



Section 2.07 MARKETING, ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

What is Marketing?

- In its purest form, marketing is usually defined as a process of determining customer needs and developing and delivering products which fulfil these needs. It is a multi-faceted process where one must consider the **product, price, promotion and place** of delivery.
- **In Tennis, that would include all the activity involving your programs and services with existing and future members.** If we accept this broad definition, then it becomes easier to understand why **marketing is the job of several of your existing key volunteers.** By examining the following components of marketing, you'll see how several apply to each of your programs or services (of which you have many!). You may also begin to see where some of these components are not being actively pursued by the person with the program or service responsibility. Don't worry as this is usually the case. Marketing components for each program or service is often overlooked, ignored and/or misunderstood. Identifying those programs or services where little or no marketing exists and choosing to do something about it often is the reason a previously unsuccessful idea suddenly becomes successful.
- In the world of sport, marketing has also become the process of securing sponsorship support for programs or events. This support may involve either money or donated product. The term "marketing" is usually applied to this process for a number of reasons.
- To begin with, selling is part of marketing and if you have managed to secure support for your operation, then you have in fact made a sale. Secondly, and more commonly, supporting an event or program is a means of promotion for the sponsor's overall marketing initiative.

Marketing Components

- **Sales** - everything for which a fee is charged, including memberships, lessons, tournaments, socials, merchandise, tickets, draws, etc.
- **Image / Reputation**—everything that affects one's perception of what the Club is and does—members, future members, public-at-large, various communities, etc.
- **Pricing**—everything that is involved in the best decision of what to charge.
- **Service**—All activities that provide help and satisfaction for members/future members.
- **Communications**—all the ways we create and dispense information and dialogue.



- **Public Relations**—work done to build image and establish relationships with groups and individuals.
- **Advertising**—all the ways to get the member/future member to buy something or participate in something.
- **Promotion**—all ways for increasing awareness of products and services.
- **Research & Development**—the planning portion of any successful endeavour...the homework.

Why is marketing important to a tennis club?

- Membership levels (both new and renewal), successful program operation and managing costs are just a part of the ongoing challenges for the club's Executive members. Your club exists because it is filling a need in the local community. There are people in the community who want to participate in structured tennis. If this was not the case, then there would be a lack of members and the club would cease to operate.
- From this perspective, you are already involved with marketing. You make decisions to offer a round robin or social program because you believe your members want these. You enter your club into leagues because you have members who want to participate. These are both examples of marketing. If these programs were not offered to members, they may find a club which did offer them and join that club instead.
- In producing this document, it is our intention to offer some ideas and concepts to help formalize the marketing process at your club and, hopefully, make it more effective. Successful marketing can serve a number of purposes. To begin with, it can ensure that the programs and services your members want are being offered. It can help to raise interest in tennis and your club in the community, thereby ensuring an ongoing strong membership base. Finally, it can create opportunities to partner with other organizations within the community in the interest of broadening the resources at your club's disposal for the delivery of events and programs, or the improvement of the club's facilities or equipment. Any or all of these reasons are sound ones for becoming more involved with marketing.
- Marketing has to do with determining and fulfilling customer needs. A primary customer group for your club is the current members. Conducting some form of survey, as well as posting a suggestion box among this group to ensure that the programs being offered are consistent with member needs is a great way to begin becoming more market focussed. It is important to do the research before spending time to organize, advertise and administer a program that your members do not want.
- Often, it is assumed that everyone is happy with the status quo. Remember that needs are always changing and successful organizations change to ensure that they are filling these



new needs. You have to gather as much information as you can about these needs to ensure that the right changes are made. Both the direct and indirect feedback you receive is most important in addressing member satisfaction.

