist newsletters distributed in the local area that would suit your target market.
Local radio	Generally more expensive than the local paper – requires a written script, an actor and production facilities. Check the local radio station for their demographics and rates before you decide on this method.
Local billboards and signage	Depending on where your target market is located, this could be an effective method of advertising, particularly in highly visible locations outdoors, on bridges or in shopping centres. Important to check rates and value of producing the sign.

If you decide to advertise, check the content of your advertisement very carefully before you send.

Remember to evaluate and report on all advertising. Find out whether the ad worked by asking people who come to the event how they heard about it.

Publicity and media

Publicity is free promotion for your sports club, most commonly obtained through the media. When done well, it can bring many benefits to your club. However be aware that you have no control over what form the publicity takes.

How to get publicity

Get to know local media. Get to know the local journalists who write the sports sections for the free newspapers or report for the radio stations. Find out what they're interested in covering and how you can give them the information. Check their deadlines and requirements.

Attract attention

The media is more likely to publish or broadcast news or human-interest stories that will appeal to their audience. Check the local papers and listen to the radio to find out what types of articles interest the editors, readers and listeners. Work out ways to make your information more interesting. Find an angle that will attract attention. Examples are: three sets of twins in one team, a celebrity is opening your fundraiser or your sport attracts mothers keen to socialise.

Send media releases

Media releases are the standard way of providing information to the media. Journalists and news rooms receive hundreds of media releases every day.

Essential guide to the perfect media release

Presentation

- Must be typed on letterhead
- Identify it as a media release on the top left
- Date it top right
- Use a catchy headline
- Use one side of the paper only and keep to one page when possible
- Check for spelling and typos

Information

- Who, what, when, why, where and how?
- Short paragraphs. Clear sentences. Use layman's terms
- Your first paragraph is short and punchy. It is the story in a nutshell
- Provide news angles (ie. focus on what is news – check your local paper for ideas.)
- Use present tense and active language
- Include important facts and statistics but don't overload
- Use quotes to support your release
- Have someone proof your release

Contacts

- Provide a contact telephone, mobile, fax and email for more information
- Make sure the contact person is available and returns calls promptly

The media

- Identify the media you are targeting
- Take time to find out how they prefer to receive information (email/phone/fax) and what their deadlines are
- Don't be pushy, instead willingly provide information and be prepared to assist the journalist in their pursuit of a story
- Follow up your release with a short phone call: "Just wanted to ensure you received our release and let you know we are available to help you in anyway possible"
- Develop a relationship with the journalists you regularly deal with.

Other Promotional Ideas

Websites

- A simple and effective way to communicate to your members, supporters and the local community.
- Can cut down on printing costs and time.
- Check your member base for people with website design skills and writing skills.
- Find a local store to sponsor website development in return for some form of branding and logo commitment.
- Basic sites should include:
 - a club's range of activities on offer
 - results
 - a calendar of events
 - membership information
 - contact details.
- Get your website linked to related sites. Ask your local council, schools and recreation centres to provide a link to your site. Offer your logo, the page you'd like the link on and a link to their website.
- If you have the resources, consider adding discussion forums, board and member lists etc.
- Remember to update your website. There's nothing worse than a site that has last year's scores only. Assign someone responsible for updating pages.

Newsletters

- Distribute a regular newsletter to provide information to members about club events, activities and news.
- Check your member base for people with desktop publishing and writing skills.

- If your budget is limited, find out if you can create an online newsletter that can be emailed to members (check privacy conditions) and published on the website.

Signage

- A banner with your club name, logo and colours could be used at registration days, presentation days, competitions and promotional events.
- Find a sponsor to pay for the signage in return for some form of publicity if your budget is limited.

Club logo

- Design a logo for your club to use on letterhead, promotional materials, displayed on the website and emails.

Flyers and brochures

- Produce a simple brochure or flyer that outlines the club's services or competitions, membership fees and contact information.
- Distribute to the local community notice boards, library, recreation centres, primary schools or letter box drop in the local area.
- Attach to your website or send via email.

Merchandise and jerseys

- Well-designed jerseys enhance a club's image while promote a club at events and activities.
- Maintain realistic uniform standards.
- Create merchandise such as caps, socks, shirts etc. to raise funds and promote your club at the same time.

Remember

Many organisations make the mistake of spending a lot of time and money on conducting promotions to recruit new members and forget about retaining current members. Developing marketing strategies to improve the basic product or services the club/group provides, the attitudes of volunteers or staff towards members or customers and the standard of facilities may be less expensive and more effective in the long-term.