

Event Marketing

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Chapter Objectives

After completing the chapter, the reader should be able to do the following:

- Understand why event marketing provides different challenges and opportunities than traditional marketing.
- Understand the role of the marketing plan and the marketing planning process.
- Utilize multiple methods of identifying target markets for events.
- Identify the key issues of developing an event brand.
- Understand multiple tools available for promoting events.

Industry Profile: George Barbetto, University of Louisville

As senior marketing manager for the University of Louisville athletic department, George Barbetto is responsible for marketing and sales for multiple college sport programs. In this role, he oversees various sales and engagement initiatives and develops marketing plans to increase attendance and maximize fans' experiences. Prior

to coming to Louisville, George worked in event and game operations for the New York Jets, overseeing a variety of marketing and event initiatives.

What are some unique challenges in marketing college sporting events?

We have 23 NCAA Division I sports here and each sport is different. Marketing tennis is obviously different than marketing men's basketball or football. We want to make an engaging atmosphere for fans while they are at the event, but you have to get the fans there to do so.

When you put together your marketing plan, how do you identify the direction you want your marketing efforts to take?

You have to set goals based on what the team wants, what the coaches are looking for, and what goal the athletic department as a whole has for the sport. We work with the team to set those goals and then create the plan and marketing efforts to reach those goals.

Who is your target customer?

Each sport's consumer is different. Our football and basketball fans have a similar overlap, but our women's basketball and volleyball fans are completely different. Through our social media analytics and through our customer relationship management databases, we have information on who our season ticket holders are, where they live, and their demographic information. We tailor our messaging to those demographics. We know what time they are most active on social media and if they are opening our e-mails. We build an outline of our customer so that we know who you are without knowing exactly who you are.

What methods do you use to promote your events? What is most effective for you?

Over the last five years it has been heavy social media interaction. Some of the newest, most engaging things are Instagram stories and Snapchat stories. Our go-to is e-mail marketing. We are heavy on that for all sports. Paying a small amount to advertise on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram always has the best return on investment. Social media is our best bet to target our audiences.

What makes someone successful in event marketing?

What makes someone successful in event marketing is having a passion to learn and constantly grow and push yourself and the events; to be new, innovative, interactive, and thinking of how it can be more fun for the fan. Pushing yourself to be creative, whether it is brainstorming every day with your team or being actively involved in other events and active in how other people do things. You never know when the next best idea is going to come.

What are some tips you would offer to others marketing events?

You can never plan too far in advance for an event. Having plan B, C, and D prepared will get you a long way. There are things in events that you may never anticipate happening. Being able to react on the fly, be a quick thinker, and adjust on the move are definitely skills people in event management and event marketing need to have.

Marketing Sport Events

Sporting events are unique products; therefore, marketers must consider differences between marketing sporting events and marketing other goods and services. Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2014) and Wakefield (2007) provide a series of differences between sport marketing and marketing other goods and services. Many of those differences can be applied to the marketing of sporting events.

- Sport consumers tend to be highly identified with the sport or the event. Spectators may travel great lengths and spend more than they should to attend events featuring their favorite athletes or teams. For example, a college student may stay up all night for tickets, skip class, and spend a week's salary to see his team play in the NCAA basketball tournament. You do not see that type of behavior with the purchase of toothpaste or socks. Similarly, event participants may also be highly identified with the sport in which they participate. Given sport is part of their identity, they may follow it more closely, be more aware of upcoming events, and be more willing to invest their time and resources to participate in a specific event.
- Every sporting event is a unique experience for the spectator and for the participant, adding an element of unpredictability for the event marketer. Event marketers cannot promise a close game, a competitive tournament, or good weather. The implication here is that participants and spectators typically consume sporting events for the experience instead of some tangible factor. Therefore, event marketers have to focus on the experiential nature of the event in order to attract and retain customers.
- Sporting events may consist of core offerings (e.g., basketball game, volleyball tournament) as well as extensions (e.g., halftime show, awards ceremony, music, tailgating). The challenge for an event marketer is to develop an acceptable mix of activities to meet the needs of participants and spectators. Consider the Circle City Classic, a college football game featuring two historically black institutions. Although the game itself may be the central product, fans often attend the games for the entire experience, which includes a fan fest, a parade, and a postgame concert, in addition to a number of community activities that take place during game week.
- The cost of attending an event is often much greater than just the ticket price. Spectators attending sporting events may also incur expenses for travel and lodging, food and beverages at the event, and souvenirs and entertainment surrounding the event. For example, the average ticket cost to Super Bowl LI in Houston was \$4,652; however, when airfare, lodging, local transportation, parking, and meals were figured

in, the total cost was \$6,820 for fans traveling from Atlanta and \$7,467 for fans traveling from Boston (Kaylor 2017). Clearly, event organizers have to consider these total costs when setting their prices for tickets, registrations, and other goods and services.