- However, this is only a start. Looking beyond your present membership, there may well be many more people in your community who could potentially become tennis enthusiasts and members of your club. Promoting participation in tennis and membership in your club is also an important part of marketing. Don't run a "closed shop" which just caters to the needs of a few long time members. Rather, look to ways of growing your potential membership base.
- It is always important to investigate and try new types of partnerships or new opportunities. Your local Parks and Recreation Department or schools may have introductory tennis programs in place. By supporting these programs, or inviting participants in these programs to an open house at your club, you may well succeed in developing new members. This is a case of partnering with other organizations that have something which can be of benefit to you.
- Likewise, you have things which can be of benefit to other organizations in your community and therefore, opportunities to establish mutually beneficial relationships. An example of a property which a club has, and a potential partner interested in this property, would be your club's membership and a local sporting goods retailer.
- The establishment of some form of relationship would be beneficial to both organizations. The retailer may well supply prizes for a club event or a discount to all club members. In return, the club would give the retailer the right to place promotional materials in the clubhouse, hang a banner at the club or include information in a club mailing.
- It is important to keep an open mind about all potential opportunities. Also, keep in mind that you have to give to get. Do not expect that organizations will bend over backwards to assist you without you offering them assistance as well. After all, this should be a **PARTNERSHIP** in order to be successful for both parties in future!
- Finally, assign a member of your executive with the responsibility for coordinating marketing activities. This task could be given to an existing member or a new position could be created. Either way, assigning responsibility is a good way to ensure that things will happen.
- The above are just a few ways to begin becoming more market focussed. If your club is not engaged in any of the activities noted, we urge you to try just one. We are sure there will be returns to your club for doing so.



THE IMPORTANCE OF “REPUTATION” OF A CLUB

- A reputation of a club is its important and valuable asset. A positive one may bring many benefits to a club, when a negative one may significantly harm it. A club's reputation is closely tied up with its stakeholders' emotional beliefs about it.
- A reputation of a club may play a key part in its business development and program success.
- Reputation is a "soft" concept that most members at large and employees don't feel is their job to manage. Instead they view it as the role of the executives, or the function of those in charge of club portfolios, communications, marketing, advertising, or public relations.
- **WHAT IS YOUR CLUBS REPUTATION? ARE YOU MANAGING YOUR CLUBS REPUTATION**, in the community, in your region, in the province?
- Reputation Management is the understanding of the importance of having a positive image.
- Reputation Management should be treated in the same way as branding, you can't necessarily measure the results directly.
- All clubs need to focus on developing a strategy to feed/develop positive comment and avoid, **negative comments** that could be costing your club members. It's much easier and cheaper to act before issues arise, taking a preventive measure will help not only protect your brand but also stop unsubstantiated rumor from a disgruntled source from spreading, (I.e. the person who didn't get chosen for a team)
- It is the responsibility of all members of a club to do anything that they can to develop a positive reputation for their club at all times of the year.

REMEMBER,

A strong club reputation can power a club's success by:

- attracting, motivating and retaining talented members and employees
- the development of new and innovative programming
- leading to public goodwill and positive references.



How to Market Your Club

- Ask yourself if it is prudent for the club to expand the membership base if the courts are already jammed every night. Maybe the answer lies in recruiting new members to play during the day, therefore marketing will be different, perhaps targeting seniors or retirees.
- Person to person, word of mouth is one of the most successful ways to join new members. Create incentives for your club's members to bring in someone new. This way, household members' relatives, neighbours and friends are approached by someone they know.
- Printed work such as applications, brochures, posters, flyers and advertisements have naturally limited audiences and are looked at by different kinds and ages of people for varied reasons. Wherever possible, focus on a particular group and direct your message accordingly. Provide reasons to join other than the obvious (such as volunteering, opportunities to tell the club what programs are wanted, career opportunities).
- Electronic messages can be a lot more than a ticker tape "join us" on cable TV. Why not show people in action or arrange for an interview to further explain your program.
- Club, team and other organization contact gives you lots of opportunities - speaking engagements, articles in newsletters, invitations to attend specially designed activities, etc.
- Testimonials and encouraging words from local business owners could go a long way to interest their employees to join your club.
- Active and manned displays in high traffic areas (club display at a shopping mall) can bring you person-to-person with the public.
- Web sites can be a great tool to provide information on your club to prospective and current members.
- Take advantage of local Parks and Recreation communications (booklets or web sites) and make sure the OTA has your up to date information so your club information is readily available when someone accesses the OTA web site to "find a club".
- Check with the OTA for programs to promote tennis (such as Tennis Pathways or Schools Programs) that are or could be run in your area in which you could partner to promote your club.
- Whichever way(s) you choose to increase your membership, write down your plans. Consider every step necessary to carry out each plan. The amount of work/resources required with each plan coupled with the expected success rate should help you to determine your action priorities.



