

MARKETING YOUR CLUB

Marketing is the ability to talk about what makes your club unique and appealing to a target market. How does that apply to your club? There are two main forms of marketing a club – formal and informal.

Formal

Formal marketing can increase a club's profile and membership in a particular area. Listing your club in the telephone directory, advertising membership registrations in the local newspaper, offering a discount on court hire prices, or redecorating the club facilities are all examples of formal marketing activities.

These formal marketing activities should be recorded and planned for in a club's marketing plan.

Informal

Informal marketing are the little things club management and members do everyday – like offering help and providing information to prospective customers over the phone, or encouraging their friends to join up

Both forms of marketing rely on club members talking positively about the club. So it is important to try and make every experience or contact with your club a positive and rewarding one.

Who does marketing?

Everyone in the club should be involved in informal marketing whenever they can. Encourage your members to tell their friends and family about what the club can offer.

For formal marketing, it's useful to appoint a marketing and promotions officer, or a small team to oversee the development and implementation of the club's marketing strategies.

It helps you find out more about potential members needs, how you can develop new and existing services to keep up with their needs, and how to let them know about this.

A marketing plan should not be complicated or difficult to develop. It is important to be realistic about the club's marketing objectives as some marketing strategies can be costly to implement and may not have the desired effect.

There are many ways to develop a marketing plan, but before you start it may be useful to raise it with members at a club meeting. Discuss what sets your club apart from other clubs, what it offers that other clubs don't, and what the benefits of joining your club are.

These messages about the club should be included in the marketing plan and subsequent marketing activities. These are the things that attract new members and make people feel good about joining. It may be helpful to look at how other clubs market themselves. This may give you some ideas to adapt for your own plan. Many clubs make the mistake of spending a lot of time and money on promotions to recruit new members but forget existing current members. To retain members in the long term, it may be less expensive and more effective to improve the basic services the club provides, the attitudes of staff towards members, and the standard of facilities.

SIMPLE MARKETING PLAN

A simple plan for a small club would contain some basic elements including:

Objectives

These should be specific, measurable and achievable eg. recruiting twenty new junior members by the start of a particular competition.

Situation analysis

What's the club current situation? It could be helpful to do a SWOT analysis (to establish your clubs strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Strategies

These are the tools and activities to address the club's particular situation e.g. not enough members. These tools and activities must be targeted at specific markets.

Target marketing is the practice of designing and directing services at specific individuals or groups of customers. Try to think about the most effective way of communicating with your target market – what do they like, what do they read, where do they go, how can you attract their attention.

Budget

Develop a realistic marketing budget within the club's capabilities. Focus on low-cost or no-cost strategies to begin with.

Evaluation

Make sure you have a chance to evaluate the strategies. Have they met your objectives? Some activities such as a membership drive are easy to evaluate. But it won't be possible to evaluate others until after the event.

Collect copies of press clippings or media coverage, records of attendances at functions or competitions, and any feedback the club receives - positive or negative.