- Sporting events are social in that most consumers prefer to attend or participate with other consumers. Sport consumers like the idea of being part of a crowd, and event participants tend to prefer the events with more players or more teams. In other words, sport spectators help create the environment, and other participants help create the competition. Considering the technological changes that make it easy to stay home, sporting events represent opportunities to be social and be a part of a community (Morrison 2014).

Developing a Marketing Plan

The marketing plan is the document detailing the marketing activities that need to happen for an event to reach its objectives. In other words, it is the blueprint you create to outline your marketing activities. Developing a marketing plan is a step-by-step process whereby organizations first consider their objectives, analyze relevant data, and then develop tactics accordingly. A typical marketing plan contains the following sections.

- *Data and analysis.* This section encompasses the information necessary to make wise marketing decisions. It should include detailed analyses of the event, current and potential customers, and the external environment.
- *Marketing goals and objectives.* Using data from the analyses, event marketers should set performance goals consistent with the organization's overall goals.
- *Target markets.* In this section, target markets are identified and described. Target markets are selected based on careful analysis of consumer data, and should be consistent with overall objectives.
- *Marketing tactics.* Sporting events are no different from other businesses in that effective use of the marketing mix is important for reaching marketing objectives. Traditional definitions of the marketing mix consist of elements related to the sport product, price, promotion, and place. Tactics based on the marketing mix are typically developed with the specific needs of each target market in mind.
- *Implementation.* This section of the plan includes a thorough detailing of what needs to take place to successfully implement the marketing plan. Having good ideas is not enough to be successful; marketers have to execute those ideas. Planners should identify and address issues related to budget, organizational support, leadership, resource acquisition, resource allocation, coordination, and timing (Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton 2014).
- *Assessment.* In this section, organizers describe how they will measure and assess

results. At this point, organizers can address how plans can be modified in the future.

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Market Research and Analysis

Effective decision-making depends on having good information. In order to make these decisions, event marketers need to collect and analyze information across a variety of areas such as the internal environment, the external environment, current and potential customers, and the competition. Table 6.1 illustrates some of the methods that can be used to collect data.

Table 6.1. Market Research Techniques

| Method | Description |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Internal data | Information such as sales records, consumer inquiries, attendance figures, and web traffic that can easily be collected to learn about your organization and consumers. |
| Secondary research | Published data. The advantage of secondary research is that it has already been collected and produced. The drawbacks are that the data may not be specific to your research questions, the data may be dated, and some data can be quite expensive. |
| Surveys | Lists of questions that can be distributed by mail, e-mail, or phone, or face to face. Surveys are good for collecting a lot of quantifiable data from a large number of consumers. |
| Personal interviews and focus groups | Qualitative research involving discussions with consumers designed to get feedback about issues or ideas. These methods are used to get more in-depth information about consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs. |
| Social media research | Collecting data from social media sources, which can be used to follow trends or to follow what your consumers are saying in real time. |
| Participant observation | Observing behavior of consumers and employees in their natural setting. This method is appropriate for measuring direct behavior rather than reported behavior (which can often be unreliable). |
| Mystery shopper | Using staff to pose as consumers in order to evaluate your own staff and facility. |

- *Internal Environment*: What is it that makes the event or location unique, attractive, and exciting to potential participants or spectators? What are the event's strengths and weaknesses?
- *External Environment*: External influences such as social trends, technological advances, legal restrictions, demographic trends, and economic issues should be analyzed so that you understand factors that may affect your marketing strategies (Shank 2014).
- *Customers and potential customers*: Who are our customers and what are their needs?
- *Competition*: Who are our competitors? What gives us a competitive advantage?

Understanding Consumers

Understanding your consumers' wants and needs is at the core of the marketing plan. Knowing this information allows you to create events appealing to consumers and craft messages to communicate effectively with consumers. Regardless of whether you are marketing to spectators or to participants or both, addressing the following questions will go a long way toward understanding your consumers.

- What is important to consumers?
- Why are they attending?
- What is keeping people who want to attend from doing so?
- What do consumers expect from the event?

To address what is important to consumers, you must identify what consumers want and what they value. Do they want to see the top athletes? Be a part of history? Enjoy time with family and friends? The following is a list of aspects of sporting events that commonly influence spectators' decisions to attend. The event marketer's task is to identify which aspects of an event are relevant to your consumers, to highlight the appealing aspects, and to illustrate how this product is different from other entertainment options.