- **Consider** - Companies determined to sell more of their product do at least three things:
 1. Study how the competition does it (consider all other sports).
 2. Focus on specific groups of people, target markets.
 3. Select a variety of ways (which frequently interact) to get the message across.

Marketing Your Programs

- Programs are not much different from any other product. The ones that succeed are the ones which properly address a customer need, are delivered at the proper time, and are priced and promoted in the right way.
- We have already discussed the concept of getting feedback from your members on the programs which the club will offer. You must look at your customer. Programs should be "customer driven". Making them a success will depend on proper promotion and delivery.
- You should also be checking your assumptions and countering any bad assumptions. Here's a very short list of examples of BAD ASSUMPTIONS which we need to identify and do something about.
 1. One "exciting" poster is all you need to attract a large enough draw to hold a tournament!
 2. The Tournament convenor's job is only to schedule matches and award prizes.
 3. Low or No fees attract more contestants.
 4. Scare tactics work ("we need 8 teams or the event will not be held").
 5. It worked before; therefore, it will work again.
- Be thorough. Challenge each decision that is made or not made. Should there be more ways to "advertise" the tournament? Are there well-known club members around to promote it? Could a smaller tournament be better? Does the convenor "help" potential players to "make up their minds"? Will a different time, price, venue, selection of teams, prizes, etc. help bring in more players?
- For example, if you want to promote a program for older members, you need to use a message which they can relate to. This message will probably differ from the one you would use to promote a junior program. Promotional information should be in place well in advance of the program dates. Posters, club newsletters or club e-mails are all prime vehicles for promoting programs.
- Likewise, the delivery must be consistent with what your target group expect and want. Something that works with the junior members will not necessarily work with older adults. For some programming ideas, see the Programming sections of this Club Manual.



PRICING & PACKAGING

- Usually clubs charge the same fees as the previous year, or up them \$5 for “inflation”. Unless there is a one-time large bill to be paid (such as court resurfacing), there is no reason to build a large surplus (unless there is a long-range plan to add courts, a clubhouse or a bubble!). Without “special” expenses, the budget basically covers programs, equipment and some wages. Little thought is given to what to charge, and maybe that shows. Does the club that offers the cheapest price have the most members to show for it? On the other hand, some clubs have terrific memberships because of the quality programs/services they offer at the premium.
- Here are a couple of quick examples. Does the club pay for the balls and refreshments at regular club events? It costs more, but it can be included as a club service which is built into the membership fee. What about lessons, tournaments, leagues, etc.? Are these fees all included in the membership fee, or are they charged separately? Do members pick and choose, or do they have to take the whole package?
- There isn’t necessarily one right or wrong way. What is important is that some thought is given to what is being offered extra, what is being included and what is fair market value. Another example: fees collected for club tournaments resulted in a large enough surplus that the Executive agreed to provide a free bottle of wine on each table at the Club Annual Awards Night Dinner/Dance.

THE COMPETITION

- The next closest Tennis Club may not be a factor in determining programs, services and fees, but several other sports that compete for the same people at the same time might certainly be considered as competition. How do your program opportunities and resulting fees compare against one of the more popular sports in your area? Does a person joining your Club get more “bang for the buck”? Any surveys that I’ve seen on the local scene show that community tennis is a terrific value compared to some of the other organized sports. This is a message well worth making known!

