



A business perspective of The United States Tennis Association's American Development Model: Discover, Develop, Play

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ABSTRACT

The American Development Model (ADM) implemented by the United States Tennis Association (USTA) has gained significant attention for its player-centric approach and structured framework. While previous studies have explored the impact of the ADM on player development, this approach takes a unique business perspective to analyze the model's efficacy and implications. Drawing upon business management theories and practices, this overview examines the ADM's alignment with strategic planning, resource allocation, talent acquisition, and marketing within the context of the USTA. This article sheds light on the business strategies employed by the USTA in implementing the ADM, highlighting potential areas for improvement, and providing practical recommendations for other National Governing Bodies of sport seeking to adopt similar player development models. Overall, this information contributes to the existing literature by bridging the gap between sports management and player development approaches, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the ADM from a business standpoint.

Key words: American Development Model, Long Term Development, Tennis Business Application.

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INTRODUCTION

The USTA is committed to developing athletes who excel in tennis and adopt a lifelong love for the sport. To achieve this, the USTA has adopted the Long-Term Athletic Development (LTAD) principles as the guiding framework for their ADM. This article explores how the USTA uses LTAD principles to guide business management and tennis programming to attract more young tennis players to our sport, as well as how to support and retain them for a lifetime.

BACKGROUND

The ADM was launched in 2018 and is based on LTAD principles (Davies, 2018). LTAD is a systematic and holistic approach to athlete development that considers physical, mental, emotional, and social development. It emphasizes the importance of age-appropriate training, skill development, and competition that aligns with the athlete's developmental stage (Balyi, Higgs, & Way, 2013). By doing so, LTAD aims to support athletes who are physically and mentally healthy, have a lifelong love for sport, and can achieve excellence in their chosen sport.

The USTA uses LTAD principles to guide many business management decisions, particularly in player recruitment and retention. The ADM emphasizes the importance of creating a positive and supportive environment encouraging athletes to participate and continue playing tennis (USOPC, 2020). The USTA has developed a comprehensive recruitment strategy that targets children at different developmental stages.



They have also implemented programs that provide ongoing support to athletes, such as coaching, sport science, and sports medicine.

Attract, Engage, and Retain diverse participants and keep them playing for a lifetime

Attracting, engaging, and retaining participants are essential components of any successful business model, and the USTA's ADM is no exception. From a business perspective, the ADM offers a strategic framework that aligns with these principles, enabling the USTA to effectively attract, engage, and retain players, coaches, and stakeholders. This section explores the business implications of the ADM in relation to attracting, engaging, and retaining various key stakeholders.

Attract

The ADM plays a vital role in attracting players to the sport of tennis. By providing a player-centric approach and emphasizing a fun and inclusive environment, the USTA enhances its appeal to potential participants. The ADM's focus on age-appropriate development, skill progression, and positive coaching methodologies creates a compelling value proposition for parents seeking a comprehensive tennis program for their children (USOPC, 2020). Additionally, the USTA's marketing efforts, driven by the ADM's principles, effectively showcase the benefits of tennis participation, capturing the attention of new players and their families.

• Coaching Tip #1

Particularly when attracting children in the youngest age groups to learn tennis, consider using modified equipment. This allows for greater success at earlier stages of learning. Doing so creates a positive and supportive environment that encourages children to participate and continue playing tennis.

Engage

Once attracted, the ADM ensures active engagement of players, coaches, and other stakeholders. The model's emphasis on skill acquisition, tactical understanding, and holistic development keeps players engaged and motivated to continue their tennis journey. This engagement is reinforced through high-quality coaching, player-centered training sessions, creation of a positive and supportive tennis community, and support of multi-sport play (Roetert, Woods, & Jayanthi, 2018). By aligning with the ADM, the USTA cultivates a sense of belonging and fosters a passion for the sport, increasing the likelihood of long-term involvement.

• Coaching Tip #2

As a coach, make sure you provide opportunities for your players to participate in tournaments and events that align with their developmental stage as well as opportunities to participate in other sports.

Retain

Retention is crucial for sustained business success, and the ADM facilitates player and coach retention within the USTA's ecosystem. The model's structured pathway allows players to progress through different skill levels, ensuring continued challenges and opportunities for improvement (Hainline, 2012). The USTA's commitment to ongoing coach education and development, guided by the ADM's principles, contributes to the retention of highly skilled and knowledgeable coaches who can effectively nurture player growth (Davies, 2018). Additionally, the ADM's focus on holistic development helps create an environment that values personal growth, social connections, and long-term player engagement.