- Amenities offered
- Atmosphere
- Attractiveness of teams and players
- Convenience and accessibility
- History and tradition
- Level of excitement
- Popularity of the sport

- Pregame and in-game entertainment
- Significance of the event
- Social opportunities
- Special offers

In addition to identifying event characteristics that are important to spectators, event marketers need to identify why consumers attend their events. The *why* is often addressed by identifying the consumer's motivation, the internal drive that leads to behavior. Motives to attend may differ by type of consumer. For example, youth teams might travel to a volleyball tournament to challenge themselves against the best competition, while older adults might participate in volleyball tournaments for the social aspects. Participant motivation may also differ by type of event. For example, runners in a charity road race are likely participating to support a cause or just to have fun, while competitors in a triathlon are more likely to be participating to challenge themselves and to gain a sense of achievement. It is important for marketers to identify what it is about their respective sports that motivates consumers to watch and attend. Some of the more common sport event motives are:

- Achievement and performance
- Affiliation
- Escape from daily life
- Excitement and drama
- Family togetherness
- Fun and entertainment
- Health and fitness
- Learning and discovery
- National pride
- Socialization

In some cases, consumers may want to attend but are prevented by one or more barriers to participation. These barriers are referred to as constraints. For example, some individuals may want to attend events but not have the time to attend or anyone to attend with. Or, a tennis player may want to play in a local tournament, but may feel that he cannot afford the entry fee or that he is not skilled enough to participate. While not all constraints can be removed, marketers can try to design programs that will eliminate or lessen potential constraints. Some of the more common constraints are:

- Economic

- Environmental
- Lack of someone to attend with
- Lack of success or skill
- Lack of support
- Location and access
- Social restrictions
- Time
- Weather

Sport consumers have most likely attended other events and therefore have expectations of what their experience should be like. For example, a marathon runner has likely entered marathons across the country and will have expectations of what amenities should be offered and the level of service she should receive. When her experiences meet or exceed expectations, she is likely to be satisfied. Satisfied customers are likely to come back and tell others about their experience (positive word of mouth). When experiences fall short of expectations, they will be dissatisfied. Not only are dissatisfied customers unlikely to return; they will tell others (negative word of mouth). Therefore, you need to make sure you understand why people are participating and what they hope to get. From that knowledge, try to turn your event into an unforgettable experience.



Professional soccer is growing in popularity among U.S. fans. © CHRIS GREENWELL

Setting Marketing Goals and Objectives

If the organization's goal is to generate revenue, the marketing plan should be designed to maximize the amount of money that comes in through registrations, ticket sales, sponsorships, and so on. The plan will be much different if the focus of the event is to promote a cause. Typical marketing goals may be related to revenue, attendance, participation numbers, media coverage, fund-raising targets, or room nights. Specific, measurable objectives define targets that need to be reached to achieve each marketing goal. For example, a local runners' organization may set the following goal and objectives for its annual event:

Marketing goal: Increase participation in the annual Spring Fun Run.

Objective 1: Retain 95 percent of last year's participants.

Objective 2: Recruit 50 new runners.

Objective 3: Recruit 10 more organizational groups.

Objective 4: Increase number of youth participants by 15 percent.

Market Segmentation and Target Markets

No event can provide all benefits to all people. Even the Super Bowl, with an average audience of almost 100 million viewers in the United States, reaches less than half of the population. Think about an extreme sport event. Would it make sense to try to market the event to the entire community? Given that most people in the community would not be interested in the event, a broad marketing campaign would be wasteful because many resources would be expended on people with no intention of ever attending the event.

Instead of marketing to everyone (mass marketing), events should be tailored to meet the needs of specific segments of the population (target marketing). Market segments are groups of consumers or potential consumers with similar attributes, attitudes, or behaviors. By segmenting the population into groups with similar attributes, event marketers are able to develop efficient marketing plans to reach those groups. Segments are often identified using the following criteria:

- *Demographic segmentation*: identifying groups based on population characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, geographic location, income, and education
- *Psychographic segmentation*: identifying groups based on psychological characteristics such as lifestyle, personality, opinions, and values
- *Product usage*: identifying groups based on how often or how much the consumers use the product
- *Product benefits*: identifying groups based on the benefits consumers seek from an event

After identifying segments, event marketers select target markets, that is, the segments to which the event will be marketed. These markets are selected based on the segment's interest in the event, the likelihood of buying, size, and accessibility. Once targets have been selected, event marketers can develop specialized marketing activities and messages designed to appeal to and meet the specific needs of the target.