ALTERNATIVES

- Clubs should have activities that are unique, adding to the Club’s personality. Just like products stress unique features and subsequent benefits, you should be looking for, or creating, the reason(s) why people want to join your club and/or participate in your activities. Then your promotions and sales should focus on that uniqueness. Not all Tennis Clubs are OTA members. Not all have tennis camps, club pros, monthly social round robins, winter programs, ladders, inter-club play, house leagues, awards nights, intermediate and specialized lessons, fundraising events, etc. **Take the time to really sell your members and potential members on the alternatives within the club program,**



NOT alternatives to the club program.

QUALITY/QUANTITY

- Attracting and keeping members requires that your club creates the perception that it provides exactly what the member/potential member wants. Since everyone's wants differ, you are better to err on the high side in terms of variety of opportunities. But don't discount the need to have one or two "really first class events" for those who are looking for that. For example, you could have 5 socials a season-- 4 that serve hot dogs and cost \$2, and one that serves caviar @ \$15.
- While the above may seem ridiculous, **you can only be sure by asking your members what they need/want.** Then work this into the club plan of what it is prepared to offer.

Fundraising and Sponsorship:

- If sometime during your tenure as a member of your club's executive you have thought, said, or heard someone else say, "If we had \$X, we could...", then you probably have a good reason to fundraise, especially if the club does not currently have the funds, nor is likely to get them without a special effort.
- Fundraising is that extra agenda item that is not part of the budget and causes scowls among the pessimists because they did not think of it, don't trust it, don't believe you will succeed and don't think the reason is good enough to go to the trouble. In many organizations (tennis clubs included), dreams, which cost money, all too often do not become reality. Your goal is to make dreams come true.
- Here are a few reasons why you might want to fundraise for your club.
 1. Big ticket items: a club house or major renovation, winterizing, putting on additions, adding courts or even a bubble over some courts to market a year round facility.
 2. Smaller items: court resurfacing, nets/screens/balls, a new patio, deck, washroom or signage.
 3. Programming: free lessons, junior/mini-tennis program, tournament cash prizes, year end annual dance.
 4. Reserve for future activities where up front cash is required.
- However, before you rush off on a fundraising initiative, it must be very clear in your mind what it is that the club needs. You must be able to demonstrate the need and the benefits derived from fundraising. In order to get any executive approval to proceed, you must also demonstrate that you have thought beyond just a good idea and that someone is committed to taking charge of this special project. Like any good plan, there needs to be an objective



that is clearly understood by all, and is measurable and obtainable. It should be very specific in terms of financial targets, time, dates and responsibility.

- Finally, there needs to be an action plan drawn up (preferably by those who will carry it out), and then it needs to be executed. Either a critical path or critical success indicators must be established as ways to monitor success along the way.
- The need and objective should be presented formally to the club executive along with a specific commitment to the project. It helps to "test the waters" first with other executive members or get a straw vote so your idea meets little resistance when actually presented.
- While the action steps should be drawn up by those who will actually do them, it may be comforting to the executive to give them examples of both the steps that may be taken and the measurements that would be made along the way. This allows alternate courses of action to be planned before you are in too deep or before it is too late.
- As you are involved in a selling function, you have to be honest, enthusiastic, committed, know what you are talking about, handle any objections by identifying them, minimizing them through stressing benefits to those objecting and with a sense of urgency, ask for approval to go ahead.
- There are many turn-key fundraising programs available these days. These range from coordinating programs and events for members at your club, or selling confections or tree seedlings. Some ideas and examples are as follows:
 - Tournaments/Special Events (Calcuttas)
 - Auctions (have club pro's, and tournament champions auctioned as partners at a club tournament or event)
 - Special Dinners
 - Garage Sales (members donate items to be sold)
 - Bake Sales
 - Raffles
 - Tennis Movie Evening
- These events require hard work, imagination and volunteers. They not only raise dollars for your club but also build a sense of community.
- Sponsorship support is something that almost any club can secure. We noted above the opportunity of partnering with a local sporting goods retailer. Similar opportunities for support would occur with many local businesses. However, there are a few things which could serve to make your attempts at securing and maintaining sponsors more successful.
 1. Take inventory of your marketable properties. These could include your membership list, major club or local tournaments, large ongoing club programs, etc.