• Coaching Tip #3

Implementation of a developmentally appropriate pathway emphasizes and reinforces the importance of creating a positive and supportive environment that encourages players to participate and continue playing tennis.

From a business standpoint, the ADM's emphasis on attracting, engaging, and retaining stakeholders aligns with fundamental principles of customer acquisition and retention. By effectively attracting new players, engaging them through meaningful experiences, and retaining their involvement over the long term, the USTA strengthens its brand, builds loyalty, and ultimately generates sustainable revenue streams. Therefore, the ADM serves as a powerful business tool, driving growth, and creating a thriving tennis ecosystem that benefits all stakeholders.

The ADM's business perspective emphasizes the importance of attracting, engaging, and retaining participants in the USTA's tennis programs. By aligning with these principles, the USTA capitalizes on the model's player-centric approach, fostering long-term involvement, and ensuring the continued growth and success of tennis in the United States.

The USTA, as the National Governing Body of tennis in the United States, wants to create a sense of belonging and community, which helps to retain athletes and develop a lifelong love for tennis.

Coaching

The inclusion of the 5 Cs - competence, confidence, character, connection, and creativity - in the USTA ADM justifies and supports its comprehensive approach to player development and its positive impact on coaches and the delivery system. Competence ensures that coaches possess the necessary knowledge and skills to provide effective instruction and guidance to players, fostering their growth and development. Confidence-building within players is vital for their overall performance and motivation, and coaches play a crucial role in instilling belief in their abilities and creating an environment that encourages risk-taking and continuous improvement. The emphasis on character development promotes sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and values that extend beyond the court, shaping players into well-rounded individuals. Connection focuses on building strong coach-player relationships and fostering a sense of belonging within the tennis community, enhancing engagement and long-term involvement. Finally, creativity encourages coaches to think innovatively, adapt to individual player needs, and create engaging and enjoyable training experiences. Together, the 5 Cs of the ADM empower coaches, enrich the delivery system, and contribute to the holistic development of players, promoting a lifelong love of the sport (Davies & Roetert, 2023).

Sport Science

The purpose of sport science integration, as it relates to the ADM, is to promote athletes' long-term health and wellness. Sport science provides evidence-based training, nutrition, and recovery strategies that support the athlete's physical, mental, and emotional development (Balyi, Way, & Higgs, 2013). By using sport science strategies to guide training and recovery, coaches and athletes can optimize performance, reduce the risk of injury, and support the athlete's overall well-being.

From a health and wellness perspective, properly integrating sport science principles is significant because it promotes a holistic approach to athlete development. Rather than solely focusing on performance outcomes, sport science considers the athlete's health and well-being.

- **Coaching Tip #4**

Provide sport science coaching guidance on nutrition strategies to promote healthy eating habits and prevent the development of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

Integrating sport science principles can also provide injury prevention and rehabilitation strategies, which are crucial for maintaining the athlete's health and well-being. By reducing the risk of injury and ensuring a safe return to play after injury, applying sport science concepts can help athletes to maintain their physical and mental health over the long-term.

In addition, sport science can guide the development of mental and emotional skills that support the athlete's overall well-being (Davies, 2018). For example, sport psychology can provide strategies for managing stress, building resilience, and enhancing motivation. By promoting mental and emotional wellness, sport science can help athletes to maintain a positive attitude and enjoyment of the sport.

Using sport science information in the ADM is significant from a health and wellness perspective because it promotes a holistic approach to athlete development that prioritizes the athlete's long-term health and well-being. By providing evidence-based training, nutrition, and recovery strategies, sport science can support athletes in achieving their performance goals while maintaining their health and well-being over the long-term.

Research

The purpose of research when it comes to the American Development Model (ADM) is to provide evidence-based data that guides the evolution of the model. The ADM is based on the principles of LTAD, which emphasizes the importance of age-appropriate training, skill development, and competition that align with the athlete's developmental stage. Conducting and applying research strategies is essential to ensure that the ADM remains up-to-date with the latest scientific knowledge and best practices in athlete development.