One common mistake is to target overly broad segments or to target segments based solely on size. Think of an extreme sports event. Organizers may have identified a large segment of senior citizens in the community. Although this segment may be large, it would not be appropriate to target this group because they would not be interested in

the event, and no amount of marketing genius would be sufficient to get them to attend. This example illustrates that just because a segment is large, it may not necessarily be the best one to target. In fact, smaller, well-defined segments are often the more attractive targets. Niche markets are typically small, focused segments whose needs may not be currently served by larger events. A good example of this strategy comes from the cable television industry. Although ESPN and Fox Sports Net reach wide audiences with a variety of events, smaller networks such as The Golf Channel, The Tennis Channel, and The Outdoor Channel have emerged and have experienced success in marketing to smaller, focused audiences. Another example of catering to niche markets comes from the Arizona Diamondbacks, who create unique promotions and concession items to appeal to their Hispanic consumers. According to them, it is not enough just to translate content from English to Spanish, they have to create content specifically for their Hispanic fan base (Diaz 2015).

Branding the Event

A brand is the combination of names, symbols, slogans, or logos identifying a product and distinguishing it from other products (Aaker 1991). Brands also communicate an identity or image of a product. Events' brand names (e.g., the Olympic Games, the Ashes, the Super Bowl, the Masters, the Ironman Triathlon) and marks (e.g., the Olympic rings, the Ashes urn, the Super Bowl logo, the green jacket, the Ironman M-Dot) help consumers identify the event and differentiate it from competitors.

A strong name is especially important because it is often the center of marketing and promotional campaigns. For example, in 2006 the Senior LPGA Tour, a series of golf events for professional golfers 45 years of age and older, changed its name to the Legends Tour. Whereas the former name was effective in describing the event, the new name communicates an image more attractive to consumers.

Beyond having a strong name, events have to continue to build their brands in order to differentiate themselves effectively from the competition. The first step is by building brand awareness. Target consumers need to be aware of the brand and be able to recognize the brand's marks. Once consumers are aware, efforts shift to managing a brand's image. At this step, marketers associate the brand with attributes important to the consumer such as quality, tradition, reputation, success, and prestige. High levels of brand awareness and a strong brand image should generate brand equity, or the added value attributed to the brand. For example, the Spartathlon, a 246-kilometer race from Athens to Sparta, draws upon tradition to build its brand image. The race follows the path of Pheidippides, who ran from Athens to Sparta before the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE.

Event Pricing

Price is what you ask your customers to pay in order to watch or participate in your event. Pricing decisions are important to event managers because price balances attractiveness

and value with organizational revenue. Setting the price is especially difficult for sporting events because in this case price is associated with an experience rather than with a tangible good. Because of the subjective nature of intangible benefits, it is difficult to determine what the experience is worth to the customer.

To make effective pricing decisions, event marketers need to consider factors such as the cost of producing the event, consumer demand (what people are willing to pay), and competitors' prices (how your event compares with others). Event marketers also have to consider organizational objectives when setting price. Events may set their prices to maximize profits, to generate exposure, to meet competitive threats, or to provide participation (Shank 2014). For example, each of the following events would use different pricing strategies to meet different objectives.

- *Championship boxing event*: Set a high price to maximize revenue.
- *Charity fun run*: Set the price at a level that would encourage people to attend and give to the cause.
- *Volleyball tournament*: Set a price that would be comparable to other tournaments.
- *Intramural softball tournament*: Set a low price to encourage as many people as possible to participate.

Sporting events have many pricing options to meet these objectives. Some common pricing tactics are illustrated in table 6.2.

Distribution

Distribution relates to important issues of time (when is the event) and location (where is the event). Marketers can make events more attractive by making them more accessible and convenient. Time of the year, day of the week, and time of the day each influence consumers' ability to participate. In regard to location, event marketers need to consider access, perceived safety, and proximity to transportation when designing marketing efforts. Distribution is particularly important for sporting events because if tickets go unsold or teams don't register, the tickets can't be shelved and sold later.

A great example of how place can influence the perception of an event was the Battle at Bristol, a college football game between the University of Tennessee and Virginia Tech University. Rather than playing at one of the home stadiums, the game was played at Bristol Motor Speedway, which lies approximately halfway between the two schools. Thanks to the unique setting and the proximity of the two schools' fan bases, the game set a record of 156,990 for the highest attendance at a college football game (Cole 2018).

Distribution is often improved by working with various intermediaries (also called distribution channels) that make the event available to consumers. Examples of these intermediaries include the venue where the event is held, the media that broadcast the event, ticket agents, web hosts, and retail partners. While working with intermediaries

may add costs, it can also help make it easier for consumers to access your event.