2. As noted, you have to give something to get something. This might involve allowing the business to do a direct mail to your members or posting promotional materials at your club.
3. Match the participants in the event or program to the target market of the organization who you are approaching as a sponsor.
4. Submit written proposals outlining the event/program, the participants, the promotional opportunity for the sponsor and what you need in return. Follow up with personal visits.
5. While cash support is preferred, do not set your sites on this exclusively. It is often far easier for sponsors to donate product rather than cash. It is better to get product support than no support at all.
6. Invite the sponsor to attend the event or directly participate in the program. Also, invite the local community media and make sure they know the sponsor is supporting a local community event.
7. Always follow up after the program to assess how it worked for the sponsor as a promotion and lay the groundwork for another program.
8. Programs which can be identified as leading to actual sales for the sponsor are usually the most successful. A program which includes a special coupon falls into this category. The sponsor can actually determine how many coupons are redeemed and therefore how many sales were made as a result of the program.

Who Does Your Marketing?

- Not everyone wants to be or likes being a salesman! That's truly an understatement. Some people will go to almost any length to avoid having to ask someone to buy something. Right? Well, funny enough, there is nearly always a situation where someone has to sell something such as a product, an idea, himself, etc. The trick is to train people who need to sell the how, what, where, when and who.
- Here are a few examples. The membership convenor needs to be knowledgeable about what is offered, and persuasive and convincing that what your Club is offering is good value. Extra information about competitor product/price would be worth having. The league convenor may have to handle diplomatic personnel problems which require the selling skill of convincing parties in dispute to accept a compromise. What about the Tournament Chair who is arm-twisting people to sign up for tournaments, stressing benefits to the stubborn member on the other end of the line?

POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

- Successful people refuse to let disappointments get them down. This has been proven time and again in the sales arena where the top producers react to a lost sale by bouncing back with even more determination. The trait can be developed, and is something we should all strive for, especially when it comes to increasing membership, increasing participation in



activities, raising funds, finding volunteers, etc.

- Positive thinkers distance themselves from negative thinkers. As much as possible, those responsible for the selling tasks should also be positive thinkers. If the person selling dance tickets thinks he can only sell three of the 15 tickets he's been given to sell, then he will only meet that expectation. You want a person who is convinced of their own ability to sell all 15 tickets!

IT'S EASIER TO PLAN TO MEET, THAN MEET YOUR PLAN

- Does your club Executive meet regularly? Does it have a Club Plan that it is following, or does it meet primarily to hear how each member is doing with his/her list of responsibilities? For instance, it is one thing to ask the membership convenor to comment upon what has taken place since last meeting, to recruit new members or bring back previous members. It's quite another thing to list, at the beginning of the season, all the things that are going to be done to achieve the membership target, and then, at monthly meetings, report that activities have taken place and results are as shown. It takes GUTS.
- Frankly, most people won't do it, with reasons varying from: I haven't time; Hey, I'm just a volunteer; We don't need to; to: What's the big deal here? Why bother, etc. Only you can be the judge of whether your club needs to plan or not. It's up to your Executive to conduct itself in a way that yields the best results. But imagine the feeling that comes with planning your work, then working your plan and its success surpasses your objectives! You can't get that feeling if you don't plan!

Ambassadors

- Most often, the glue that holds tennis clubs together is a small group of dedicated tennis players who are the keener players in the Club. Likely, these are the people that are most excited about the game, they are the people who want the Club to thrive, have lots of good activities that are well-attended. These may be the people that know what it will take to make things come alive. These are the people that play and play and play tennis umpteen times a week.
- Can we not somehow harness their enthusiasm for the game? What influence could the club champion have on some of the new players, juniors and adult? What if someone called on them to perform a very specific task, such as running a round robin, cooking hamburgers, giving pointers to the most promising kids, thereby establishing a role model. And, if you need a local sponsor, what better than to call upon the person most likely to win. What passion they must have to play the game so well!
- Clubs are quite surprised, for instance, when they discover how many people are willing to help do things, if they are asked on the membership application or in person; then called



and set up with their volunteer task. A strawberry social or car rally may be just the thing to cause some previous non-participants to change their tune and start joining in other activities.

