

Publicizing Your Product

Marketing a CTA to its service area is a key ingredient of the USTA mission “to promote and develop the growth of tennis.” Advertising, promotion, sponsorship, and public relations are tools a CTA can use to generate awareness of and participation in its events and programs.

A CTA must prioritize how it will spend the limited advertising and promotion dollars available in its budget to produce the most cost-effective results. Below are definitions of what is meant by advertising, promotion, sponsorship, and public relations:



- **Advertising** is a paid means of building awareness about a program, product, or event to a targeted audience. It consists of two components: the creative piece (newspaper ad, radio, or television commercial, etc., which communicates the desired message about events and programs) and the media placement (newspaper, radio, or television station, internet, etc., which delivers the desired message about events and programs). The creative piece should be done professionally and project the image the CTA wishes to communicate. Media placement is equally important to reach the proper audience/market. Most advertising is paid for by the client, who has control over both the creative piece and the media placement.
- **Promotion** is a means to increase sales or participation in events and programs by providing an incentive (e.g., sweepstakes, premiums, free samples, contests). Advertising is the vehicle that communicates the promotion to the service area.
- **Sponsorship** is a means to receive income or “in-kind” product in return for promoting a specific business and/or product. Sponsorships are generally valued based on the size of the event and/or program and the exposure provided to the sponsor. Sponsorship dollars may be used to advertise the event and/or program.
- **Public Relations** is communicating positive information about the CTA and its events and programs, whether through the media, the Internet, or word of mouth, and should include articles and news coverage. Public relations is different from advertising because there is no charge for the time or the space used to carry the message, but there is usually little control over the way the message is received and repurposed. Public relations can be the most cost-effective and powerful way to promote tennis and your CTA.

Depending on the event or program, USTA sections and districts can offer help, and many can provide further marketing materials, assistance, and expertise on a local and individual basis.

Advertising

A CTA is encouraged to develop a logo to be used in all advertising and other printed materials. An attractive and recognizable logo allows a potential consumer to easily identify the source of the advertising. All advertising must include pertinent information such as: program or event description, dates and times, locations, cost (or free!), promotions (value-added give-a-ways, contests, and sweepstakes), contact information (phone, fax, e-mail, physical address, and mailing address), how, and where to sign up.

A CTA may communicate its advertising message in many ways, some more cost-effective than others. Most CTAs have limited advertising budgets available, but keep in mind media outlets may offer a lower rate to nonprofit organizations or consider your message to be a public service announcement. The more cost-effective methods of advertising are:

- **Flyers, brochures, banners, and posters.** These items may be produced inexpensively and distributed through schools, YMCAs, after-school programs, businesses, etc., at no cost. Use volunteers or other community service groups (e.g., Boy Scouts, Lions Club) to distribute flyers whenever possible. Mailing flyers may be more effective, but it's also more costly. Consider postcards as a less expensive alternative.
- **Newspaper Advertising.** This will be more costly but can be effective with the properly designed ads placed in the right section of the paper. This should be done through a series of newspapers, not just one.
- **Internet.** This offers a great way to communicate the CTA's message through a CTA website, e-mail blasts, electronic newsletters, or other website advertising. (This can be especially effective on district websites.) A properly designed website will pay dividends if it is kept up to date and includes the right information. The USTA offers CTAs the opportunity to participate on the USTA.com network. The website hosting and design is free. Users are provided with free training, and the design and functionality are current technologies. Contact your USTA section office for an application to join the USTA.com network. Website design and hosting can also be done locally at a nominal cost. Also, make sure to utilize social media websites like Facebook and Twitter to get your message out.
- **Cable television.** This media can be very cost-effective and can be placed on channels to reach sports enthusiasts and cable companies to reach specific (area) markets. A well-designed and well-produced spot is essential. Production of a quality television commercial can be expensive, but customizable television commercials are available.
- **Movie slides.** This can be another cost-effective way to reach area consumers. Some theaters may offer this free as a public service announcement.

Radio, network television, magazines, and billboards are other effective advertising tools. However, in many cases, these may be too costly for CTA budgets. The following tips may help in allocating advertising media budgets to maximize return:

- If a volunteer has experience or expertise in advertising, solicit his or her help.
- Always use the USTA logo on marketing flyers, organization/event banners, etc.
- In most cases, an audience will pay more attention to an ad placed in a paid-circulation publication than in a free one.
- An audience that has a high composition of desired consumers (participants) is generally a better media buy than an audience that is less concentrated.
- A media vehicle that reaches more consumers per dollar is better than one that reaches fewer consumers. Each media vendor should be able to supply information about market penetration.
- Ask the media vendor to provide value-added items (e.g., public service announcements, prizes, promotions, coverage).
- Contact media as far in advance as possible as their deadlines may vary, and place advertising one to three weeks prior to an event or program launch.
- Increase the frequency of advertising, as the budget will allow, for maximum impact.
- Reach active sports enthusiasts by advertising in media that promotes and broadcasts sports.
- Offer media the opportunity to sponsor events or programs by trading space or time instead of a cash buy.
- List events and programs in community calendars or bulletin boards on the local public television access channel.
- Distribute flyers in high-traffic locations (e.g., health clubs, sporting goods stores, community centers, college student unions, schools) frequented by the target audience for the event or program.
- Contact area radio and television stations and ask that the event or program be included in their public service announcements.
- When buying radio or television time, work with this media to support the event or program by suggesting they:
 - Promote the event or program five to seven days in advance.
 - Advise listeners and viewers about event or program sites, dates, and sign-up information.
 - Provide on-air talent for the event or program.
 - Conduct a live remote broadcast.
 - Post information about the event or program on their website.

