



# 12 Marketing



## MARKETING

The overall marketing efforts and consistency of message has improved with some of the staff re-assignment in responsibilities. These improvements were recognized by several people that participated in the stakeholder meetings.

- Conduct exit interviews for customers who discontinue/cancel membership at Club Fitness
- Conduct program evaluations. Although the program supervisors can administer the evaluations all completed evaluations should be processed through the marketing department.
- Conduct annual focus group meetings with a cross-section of facility/program users
- Continue efforts for community outreach with the Latino neighborhoods
- Utilize e-blast to help promote programs that need more registration or promotions going on in the Park District
- Attend company health fairs and benefit enrollment sign-up for local companies/businesses to promote and encourage use of APD facilities and programs.
- Increase marketing efforts through the school district

The program catalog is outstanding. The organization of material, quality of print, course description and pictures are outstanding and the availability of on-line access is a big plus for the Park District. There is a nice mix of new programs sprinkled throughout the program guide. Of particular note is the promotion for Athletico. This type of support by the District solidifies and strengthens the relationship with a strong program partner.

One political sensitive issue involves the production of the catalog in Spanish. Without getting into debate over the merits of philosophy from a marketing perspective it will benefit the APD by having the catalog in Spanish. Addison Park District officials must recognize that residents have a choice as to where they go to access park and recreation services. For many services in Addison that is not the case. For example, Village residents do not have a choice over who provides police, fire, public works or utility services. They do however have a choice on where they go to recreate so from a marketing perspective it is important to aggressively promote the APD, including having program information available in Spanish.

Since printing a separate catalog in Spanish is a costly redundancy but there may be some less costly methods of achieving the same results. The program catalog could be converted to Spanish via software application. There could be a short paragraph in Spanish in the front section of the program guide that provides instruction on how to access the program guide in Spanish on-line.

The APD staff has been conducting community outreach with the Latino community to better understand issues facing Latino families, program interest, cultural differences and how the District can better serve them. The District administration should be commended for their efforts and commitment to improving services for all Addison residents. These efforts will go a long way in establishing relationship and trust with the Latino population and should be continued.

The successful promotion of a recreation program hinges upon the ability to communicate effectively with people. It is important to remember that the promotional process is one that not only informs individuals, but also persuades them. There are five types of on-going marketing that the Park District staff should use: public relations, publicity, advertising, personal selling, and sales promotion. Efforts should be made to make staff members aware of the following methods and to incorporate them into your daily operations.

1. Contact the Village of Addison about distributing APD info through the new resident package the Village provides for new residents. Our experience has been that the recreation program catalog being offered greatly enhances the new resident service materials and lends additional credibility to the Village service.
2. Weekly public service announcements and news releases should be issued to the newspapers, radio stations, and TV stations. These should cover up-coming special events, special services or new programs being introduced. When appropriate, photos of events or people should be sent to newspapers and suggestions for feature stories recommended.
3. A monthly or quarterly newsletter should be developed for annual pass holders that keeps them current with center events and also provide information on fitness, aquatics, golf and other recreation activities.
4. Develop a video of the APD facilities that shows the amenities and services that are available. This can be used for promotional purposes at a variety of events and can also be shown on cable TV.

5. Set up a suggestion/complaint box in a prominent place in the community center, Club Fitness and other facilities and encourage patrons to leave their comments. Leave a place for someone to put their name and phone number (if desired and reply to all such remarks within 48 hrs).
6. The retention of annual pass holders at Club Fitness should be a primary consideration of the on-going marketing plan. A goal of retaining 70% of annual pass holders from one year to the next requires a program that will encourage re-enrollment. Most annual pass holders will be on an automatic withdrawal system from their checking account. This is important because withdrawal continues unless the pass holder designates it to stop. So in effect no renewal is necessary.
  - Approximately one month before renewal. A letter notifying the pass holder of the expiration of their pass is sent. Encourage renewal with a 10%-15% discount or the addition of an extra month if the pass is renewed before it expires.
  - An annual survey should be sent out to all pass holders to obtain their input and reaction to the operations of the community center
  - A monthly or quarterly newsletter should be sent to each pass holder/member.
  - Be sure to acknowledge birthdays and other special occasions with cards
  - Attempt to always call pass holders/members by name if possible.
7. The recruitment of new annual pass holders should involve three different campaigns to encourage sales. These campaigns require paid advertising and effective follow-up from staff for them to be effective.
  - The greatest single time of the year for interest in recreation centers and fitness facilities is immediately after the New Year's holiday. This should be the biggest campaign and "best deal" of the year. Due to the sales that other private fitness centers usually have at this time it is best to offer a 15% discount or extended use or a free class on annual passes sold during the month of January.
  - May is the next target month to try to encourage sales before the summer season. This promotion usually involves the addition of benefits to an annual pass such as a free fitness assessment or other service give-away.