- Identify your ambassadors. Have them wear a special tennis pin. It will be a good investment.

Communications

- Each person on your Executive has a communications responsibility. Just think about it: the President, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Newsletter Editor the Tournament Convenor, the Social Convenor, the Membership Convenor, the Junior Development Chair, etc. Each has an ongoing report to Committee; dialogue and/or verbal notices; and more. Good communication is more though. It takes an additional step. It actively solicits responses from the “other party”. It is two-way!
- It is relatively easy, at the planning stage, to ensure that there is always opportunity for feedback, a chance for someone to applaud a good job and/or offer help/helpful suggestions to improve something. Even a suggestion box may yield results.
- It is important to decide early on which kinds of communications belong to which person. For example, program complaints, ideas, external contact, artistic posters, photography, articles for the mailed or e-mailed newsletter, phone committee, etc. It is very easy to assume that someone else is doing “such and such” , when, in fact, nothing at all is being done. What a disaster this could wind up being.
- A good communication adage used in the training field is: Tell ’em what you are going to tell them; tell them; tell them you told them. This serves effectively as a reminder.
- There are many opportunities to communicate with the people that make up your club, both orally and written. It not only is useful to inform, but pleases the member who feels a part of the club. Take the time to make a list of the ways you can better communicate with your members. Chances are you will discover serious shortcomings in some areas.

Personal Communication (Telephone/email)

- The use of the telephone or personal communication diminishes in direct proportion to the opportunity for mass communication such as newsletters or posters; there is an assumption that adults don’t need to be reminded of things; there is the initial scare of a negative response. Generally, it will be used for “convincing” purposes, which is not everyone’s cup of tea. However, short of eye-to-eye, it is the best way to get a response and feedback. Develop your telephone/personal contact committee.



External Communication

- So often in our rush to meet seasonal demands, we forget about duty to the neighbours, the municipality (if they supply the courts, grounds, buildings, parking, etc.), local business (who can be very helpful as sponsors of prizes), schools, free advertising called public service announcements and, of course, are our best source of potential members. It would be easy and profitable to include them automatically on the newsletter mailing list. You just never know when it would pay off.

PROMOTING THROUGH THE MEDIA

- Promoting your club has many benefits such as:
 1. Awareness and interest generated for your club will mean more people will participate, which, in most cases, makes for better tennis.
 2. Those who discover your club through a tournament or special event could also be prospective members.
 3. If your club has been fortunate enough to secure a sponsor to help with the expenses of a club event, promotion will be a necessity to help repay their generosity.
 4. Current club members will take pride in their club when it is presented to the wider community as a good place to belong, which is important for member satisfaction.

GETTING STARTED

- The first task in generating publicity is to assign either one person or a committee of people to look after promotion, and nothing else! This assignment cannot be looked after by the person in charge of the event, such as a tournament director. If done properly, publicity tasks inevitably overlap with the running of the tournament. You can't do two things at one time. Put your most energetic and eager committee member in charge of promotion. The idea in promotion is to reach the largest number of people in the simplest and most cost-effective manner.

HOMEMADE PROMOTION

- Posters with obvious and attractive tennis themes can be very effective. Make sure important information such as times, place, cost and added hospitality are clear and easy to understand. Canvass your membership to see if anyone has special talents in this area. You might be surprised to find how many people can help you.
- Display your posters at your courts and throughout the community; schools, community centres, recreation departments, parks and playgrounds, medical centres, civic buildings, shopping malls and convenience stores. If your event is a tournament you should contact



other tennis clubs in your area and provide them with a poster to encourage their members to participate. If your event is open to OTA members or OTA sanctioned, you can also send your event information to the OTA who will try to help you promote your event through the weekly e-news or monthly e-magazine or help you with mailing out notices to a specific group. This is a great selling point for potential sponsors of your event.

- Many local cable television channels have a free billboard service operating at some point during the day that is specifically geared toward promoting community events like a tennis tournament at your club.
- Don't forget to promote your event to your own club members and get them promoting your event by word of mouth to their friends and contacts.