Table 6.2. Common Pricing Tactics

| Pricing Tactic | Description |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Single ticket pricing | Each person is charged for admission or participation. |
| Group pricing | Teams or groups rather than individuals are charged. Group pricing takes advantage of the fact that consumers are often motivated to participate for social reasons. |
| All-inclusive pricing | Provide multiple benefits (e.g. admission, food, and parking) under one price. This method has the advantage of providing the consumers with extra perceived value. |
| Package pricing | Create packages that include multiple events, such as all-tournament passes or multiday passes. Rather than paying per game or match, consumers pay for access to multiple events. This method encourages consumers to attend more events or less attractive events. |
| Variable pricing | Set higher prices for the more attractive times and locations and lower prices for the less valuable inventory. |
| Dynamic pricing | Change prices as demand changes. If demand increases, prices increase to capture more revenue. When demand is low, prices drop to stimulate purchases. |
| Complimentary tickets or admissions | Free admission can be profitable if you can generate revenue through sponsorships or media. In addition, customers attending for free may generate revenue through concessions, parking, merchandise sales, or, depending on the type of event, donations. |

Event Promotion

Promotion embodies the methods marketers use to communicate with customers. The keys to effective event promotion are to define what you want to accomplish, choose messages that appeal to your target audience, and use the right methods to communicate

with that audience.

First, event marketers need to define what they want to accomplish through their promotional program. For a new event, promotional objectives may be to inform people about the event and make them aware of what the event offers. For events people are already aware of, promotional objectives may focus more on persuading people to attend or participate. Popular events may focus on reminding people about the event and reinforcing consumers' commitment to the event. Ultimately, the objectives should result in some action.

Second, the right message will go a long way in meeting promotional objectives. Effective messages will appeal to the target market and give that market a reason to listen. Marketers must therefore carefully identify what they want to promote and to whom. This is often accomplished by focusing on the needs of the consumers. For example, an event targeting families will be most effective if it focuses on issues relevant to families, such as opportunities for family fun at a low price. The message also depends on the type of event. Think about what makes the event exciting or attractive. Is it the history of the event, the location, or the participants? What makes this event relevant to the target market? Demonstrating the key benefit of the event is another characteristic of an effective message. For example, the PGA Tour used the message "These Guys are Good" for 20 years, because it emphasized the most important attribute of their events, their athletes' skills. In 2018, they decided to incorporate more of a focus on their players' personalities. Their new slogan, "Live Under Par" refers to life on and off the course (Klara 2018).

Third, the event marketer has to choose communication tools that will achieve the promotional objectives. An event marketer typically uses multiple tools to communicate the event but should take care to make sure the same message is getting across regardless of the tool being used. An integrated marketing communication (IMC) approach means the event will utilize several promotional elements to deliver a consistent message about the event.

Website Marketing

Event marketing often starts with a good website because consumers now depend on the Internet for information about events and activities surrounding them. Further, organizations depend on the Internet to build their brands, generate sales, and collect consumer feedback. Advances in technology now demand professional skills to develop sites that look and function at a level your visitors expect. In fact, a poorly designed website may suggest a poorly organized event in the minds of many consumers. When designing your web presence, keep the following in mind:

- *Think about the end user.* Take time to identify what your visitors may be seeking from your site.

- *Stay updated:* Make sure your site has the most up-to-date information. New content added on a regular basis keeps consumers coming back.
- *Add unique content:* The advantage of websites is that you can provide information, video, and archival material that may not be easily found in other places.
- *Be interactive:* Interactive activities help you build relationships with your consumers.
- *Make it mobile friendly:* Most consumers use mobile devices to access content, so your site should transfer easily to different devices.
- *Generate leads:* Capture information on your visitors, such as name and e-mail address.
- *Collect feedback:* Don't just focus on putting out information; identify ways to collect feedback in order to learn about your consumers.

Social Media

Successful sporting events embrace social media to connect with customers and promote events. Social media allow organizations to bypass traditional media and communicate directly with consumers before, during, and after events. Social media also allow events to engage their fanbase and develop personal connections with their consumers.

- *Have a strategy:* It may seem easy to just post on various platforms, but good social media campaigns are well thought out and planned. Be specific about what you want to accomplish.
- *Create content that aligns with your strategy:* What you say and how you say it should align with your overall strategy.
- *Understand your audience and the platforms they use:* Are your target consumers using Facebook? Twitter? Snapchat? Use the platforms that best align with your target consumers.
- *Create unique content for each platform:* Each platform has its own advantages and disadvantages.
- *Listen to your audience:* By following your audience, you can learn how you are being perceived and identify issues your consumers may be having.
- *Engage with the audience:* By responding to your audience, you can build relationships and show your customers that they are a priority.
- *Research your competition:* It is important to understand what they are doing and identify tactics you could be using.
- *Measure what is important:* Are you trying to reach new consumers? Build loyalty? Drive people to your website? Generate sales? Effective measurement allows you to

adjust and adapt your strategy.