Research plays a critical role in the evolution of the ADM by providing evidence-based data on the effectiveness of various training and competition programs (Davies, 2018). By evaluating the outcomes of different programs, researchers can identify which programs are most effective for promoting the long-term athletic development of athletes. This information can then be used to guide the next stages of the ADM by incorporating new programs that are shown to be effective and modifying or removing programs that are not.

In addition, research is essential for ensuring that the ADM remains age-appropriate and aligned with the developmental needs of athletes. As children develop and mature, their physical, mental, emotional, and social needs change. By researching the developmental stages of athletes, researchers can identify which types of training, skill development, and competition are most appropriate for each stage of development.

- **Coaching Tip #5**

As a coach, use this information to guide the evolution of the ADM by ensuring that all activities remain age-appropriate and effective for promoting the long-term athletic development of athletes.



The purpose of research as it relates to the ADM is to provide evidence-based data that guides the evolution of the model. By evaluating the effectiveness of different programs and ensuring that the ADM remains age-appropriate and aligned with the developmental needs of athletes, research plays a critical role in promoting the long-term athletic development of athletes and supporting their lifelong love of tennis (Balyi, Way, & Higgs, 2013).

Making Tennis FUN

The purpose of fun when it comes to the ADM is to create a positive and enjoyable experience for athletes that encourages their continued participation in tennis. The ADM recognizes that a fun and enjoyable experience is essential for promoting a lifelong love of tennis and retaining athletes over the long-term.

Fun is significant in retention circles because it is critical in creating a positive and supportive environment that encourages athletes to participate and continue playing tennis. When athletes enjoy the sport and have fun, they are more likely to continue playing and develop a lifelong love of tennis. By creating a fun and enjoyable experience for athletes, the ADM can support the retention of athletes over the long-term.

The USTA is actively engaged in several research initiatives aimed at developing a fun and engaging tennis ecosystem that aligns with the principles of the ADM. Through comprehensive studies and data analysis, the USTA is focused on understanding the practical outcomes of implementing the ADM and its impact on player retention. This research-driven approach ensures that the ADM evolves in a way that maximizes enjoyment, fosters player development, and cultivates long-term participation, ultimately creating a vibrant and sustainable tennis community.

- **Coaching tip #6**

Provide opportunities for athletes within your practice sessions for match play, interact with peers, receive positive feedback and reinforcement while experiencing success and achievement.

The purpose of fun when it comes to the ADM is to create a positive and enjoyable experience for athletes that encourages their continued participation in tennis. By providing age-appropriate training and competition programs that align with the athlete's developmental stage and preferences for

fun and enjoyment and creating a positive and supportive environment, the ADM can support the retention of athletes over the long-term and promote a lifelong love of tennis.

CONCLUSION

This article provides an overview of the USTA's ADM from a business perspective, focusing on its impact on player development, coach education, and the overall tennis ecosystem. Through the lens of strategic planning, resource allocation, talent acquisition, and marketing, we have explored how the ADM aligns with fundamental business principles to foster a sustainable and thriving tennis environment.

Initial feedback indicates that the ADM serves as a powerful tool for attracting, developing, and retaining participants, ultimately nurturing a lifelong love of tennis. By adopting the 5 Cs - Competence, Confidence, Connection, Creativity, and Character - the ADM emphasizes player-centric approaches, skill progressions, positive coaching methodologies, and holistic development. This not only enhances the overall player experience but also contributes to the brand image of the USTA.

Moreover, related research has highlighted the importance of coach education within the ADM, as well as the significance of creating a supportive delivery system that fosters player development and engagement. By equipping coaches with the necessary competencies, providing ongoing education, emphasizing connection and character development, and encouraging creativity, the ADM ensures a high-quality coaching experience and fosters positive coach-player relationships.

Moving forward, we recommended that the USTA continues to invest in research and data-driven insights to further refine and optimize the ADM. This includes ongoing evaluation of

its impact on player outcomes, coach effectiveness, and the overall business objectives of the USTA. By continuously evolving and adapting the ADM based on empirical evidence, the USTA can enhance its strategic planning, further refine resource allocation, and maximize the impact of its initiatives within the tennis community.

Ultimately, the USTA's American Development Model serves as a blueprint for success, blending business principles with player-centric approaches to create a dynamic and sustainable tennis ecosystem. Through ongoing research, strategic implementation, and a commitment to continuous improvement, the ADM has the potential to revolutionize player development, elevate the standard of coaching, and inspire a new generation of tennis enthusiasts.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest and that they did not receive any funding to conduct the research.

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