



CHAPTER 7 • MARKETING & PROMOTIONS

7.1 – INTRODUCTION

All of the potential reasons/factors why someone might want to participate in your event should be listed by you or your organizing committee. Your marketing – your reach to a sponsor who would benefit from reaching those same audiences – and promotion – how you reach potential participants – will both benefit from the results.

7.2 – SPONSORSHIP ACQUISITIONS

Almost every sports organization relies on revenue from sponsors to provide necessary funding for pro- grams and services for their clients, members and fans. This is especially true of USATF, as both the national organization and Associations are largely dependent on sponsors to be successful. Associations can survive without sponsors, relying on membership and sanction fees to fund the activities and events, but the more successful Associations have done well in securing sponsorships and been able to build more diverse programs and services.

Locating and finding sponsors requires research, planning, an understanding of the product to be sold and knowledge of potential sponsors. Before volunteers can approach a prospective local sponsor, a plan of action needs to be carefully formulated.

Information on the sponsorship acquisition process is located at

<https://www.usatf.org/Mgmt/Assoc/Forms/Essentials-for-Officers/Association-Sponsorship-Acquisitions.aspx>.

7.3 – PRESS RELEASES

Let Them Know You Are There

First, find out who your local media contacts are. Put together a mailing list. Your list should include newspapers, radio stations, and television stations and, if you are in a large market, the wire services. If there are two reporters who should receive your material, don't hesitate to send to both. Something to keep in mind: Remember to include your weekly newspapers. For example, the New York Times may not include your road race schedule on their agate page, but the Staten Island Register just might, especially if one of the events takes place there.

Keep a steady flow of information going to the media, but make sure it's useful. Calendars of events are always handy items. Advance material on upcoming events is good for the media. Instead, just put together something in outline form following the basic five W's (Who, What, When, Where, Why) of journalism.

The Contact List

An Association should create and maintain a media contact list of print (local newspapers, local or regional running publications i.e. Minnesota Running & Track, New England Runner), national

publications (i.e. Runner's World, Running Times, Track & Field News), local journals newsletters and community publications, club newsletters and any other print outlet deemed appropriate. You are the best source for what counts in your area. This is a valuable resource and gives you a good excuse to contact these people once in a while, just to update your information.

How to Get Your Material to the Media

Email is the most efficient way to reach the media these days, but there may be times when you should FAX or hand-deliver your material. If you have a release written on Monday on something that's going to take place Tuesday, by all means get it to the media as soon as possible. After distributing a press release via email or FAX, it's always a good idea to make a follow-up call to make sure it arrived. This also gives you the opportunity to answer any questions or pitch another story idea.

Establishing Rapport with the Press

If you stay at it long enough, your local reporters will get to know you as someone they can rely on for information on athletics. If you're a spokesman for your organization, this should be your aim. Make yourself available to the press, and let them know that if they have questions you're the person to contact. Naturally, this means that you've got to have the answers, or at least you've got to know where to go to get them. Always be truthful to the media because their trust in you is essential to promote your organization and its events. If you don't know the answer to a question, tell them, and then do every- thing possible to find the answer and get it to them ASAP. Media relations are all about providing a service. If you provide good and consistent service to the media, you will eventually see better coverage of your events.

What's News?

Any information you can provide on events and happenings is potential news. On a slow day, you never know what they will pick up. Calendar information on upcoming events, information on special events like the Minnesota Athlete of the Month - regularly picked up by local newspapers, special awards, events honoring awards, clinics conducted by elite athletes, results of events all are examples of the kinds of things that may attract news interest.

What to do for calendars?

If you want your events listed on calendars, by all means send this information. Find out what schedule the publication follows so you know how far in advance to submit the information. This includes the dates, sites and the names of contacts (along with addresses and phone numbers) for further information.

What to do about results?

If you want to get results to the media, get them there immediately! It's always a good idea to let the media know a few days in advance about your event, and that you will provide them with the results ASAP following the competition. Results of an event that happened on Saturday are worthless to a paper on Sunday. Be sure you have complete information, including the correct spelling of the athletes' names, correct times or distances, and the athletes' affiliations or hometowns.

7.4 – NEWSLETTER / MAGAZINE

Every Association should seriously consider publishing a newsletter/ magazine for distribution to its constituency. Newsletters/magazines can vary from a simple, text-only version up to a sophisticated magazine layout with pictures and graphics.