- *Convert social media engagement into sales:* Build in offers and incentives to drive consumers to action. Don't settle for merely reaching consumers; identify opportunities to generate leads, acquire new customers, and increase customer loyalty.

The following are a few examples of how social media can be used to promote events.

- ONE Championship, an Asian martial arts promotion, boasts a global Facebook fanbase of over 7 million, allowing the organization to reach consumers and promote their events in more than 130 countries (Mazique 2018).
- The National Basketball Association uses Snapchat to create exclusive 3- to 5-minute shows revealing what goes on behind the scenes. The platform allows them to create content appealing to their younger consumers (Wagner 2017).
- The National Hockey League and NBC Sports partnered to create a Snapchat lens that added a playoff beard (a hockey playoff tradition) and an animated Stanley Cup to their photos. The goal was to market the playoffs by creating shareable content that would keep fans engaged (Perez 2017).
- Wimbledon uploads content to 10 different social media sites (they reached 157 million people on Facebook alone in 2017) in order to make their event more accessible and immersive to a younger, tech-savvy audience (Hartnett 2017).

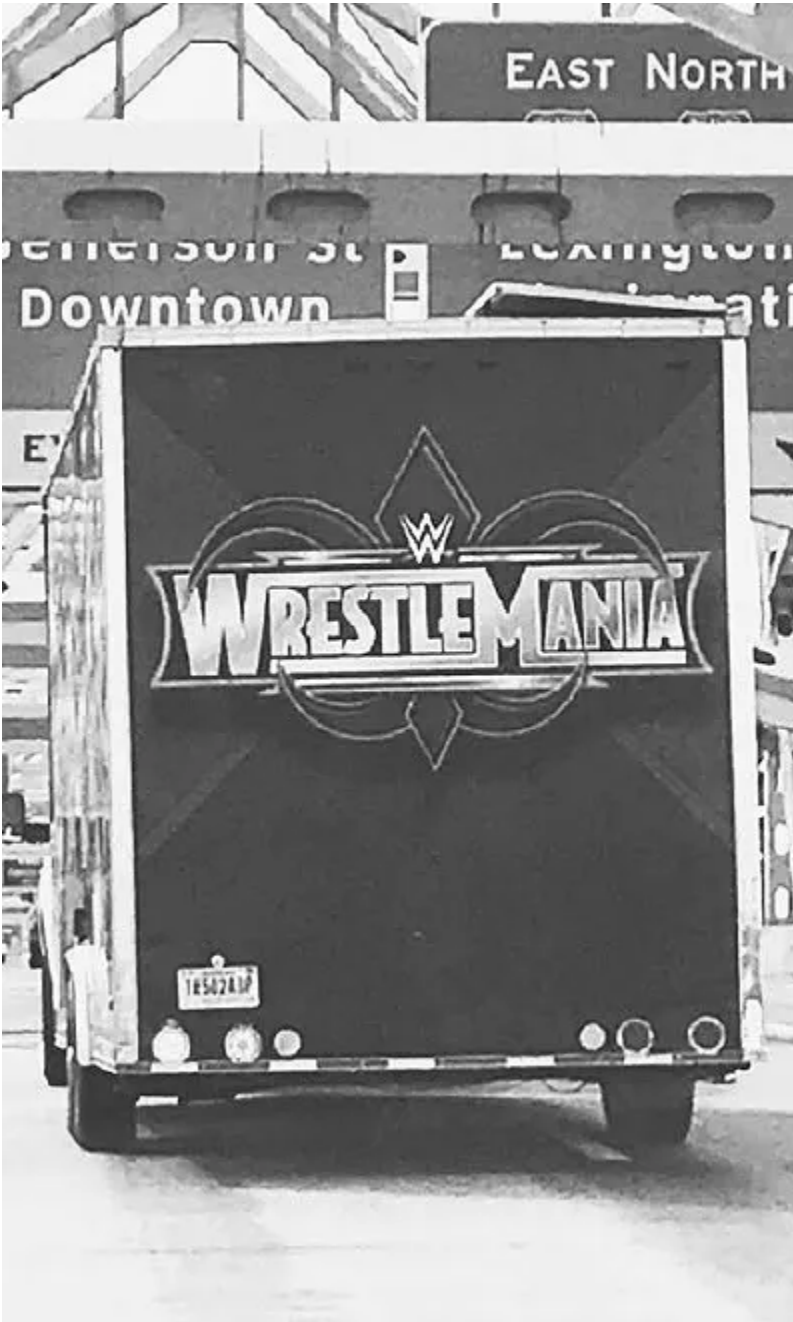
Viral Marketing

Viral marketing refers to techniques designed to encourage consumers to share information with other potential consumers. The goal is to get your consumers talking to others in their own social circles. These tactics can be very successful as consumers are more likely to trust their friends' and families' opinions. These effects can be generated by working with other organizations to get their members talking about your event, providing recruiting incentives to current customers who spread the word and enlist new customers, giving coupons or premium items to customers to pass along to new customers, and creating videos or games consumers share with each other. Social media also provides a good platform for encouraging word-of-mouth. For example, the University of Florida launched their #GatorAlways campaign to encourage fans to share their stories about becoming a fan. By sharing their stories, the most passionate fans are spreading the organization's message to others in their networks (Clapp 2017).

Advertising

Advertising is a paid, nonpersonal, clearly sponsored message (Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton 2014). Choosing the right media is critical to the success of advertising. In choosing media, it is important to consider whether it is appropriate for your message, whether it

reaches your target market, and how much it will cost to reach your target market. Although we typically think of advertising as newspaper print ad, a television commercial, or a billboard, a variety of other media such as newsletters, transportation ads, and yard signs can effectively reach target markets. In addition, new technologies have changed advertising. For example, events trying to reach younger markets are finding that advertising on websites and through social media may be more effective than traditional newspaper advertising. Table 6.3 provides a list of some of the media commonly used to promote sporting events.