- October is the other month for annual pass promotion. This is traditionally a rather slow month for the center use right before the build up for the heavy attendance of winter. Passes sold during the month of October are usually given the balance of the year free and the pass dated to expire on January 1 of the following year.
8. Paid advertising needs to be well thought out regarding the benefits received for the fee that is paid. Generally advertising in the Chicago area is considered expensive and care must be exercised in determining when to seek advertising opportunities and what media outlet type to use including:
- Newspaper
  - ACTV Access Television
  - Park Benches
  - Maps
  - Billboards
  - Brochures
  - Novelty items
  - Web page

An annual advertising budget should be developed and at least a basic plan adopted for how, when and where to expend the money.

9. The staff of the center should continue to speak at a variety of civic and state meetings to promote the programs and services that the Addison Park District has to offer. A power point or video presentation should be included in these presentations.
10. Consider selling advertising space in the program brochure to offset the production and distribution cost. This advertising should be sold on an annual basis in house or through a sale person. Testimonials and endorsements by individuals should be included in the brochure and other promotional materials.
11. Take advantage of some of the no cost promotional opportunities available through Entertainment Books and Gold Coupon Books. Various youth and civic groups typically sell these books as a fundraiser throughout the community. The books provide an opportunity to promote through a coupon and are an excellent way to expand sales. Conservatively, the District could generate another 1,000 admissions annually through the redemption of coupons.

12. Fees and charges should be reviewed annually and adjusted as necessary. Fees should be set based on the competition in the area, what the market will bear and what fees are needed to reach financial objectives. Credit cards must be accepted and annual pass sales are dependent upon an automatic debit system from the pass holder's checking account. The use of coupons in the program brochure and other sources should be used to encourage participation in those activities that are in need of more participants.
13. The District should consider implementing a money back guarantee for any program and service offered at any facility location.
14. Electronic message centers or banners should be used in and around the facility entry area to promote new programs or activities.
15. Bundle programs and services together for multiple members of a family. An example is having a women's fitness program offered during the same time as swim lessons. Or offering a discount for people who sign up for a block or grouping of activities.
16. Promote the sale of annual passes to fitness class participants by selling a "fitness rider" or "child watch rider" to any annual pass holder. For an additional fee on top of the cost of the pass, an individual can have unlimited access to fitness classes throughout the year (on a space available basis) or unlimited use of the child watch area.
17. Continue to distribute informational flyers promoting the center at all Park District facilities.



## MARKET SEGMENTATION

An important aspect of any marketing plan is to market to specific target markets or segments of the population. This is done to meet their specific needs and ultimately to improve facility usage by that group. Below are listed several market segments that need to be addressed in the marketing plan for the center.

**Leisure/Recreation Swimming** - The leisure aspects of the outdoor pool area need to be emphasized, as this is one of the primary components that will drive annual pass sales, daily admissions, and group sales. Renovation of the outdoor pool will go a long way in improving the market segment for leisure swimming which will have the largest appeal to young kids and families.

**Instructional Programming** - The major components of the Addison Park District allow for a wide range of programs in a variety of disciplines. The leisure pool is a great facility for teaching learn-to-swim lessons. The availability of the pool areas for instructional programs needs to be promoted as well as the qualified instructors that will be available. The gymnasium design provides for a variety of sports programs while maintaining availability for drop-in use. The multi-purpose room area assures that ample space will be available for enrichment programs. The Addison Park District should provide instruction in adult and youth sports, aquatics, adult and youth enrichment programs, general programming, pre-school programming and wellness/fitness. The primary emphasis should be on teaching basic skills with a secondary concern for specialized or advanced instruction.

**Fitness/Therapeutic Programming** - Therapeutic programming aimed at injury and medical reconditioning has developed into a very strong market especially among seniors. The partnership with Athletico should be enhanced and expanded.

**Drop-in Recreation Activities** - Critical to the basic operation of the center is the availability of the facility on a drop-in basis by the general public. This requires careful scheduling of programs and activities to ensure that they do not dominate the center and exclude drop-in use. The sale of annual memberships and daily admissions, a major revenue source for the District, requires a priority for drop-in use.

**Families** - A primary focus of this APD programming is the ability to meet the needs of families in a variety of ways. This fact needs to be considered when programs and services are being planned. A balance must be struck between the needs of youth and adults, and programs as well as drop-in use scheduled so that families can take part in a number of activities at one time. The discount received by purchasing a family membership must be pushed if the District is to meet its revenue projections.



**Pre-school and School Age Youth** - The fact that this is not just a center for adults but has amenities and programs geared toward young children is important to building the youth and family market. The shallow leisure pool, birthday party program and other instructional programs designed for children need to be promoted. Day care centers and schools should be approached to set up learn-to-swim classes or other special programs designed specifically for their use.

**Fitness/Wellness** - The wide range of fitness and exercise opportunities that the center provides will attract the adult and senior population. Next to the leisure pool, the fitness area will be the one of the largest factors in driving annual pass sales and daily admissions. The youth fitness center provides exercise equipment and opportunity to a segment of the population that is often overlooked when it comes to fitness. Marketing efforts should be built around the fitness and exercise opportunities, especially around January 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Sports Leagues** - A wide range of adult a youth sports programs are essentially to the overall programming efforts. However, care must be exercised to control the league players from encroaching onto the drop-in area prior to and after games. Sunday evenings, Saturday mornings and weekday evenings after 8:00 pm are non-prime time that best facilitate league play without sacrificing drop-in availability. Programming and sports leagues should not be scheduled at the expense of the drop-in use of the center.