MAKING CONTACT

- Your next step is to reach the media. Compile a contact list of the media outlets in your area. Check in your local phone directory so you don't miss any options.
- Media can consist of television (both commercial and cable access), radio, newspapers, magazines, club and service group newsletters, the Internet and more. It's important to make a personal contact, someone you can call back to follow up with new information or an added reminder.
- Of these options, the community newspaper is the most accessible and open to your needs. A small staff of writers can mean you can get your event's message into print, verbatim, at no cost! Write up a concise media release (a short description of your event in 50 - 100 words) and send it to the paper about two weeks before your event. Be sure to include a contact name and phone number of someone at the club who has all the pertinent information.
- If you want an article in a weekly newspaper, keep deadlines in mind. In order for the article to appear at least one edition before your tournament is run, you must have the information in the week before that.
- Follow-up is crucial when getting your event in print. Make sure that as soon as possible after your event, you send a detailed roundup of what happened. Always include photos. It gives your story greater attractiveness and there's a good chance it will be published.
- Make sure when taking pictures your subject is clear. It's better to take a close-up picture of an individual than taking a wide shot of your event. The paper is trying to personalize the story. A clear, well-focussed shot of a specific subject enhances the story. The written copy should serve to describe the event as a whole.
- The same applies for radio and television. Don't call them the day before. It's too late.



Make an initial call about two weeks prior to the event because cameras and other resources often get assigned by sports editors well in advance.

WORKING THE MEDIA

- Make sure all sports reporters in your area get a personal invitation to your event or happening, preferably in writing or by fax. Follow this up with either a personal meeting or phone call to allow the reporter to make a connection with the original notice. This amount of effort has instantly gained you credibility in their eyes. You've given them a reason to make an appearance.
- When the event is complete, follow up with correctly spelled names, accurate scores, or other specific information as quickly as possible following the event. Again, take lots of pictures of the event. They can be added to the information you send to the media. Pictures can also be posted around the club and kept in 'archives' to help preserve the heritage of your club.
- If a news organization has previewed the event, they should feel compelled to provide complete, follow-up coverage. Make it as easy as possible for the media to do so. Don't give them excuses to let your event slip by.
- On the other hand, don't be discouraged if not every media outlet gives you the coverage you think you deserve. You should think of any coverage as a plus. You can't demand it. Treat reporters well and they will do likewise for you in their coverage. For example, if you have a barbecue, make sure to offer them some food. If you have tournament souvenirs or shirts, perhaps give something to the attending media personnel.
- Don't think of the immediate expense. You can't put a price on good coverage now and in the future. Build on the media that did show up by pursuing them again next year.
- Meanwhile, find out in a tactful way why other media didn't show up or provide coverage. No matter where your club is located, there are always plenty of news and sports stories to be covered in your area. There are no guarantees!

BE YOUR OWN MEDIA

- Make certain your publicity committee is equipped with a camera. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. Pictures of the winners and good action shots add a lot to media releases and articles you might write for your local paper or even the club newsletter. Pictures bring the story to life. Make plenty of copies of both the story or release, that you write, as well as the pictures. Photography is an important job. This should be the singular responsibility of one committee member.



- Remember, if you haven't already started your own club newsletter, now is as good a time as any. The number of times you print it can vary according to what's going on around your club. One pre-season and one wrap up edition is recommended for those of you just getting started. Hopefully, your club has an e-mail membership database. You can save some money by e-mailing the newsletters rather than mailing them.
- Find out who in your club knows something about computers and can perhaps help you produce an information piece.
- Remember: *Ontario Tennis* is one media outlet with a guaranteed interest in your club and its events. Make sure to include it on your media list as a recipient for all your media releases and event reports.