A mobile billboard for Wrestlemania. © CHRIS GREENWELL

Table 6.3. Advertising Media

| Type of media | Examples | Advantages |
|------------------|--|--|
| Electronic media | Television, radio, podcasts | The use of sight and sound makes these options good if you need to appeal to consumers' senses |
| Internet | Websites, mobile devices | Messages can be customized and can reach very specific targets |
| Print media | Newspapers, magazines, newsletters, trade publications | Can be more cost effective than other advertising options |
| Outdoor media | Billboards, buses, benches, posters, fliers | Good for repeat exposure and low message competition |

Sales Promotion

Sales promotion consists of many different techniques used to engage the consumer such as discounts, special offers, coupons, samples, premiums, contests and sweepstakes, demonstrations, and exhibitions.

In event management, sales promotion is often used to create interest or generate purchases through reduced-price or value-added incentives. When your consumers are price sensitive and will respond to price changes, you may consider a price incentive such as a ticket discount, a coupon, or a free trial. If price is not an issue with customers, or you are concerned about cheapening your product, adding value may be the best option. Numerous types of sales promotions can be used to promote an event. The key is to identify which types of promotions will resonate with your target market and deliver results. See the Sales Promotion Techniques sidebar for some common techniques.

Sales

Sales is where we directly facilitate the exchange of goods and services. Often the key to sales is the list of prospective customers, or prospects. Sales activities rarely work unless you are contacting the right people. Smaller and less frequent sporting events do not have the luxury of full-time sales staff, so they use multiple techniques to facilitate sales. Table 6.4 on page 106 presents a list of typical sales techniques and the advantages of

each.

Creating Community Support

Another good way to promote your event is through partnerships with community organizations that can be utilized to create community support, promote your event, and involve the community. Community leaders and local politicians can provide high-profile support, and your work together is likely to generate media attention. Local agencies such as sports commissions, convention and visitors bureaus, and chambers of commerce are in the business of promoting economic activity; therefore, they are likely to have the networks, capabilities, and know-how to promote events. In addition, local businesses that cater to tourism such as restaurants and tourist attractions make good partners because they also stand to benefit from your success.

To better engage the community, organizations will often create advisory boards made up of local leaders to help them promote the event. Advisory boards bring contacts and knowledge of the community to the table and play a role in advising event organizers on these matters. Advisory boards can also establish legitimacy for events lacking awareness or recognition in the community. By utilizing trusted and respected community leaders, advisory boards can emphasize the significance of the event (Supovitz and Goldwater 2014).