**Seniors** - As the population of the United States continues to age, meeting the needs of the senior population must be essential for the Addison Park District to be successful. Generally speaking, seniors have a higher degree of discretionary income as people 50 years and older control about 80% of all U.S. savings. Almost 23% of the population in the service area is older than 55. It should be recognized that the senior discount admission rates are nothing more than a marketing tool and not based on need. There are three elements that are critical to successfully attracting senior participants.

Advertising campaigns and promotional efforts need to be designed to attract older customers. When designing an advertising campaign for older adults forget the spandex and hard bodies. Seniors do not want reminders that they are getting older and being surrounded by hard bodies wearing spandex. Use older adult models that focus on vitality and independence. Show people of all shapes and sizes. Testimonials from other seniors can also be effective.

Cater to this market segment. Hire older instructors for senior programs. Keep in mind that your customers over 55 years old have more time to spend and many in this age group are widowed and looking for social interaction. Form a coffee club

that combines exercise classes and the opportunity for coffee, a healthy snack or fruit to promote the social aspect of the club. This type of program will go a long way in creating an environment attractive to seniors. A staff dedicated to being friendly and accommodating is critical to making seniors feel welcome. High-pressure sales techniques do not work with the seniors market.

**Corporate Wellness** - There is a significant number of businesses and corporations in the service area. Successful corporate wellness models incorporate fitness, instruction, wellness, recreations, leisure and social activities. Over the past several years, corporate wellness has transitioned into selling discounted memberships more than expanded fitness services. Although many corporations and CEOs recognize the value of corporate wellness, the fact remains that few businesses provide any financial support for wellness programs. One aspect that is important in developing a successful wellness program is designing a marketing and sales package that is geared to selling the benefits of wellness. Consideration should be given to a cooperative agreement or partnership with the local Hospital securing a source for highly skilled and educated instructors needed for a wellness program. If the hospital is not interested in a partnership then a straight contractual agreement should be pursued. Contact HMO providers and insurance companies in the service area to survey direct benefits to their members for participating in a wellness program. A growing trend in the insurance industry is to provide rebates, discounts and incentives for members enrolled in a wellness program. It is advisable to have the ability to process workers compensation claims as this may increase therapeutic use.

Conduct a survey as to what the businesses and corporations in your service area are currently doing with their wellness program or if they are planning a wellness program. Offer to speak to their employees or executive leadership. For a corporate wellness program to be effective, an employee with a strong fitness background, who has the authority to develop custom programs for a company, must administer it.

**Fitness swim /lap swim** - Adequate space and time must be provided for drop-in fitness swimmers in the summer. Instead of limiting this program, attempts should be made to expand lap swimming. A "swim to" incentive program that participants track their swim distance is an excellent tool for encouragement, stimulates interest and generates a sense of belonging by the lap swimmer. You should not overlook the fitness swimmer for a master swim program.

## TOOLS OF MARKETING

The successful promotion of the various programs and strategies outlined hinge upon the District's ability to communicate effectively through marketing. Effective communication takes place when you communicate with prospective participants rather than to prospective participants. The communication process is not complete until the customer has acted on the message that he or she has received. Therefore, it is important to remember that the promotional process is one that not only informs individuals, but also persuades them into participation.

There are several different methods or tools of marketing that can be effective at delivering the marketing message including: public relations, publicity, advertising, personal selling and sales promotion. Each program area or market strategy needs to be evaluated for which marketing method or tool will work best. The following checklist summarizes some of the techniques.

### Publicity Techniques

#### Newspaper

- Public service announcements
- Feature stories
- Parks and Recreation column
- Photographs

#### Radio

- Public service announcements
- Staff announcements
- Remote broadcast
- Talk show
- Give-a way promotion

#### Other

- Face Book
- Twitter
- Web Site
- Cable TV reader ads
- Cable Parks and Recreation show
- Newsletters
- Magazines
- Specialty publications
- Brochures
- Sponsorship

### Public Relations

- Annual reports
- Awards and citations
- Volunteer recognition
- Letters to the editor
- Proper telephone etiquette
- Positive first impression
- Inter-staff recommendations
- Program and staff evaluations
- Efficient customer service
- Complaint procedure
- Suggestion box
- Exit interviews
- Survey

### Advertising

- Brochures
- Newspaper
- Radio
- Cable TV
- Magazine
- Billboard
- Direct mail
- Poster
- Flyer
- Testimonial
- Visitor center
- Electronic kiosk
- Point of sale
- Clothing apparel
- Sports programs
- School newspaper
- Web page
- Gift catalog
- Novelty items
- Maps

### Personal Selling

- Speakers Bureau
- Civic organizations
- Video presentation
- Slide presentation
- Telephone
- Newcomer/welcome service

### Sales Promotion

- Activity sampling
- Display board
- Contest
- Demonstrations
- Field trips
- Exhibits
- Prizes
- Rewards
- Coupons
- Themes
- Incentives
- Open house