ADVANTAGES OF A CHARITY

- One way of increasing your chances of coverage is to make your 'sporting event' into a 'news event'. Media wants to report on activities that touch a lot of people, either because of the participation at your event or because of the implications it has for others.
- One of the best ways to make your event into a news story, and to benefit others, is to add a charity component. A good example of this was the SunLife Nationals tournament in Mississauga and its support of Cystic Fibrosis. Tennis Canada adopted this cause as a benefactor of activities run in conjunction with that tournament. The sponsor also had an attachment to CF. As a result, it was a perfect fit.
- Your charity doesn't have to be that large. It might be a certain cause or concern in your community that your executive deems worthy of some help. A local food bank can be a good choice as you can ask for donations of food or money. When you add a charity to the mix, you automatically open your event up to coverage by the news media and not simply sports reporters. It adds credibility and deserved recognition to your event.

ORGANIZATION

- Organization and preparedness are the two most important factors in promoting an event at your club. From year to year, keep track of what worked for you and also areas where you had trouble or wasted your time and effort. If you aren't the one in charge of promotions the following year, make sure the person who is gets this feedback.
- Give the audience you are trying to reach plenty of time to find out about your event and a chance to be there. Whether it's the media, participants or spectators, you have to give people in today's hectic world a chance to plan your event into their busy schedules.
- Never bypass an opportunity to promote your event. You'll never get 100% return on your



efforts (unless you don't approach enough people), but make sure that those who do give you their attention are encouraged to get your message out or attend the following year. Be knowledgeable, accommodating, and hospitable to those who cover your event.

- Promotion translates into positives for your club event. Do what you can to make it happen.

ACKNOWLEDGE PROMOTION AS AN ON-GOING PRIORITY

- Promotion on an 'ad hoc' basis will never be as effective as a constant, consistent message to those who need to know. Make a commitment to promote everything that's going on around your club and everyone who's involved. This is a great boost to those inside and outside of your club.

ONE PERSON NEEDS TO LEAD

- Promotion should be a separate entity of your club's executive. The promotion executive or subcommittee needs to be aware of all aspects of club activity. Recruit individuals who have experience in the areas of writing, computers, print production, video and photographic expertise to serve on a promotions committee. Also, recruit those with energy and a zest for what the club is trying to accomplish.

KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE MEDIA

- Make personal contacts with editors and reporters of all the local media in your area. Understand what their needs are to get your message communicated through them. i.e. deadlines, computer compatibility, video or photographic specs, etc.

BE PREPARED. BE PROACTIVE. BE POSITIVE.

- Anticipating what needs to be done to generate media attention is often a result of experience. Learn from every attempt you make. Always give plenty of warning of your event and always follow-up with further material after the event. Often, only a small percentage of whom you try to entice to come actually show up. Don't be discouraged. Make the most of those who do show up. Be prepared for them and treat them well, and you will be happy with the resulting coverage! Sometimes, just a simple mention in a newspaper or on the radio or television can spawn a great deal of interest in your club. Be aware that no media is too small or too big to contact. If the message is important to you, it's probably important to someone else!
- If you have further questions or concerns regarding media and promotions, please feel free



to contact the OTA office.

MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

- This is a concern for many tennis clubs. It is well documented that keeping a current member happy is easier than spending the money and energy to find a new one. At a time when there are multiple options for exercise (including free options such as walking or running), keeping players at your club definitely can take more work than it used to.
- Many people feel that it is crucial to both get new players involved immediately and make them feel welcome. For example, it is very important to ensure that for those taking beginner lessons, there needs to be another program readily available to them once the lessons conclude so they can actually play. This can be something like a tennis league (or a tennis team) that is suitable for their ability level. This allows them to establish friendships with others, as well.
- For the long term success of your club, it is also important to have a ‘family’ atmosphere in the club and to make sure new members do not feel that a cliquish atmosphere exists.
- We understand that community tennis clubs operate through a volunteer network. It is time well spent by a club executive volunteer to follow up with former members (by phone or e-mail) who have not rejoined the club in the current year to find out why they aren’t rejoining. If there is a consensus as to why people are not rejoining, the club executive needs to consider these main reasons to see what can be done to rectify things. For example, if many aren’t rejoining because they took lessons the previous year but had nothing to do once the lessons were done, this would certainly reinforce the point above that there must be some sort of club activity that these people can get involved in so they can play.