The main purpose of your newsletter is to keep your constituency in- formed of what is happening in your Association, as well as nationally. This information should include Association and National

contacts, schedule of events and meetings, information on programs, articles on athletes and clubs, updates on Annual Meeting, etc.

Offering a newsletter/magazine is a great member benefit and should be promoted as such. It should be used as a tool for recruiting more members by providing something valuable to them that is not found in any other sources. You should also take advantage of your publication and its uniqueness, as way to generate added revenue by offering business, services and events the opportunity to advertise in it. By offering a vehicle to help disseminate their information to your members, you can pay for the costs of the publication. USATF members are typically the most active athletic participants in every area and purchase a lot of athletic equipment and products.

Newsletter/Magazine Distribution

At a minimum, you should try and include the following on your mailing list:

- Individual Members;
- Member Clubs;
- Sanctioned Events;
- Sponsors/Supporters;
- National Staff office and Officers;
- College & High School Coaches;
- Running Specialty Stores; and
- Running Camps

7.5 – MEDIA PARTNERS

Newsletters and/or Association information can also be incorporated into existing publications (i.e. *New England Runner*, *Oklahoma Runner*, *Midwest Running*, and *Northwest Runner*) in the form of USATF news pages or columns at little or no cost. A good example would be *California Track & Running News* and *Running Journal*, both of which provide our Associations with one or more pages relating to their Association.

The drawback to this method is your information can get “buried” within the publication, and you are giving up your membership list to the publication. If you cannot provide a newsletter in any other manner, the positives of this method outweigh the negatives. In order for this relationship to work, you should 1) know the exact location and amount of space available for your use, 2) the deadline for submitting material(s), and 3) the cost involved.

Ideally you should make sure the magazine is mailed to your entire mailing list (see below) and you will need to negotiate the mailing cost accordingly. With the addition of your mailing list to the publication’s existing list, their magazine becomes more valuable to advertisers. Before making such arrangements you should become familiar with the new USATF Privacy Policy that can be found at www.usatf.org.

7.6 – WEB-BASED MARKETING SYSTEM

The National Office has contracted with ExactTarget an Internet-based email blast company that can contact large numbers of individuals via email. The service allows the communications chair or anyone delegated by the communications chair to use the system. However, reaching the general public and/or your membership or community with email blasts is different than having a complete web-based marketing strategy.

Marketing Audits

Before you can embark on a major campaign to increase web traffic, you have to have a sense of where you are in the marketplace. Who are your competitors? How do you rank among them?

How are you communicating? How well are you articulating your brand, your offers, and your value? Which technologies are working well for you and which are not?

Site design

When most people think of site design, they think of how the pages on your web site look and feel when a user lands on them. But there's more to site design today than just quick graphics and fast download times. You've got to focus on how many clicks it takes a potential customer to find the information they are looking for – ease of “the find” makes them happy. As well, certain key branding principles will guarantee that your site will be high on the Internet search engine ranking when someone “Google's” or “Bing's” you. This is all about integrating strategic vision, branding, design, sales focus, and technology needs.

Managed direct advertising and Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

You want to select the right path for advertising success. Whether it's converting wasted print ad dollars to Google Ad Words or Facebook advertising, or choosing to stay with a great print publication that still works, everyone's goal in any campaign is to use the advertising channels available to them that will deliver the highest number of targeted impressions to their audience, the greatest number of actions, or the highest number of clicks.

Search engine marketing (SEM) through Google Adwords or Google Adwords Express, compelling graphics, video or text ads on the Google Display Network, and Facebook advertising campaigns have demonstrated paths forward with options and opportunities for most businesses.

Conversion optimization

Conversion Rate Optimization is the process of improving content, page flow, landing page design, and site architecture in order to increase the percentage of site visitors who become customers.

You need to study the information in your marketing audit. Use it to improve your copywriting, landing page, page flow, calls to action, and design in order to help convert more site visitors into customers.

Content creation and management

You more than likely don't have several copywriters on staff and are not able to react quickly to potential customer needs for regular social media updates, new articles, features, etc. But keeping your content fresh and enticing, attracting old and new users on a constant basis, is important to your success. You will need to set up systems where approved administrators can place appropriate materials on your site in a timely manner.