

Business Tips

Kids First's Marketing Tactics

Whereas 'strategic marketing' deals with identifying your business' story, 'tactical marketing' deals with identifying how your business is going to deliver that story into the minds of potential clients. Kids First Sport Center's tactics are admittedly low tech, however, they have served us extraordinarily well, giving us 30 years of continual growth. Before delving into the meat of this article, please realize one important grounding thought: Kids First's tactics change from year to year as effectiveness waxes and wanes. THAT IS WHY YOU CANNOT FOLLOW ANOTHER CLUB'S SUCCESSFUL TACTICS AND ASSUME THE SAME WILL WORK FOR YOU. The formula for tactical success is scientific and simple: experiment, measure, adjust; experiment, measure, adjust.

We continually measure the results of each tactical effort as well as each campaign. If \$1 spent on marketing does not generate revenue of \$1+, we stop doing it and seek to find a more productive way of spending that marketing dollar. As long as we can seek and find a positive return on most of our marketing dollars, growth will follow, assuming we run an excellent program and keep attrition in check.

Direct mail: In 1980 I came to understand that the single greatest tangible asset we owned was our client list. That is still true. We mail two to four times per year depending on enrollment. Due to growth, the last few years we have mailed two times per year. Make no mistake, if enrollment were lacking we would pick up the pace. Our mailings do not offer discounts except for our often used sliding scale discount which discounts less popular classes (sort of a sliding prime time/nonprime time concept). Our mailers generally reinforce our 'story' (who we are and what we are about), explain 'what's new', and offer the schedules. On a related note, certainly, email is the way of the future but we have not yet cracked that code in how to effectively manage a list of 7000 addresses (people change email addresses far more frequently than street addresses).

Yellow Pages: We currently spend about \$48k on yellow pages (don't forget we have multiple programs in multiple categories we must cover). About 10-12% of our clients learn about us from this source. We consider yellow pages a preemptive maneuver. Web Site: We are shifting brochure dollars into website dollars and trying to figure how to more effectively direct the public to this website. Websites are a great way to tell your story AND register students. Kids First is getting closer to ceasing its expensive color mailer of all schedules and resorting to a simple post card to nudge clients to logon to www.kidsfirstsports.com at certain times of the year.

Drive By: If you have a significant traffic count at your GymClub then you should consider an extensive sign/image package. In April, 1998 we moved onto a five lane road with 13,800 cars per day with 1-1/2 riders per car. We spent \$40K+ dressing up our building including structures, signs and flag pole and we now get oodles of walk-ins because our building is attractive, very colorful and has 7,500,000 drive-by impressions per year. Now, 4% of our clients learn of us by drive-by and with our enrollment that is a huge return on our investment.

Brochures: About 15 years ago we moved from a conventional printed brochure with a schedule to a two-pocket linen portfolio which we call our 'information portfolio'. This was necessary because we have so many programs and the schedules might change as often as weekly. The total cost is about \$2.50pp including postage. Many people gasp at the cost but keep in mind, if someone has the interest to call they are 'hot' and \$2.50 is a pittance to spend on a 'hot' prospect.

Val Pac & All About Kids: Over the last 6 years we have alternated campaigns between Val Pac and All About Kids, our local parenting magazine, as the effectiveness of each has proven to wax and wane. (Remember, we measure how every client learns of us. This is critical to determine whether to ditch a campaign, keep a campaign or perhaps even 'double down'.)

Word of Mouth: This is a topic unto itself since it is the SINGLE GREATEST SOURCE of new clients. I implore that you think of WOM in an active, rather than passive light: WORD OF MOUTH IS NOT SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS TO YOU: IT IS THE THINGS YOU DO TO STIMULATE IT. In other words, you have control of WOM. More later.

Lastly, even though this is a marketing article, I want to urge you to remember to put the bulk of your resources into your employees, as a strong, responsible and organized staff is the only way to keep and build upon any Olympic bump our industry may get.

Make it a great summer!

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