Sales Promotion Techniques

Price promotion

- Buy one, get one free
- Coupons
- Discounts
- Family packages
- Group discounts
- Loyalty programs

Value-added promotion

- Camps and clinics
- Contests and sweepstakes
- Exhibitions
- Honors and celebrations
- Interactive experiences
- Meet and greet events

- Premium item giveaways (hats, T-shirts, collectible items)
- Product sampling
- Special attractions (postgame concerts, autograph sessions)
- Theme nights

Table 6.4. Sales Techniques

| Type of sales | Uses |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Personal selling | Used for larger purchases such as season tickets, premium seating, sponsorships, and group sales |
| E-mail and mobile marketing | Good for creating highly targeted offers or reaching large numbers of contacts at a low cost |
| Direct mail | When used with targeted mailing lists, direct mail can be effective in putting offers in consumers' hands |
| Telemarketing | Can be inbound or outbound and is particularly good for business-to-business sales |
| Volunteer sales | Using your own customers to sell or refer new customers in exchange for exclusive rewards or perks |

A great example of an event that generates considerable community support is the PGA's St. Jude Classic. This PGA Tour event benefiting St. Jude Children's Research Hospital has been held in Memphis, Tennessee, since 1958 and has an undeniable bond with the city. FedEx, a local company, has supported the event since 1986, and according to tournament organizers, about 1,850 volunteers contribute more than 25,000 hours of service to the event each year. Youth Program, Inc., an organization made up of local business and political leaders, serves as the host organization. As of 2017, the event's 60th anniversary, the tournament has raised more than \$35 million for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Summary

Effective event marketing does not happen by accident. Merely getting the word out is not enough to meet most marketing objectives; it takes extensive planning and

forethought. Marketers need to identify what their customers want and systematically develop marketing plans to meet those customer wants. Effective marketing plans require careful analysis of internal and external influences, meaningful goals that support organizational objectives, selection of appropriate target markets, carefully planned tactics, and a plan for implementation. Event marketers have numerous tools at their disposal. A strong event brand and various promotional tools allow marketers to communicate that their events will meet consumers' needs.

Learning Activities

Assume you are in charge of marketing a senior women's professional golf tournament in your town. The organization's goal is to maximize ticket sales to make sure the event is a financial success.

1. Describe your target market.
2. What benefits or attributes would be most attractive to this target?
3. What would be your marketing message?
4. How would you reach potential ticket buyers?

Now assume you are in charge of marketing an amateur junior women's team golf tournament in your town. The organization's goal is to maximize the number of junior golf teams that register for the event. You have to recruit teams to participate in this event.

1. What would be your selling points to attract teams?
2. How would you reach these teams?

CASE STUDY: URBAN BOURBON

The Urban Bourbon Half Marathon (UBHM) is a road race staged every October by the Louisville Sports Commission. Created in 2011, the event grew to over 3,200 participants by 2017. The 13.1-mile race begins downtown and weaves through historic and scenic parts of the city. Event organizers have three primary goals: create an experiential destination event that will attract affluent consumers to the community, promote healthy lifestyles in the community, and generate revenue to support the organization's mission of attracting sporting events to the community. Based on its quality course, accessible destination, and unique theme, the race was voted the best half marathon in the US in the BibRave 100.

Half marathons are popular and growing in the US, with more than 2 million runners and walkers finishing events each year. While most half marathons attract the majority of their participants from the local market (80-85 percent), the UBHM has exceeded expectations by attracting a large percentage (43 percent) of out-of-town consumers from 45 different states and six different countries. In addition, the event's

demographics are attractive, with 56 percent of participants being female, 80 percent being between the ages of 21-49, and 75 percent having incomes between \$75,000 and \$200,000.

Much of this appeal has been attributed to the event's bourbon theme. By limiting the event to participants 21 and older, organizers are able to deliver the bourbon experience before, during, and after the race. Sponsor Jim Beam hosts a VIP packet pick-up at the Jim Beam Bourbon Stillhouse and provides a bourbon tasting at the regular pick-up location. During the race, runners pass Louisville's historic Whisky Row, and after the race runners celebrate at the Bourbon Bash with bourbon tasting, food, and other race amenities.

In terms of prior marketing efforts, almost all of the event's participants sign up online, enabling the organizers to collect key data on their consumers and communicate with them on a regular basis. Part of their strategy has been to add unique events to enhance the experience of current participants, attract potential participants, and engage community partners. Word of mouth is responsible for attracting the majority of participants, either by having a friend or family member involved (43 percent) or by hearing about it through a past participant (28 percent). Attendance at race expos (9 percent), running publications and websites (8 percent), and social media (5 percent) were the other ways participants learned about the event.

Case Study Application

The sports commission has a plan to continue to grow the race to 7,500 runners over the next ten years. Given their limited budget and the number of other races competing for participants, they have to be very strategic in their marketing efforts.

1. What could you do to make the event more attractive to potential runners?
2. Whom would you target to increase participation?
3. How would you reach these participants?
4. What would be your selling points to attract these participants?