Promotion

It is important that extra incentives are communicated to the consumer through advertising. There are many ways to offer incentives to consumers to add extra value and encourage their attendance and participation. These include:

- Clothing items (T-shirts, hats, etc.)
- Accessories (e.g., water bottles, wristbands, bracelets)
- Other prizes, even those that may not be tennis-related (e.g., movie tickets, food items)
- Larger prizes (e.g., equipment, autographed items, trips) normally with only one winner determined by a sweepstakes or contest
- Free food and/or drink
- Free lessons and/or clinics

When an event or program is provided to attract new participants, it is hard to beat it if the event/program is free. However, at some point an appropriate cost must be charged to the participant.

Many items may be secured at little or no cost, especially if sponsorship of the event or program is offered in return. Contact local businesses as well as tennis industry members. A local tennis professional or tennis retail store can often help with some incentives and contacts with tennis equipment vendors and tennis manufacturer representatives.

Sponsorship

Soliciting sponsors can be an important way to increase income and/or promotions for an event or program. Sponsors are often more interested in providing product rather than dollars. The CTA must place a value on a sponsorship and be sure sponsors deliver the promised exposure. The more people involved in an event and/or program and the more media exposure it receives, the greater the value.

Sponsorships may be offered at different levels. The higher the cost of the sponsorship, the more exposure is provided for the sponsor. Title sponsorships, in which the sponsor's name becomes a part of the event or program name, are the highest level and provide the greatest exposure to the sponsor. Other sponsorships may be sold for the same event or program.

Note: Do not solicit sponsorships for the same event or program from businesses that directly compete against each other, such as tennis equipment or ball suppliers. Do not ask two fast-food hamburger restaurants to sponsor the same event or program, although it may be acceptable to ask a hamburger restaurant and a sandwich restaurant, especially if the sponsorship is valued in product rather than dollars.

Exposure may be provided to sponsors by:

- Banners (which the sponsor should supply whenever possible)
- Logo or name on printed materials, staff shirts, T-shirts, hats, gifts, etc.
- Advertisement or listing in brochure
- Logo or name on sponsor's board at the event's primary location

- Invitation to all events and/or programs
- Remarks by a title (or other important) sponsor at kickoff event, social functions, awards ceremony, etc.

Be sure to provide what was promised, and thank the sponsor for its support before, during, and after the event or program.

Public Relations

Obtaining publicity for events and programs is an important and cost-effective part of the marketing effort. A successful public relations campaign requires planning and includes several elements listed below:

- Develop a media kit that contains information about events, programs, and planned activities.
- Develop a target media list that includes the names, addresses, e-mail addresses, telephone, and fax numbers of the media outlets that may be interested in the event and program. This may include daily and weekly newspapers, local magazines, district magazines or newsletters, television and radio stations, websites, and wire services.
- Identify a spokesperson or press contact who will make most contact with the media that promote CTA events and programs. This spokesperson must understand the key elements of the event/s and/or program/s so that all information can be consistently and accurately communicated to the media.
- Notify the media of the event or program with a press release, schedule, and fact sheet. Fax or e-mail this information to the target media list at least two days prior to the event or launch of the program. A personal phone call from the spokesperson inviting the media to the event or program will help emphasize its importance and encourage media coverage.

Regardless of the marketing strategy used, it is important to obtain ongoing publicity for the CTA's events and programs, and of tennis in general. Below are tips on how this can be done:

- Provide local newspaper calendar editors with the schedule/s, locations, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and website of CTA programs and events.
- Contact the websites of local newspapers, sports-related organizations, partner organizations, and local information sites, and ask them to list all event and program information and sites on their community calendar.
- Many local newspapers, particularly in smaller communities, are constantly looking for news to fill pages, so don't hesitate to send short press releases frequently, which may increase the visibility of your CTA.
- Return all phone calls and e-mails promptly.
- Provide consistent information to the media and the consumer.
- Notify the media via releases regarding CTA and individual achievements on an ongoing basis.
- Develop interesting stories and provide them to the media on an ongoing basis to encourage coverage.
- Include all media in electronic newsletters, e-mail blasts, and other communication.

A good working relationship with the media will maximize the chance of generating first-rate publicity. It is important to be aware of media protocol and the requirements and deadlines of media contacts. Journalists are more likely to work with someone who respects their needs and schedules. Some simple rules to follow are:

- Do not contact a daily newspaper reporter after 5 p.m. unless it involves breaking news.
- Know that local television sports news producers rarely arrive at work before noon.
- Find out what type of artwork or other information is needed prior to sending it.
- Understand the difference between long-lead media (monthly magazines) and short-lead media (daily newspapers, television, and radio stations).
- Use e-mail to contact the media whenever possible.
- Communicate only important and pertinent information to the media. Too much information can be a negative.
- Follow up with media in a timely fashion regarding event and program results.
- Most media members are looking for a new angle to cover the event or program to differentiate themselves from their competition. Human interest stories are of value whenever available.
- Thank the media for their coverage of the event and/or program.

Word of mouth is a part of public relations. Work to provide high-quality events and programs along with prompt, accurate, and consistent information to generate positive remarks from participants. Image is also important. Maintain all CTA facilities, and keep the courts and grounds neat and clean. Have attractive signage. Participate in local festivals and other special events, and become an integral part of the community the CTA serves.

CTAs are in the tennis business. However, like most businesses, they are also in the customer service business. Below are five items that help keep public relations in good stead:

- Make staff or key volunteers easy to contact.
- Return phone calls and e-mails promptly.
- Keep the website up to date.
- Strive to provide consistent information
- Develop a marketing plan and update the plan regularly.