



The Business of Tennis: Promoting Tennis Programmes.

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ABSTRACT

The business of tennis involves understanding certain components of business. With an understanding of these business concepts they can be adapted to the game of tennis. The main objective for tennis clubs and federations is the overall promotion of tennis. For the tennis club it is a business incentive and for the federation to get more people playing tennis. Theoretical principles covered are AIDA and the 4 P's of marketing mix.

Key words: Clubs, Federation, Promotion, Business, Marketing mix.

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INTRODUCTION

When looking at tennis from a business perspective, the aim of any entity operating in the tennis industry should be to survive, grow and profit. This remains constant for all programmes offered by tennis clubs and federations, regardless of the level of players it caters for. In for-profit enterprises this especially rings true, but a non-profit enterprise will not continue to exist if it does not grow with the needs of the industry and consumers, and at the very least, manages to break even on their costs. All this can be done through effective planning, organising, leading and controlling of the enterprise by a knowledgeable manager.

This brings us to the promotion of the programmes. Promotion is the process of firstly making existing consumers, but especially non- consumers, aware of the programmes on offer from your tennis club/ federation. In doing this the marketer or manager needs to apply the AIDA principle: Attract attention, create Interest, create a Desire to become involved, and Action by the consumer, in other words becoming involved in the programme. However, it needs to be realised that the promotion of a product/service/programme is the final element of the marketing mix (4Ps), and that in order to promote a programme effectively, a few other elements needs to be considered first.

The Marketing Mix

The marketing mix (4Ps) consists of the: Product, Price, Place and Promotion, and they are developed and determined in that order. The first aspect to consider is the segment of the market you want to focus on, thus identify your target market and target group. This is very important because, as will be seen in

the practical application in subsequent sections, the approach a club would have to promote programmes to beginners, intermediate or advanced players differs, and in turn this again differs from the approach federations would follow to promote to all three these levels of players. This means the programmes offered have to cater to the specific needs and wants of that specific type of consumer or client (target group).

As a manager in the sport industry you need to remember that the income an individual departs from in order to become involved in your sport programme is called his/her disposable income. That is the money left over after all necessities (food, clothing, home, etc.) has been paid for. Therefore particularly in an economic climate such as is currently experienced globally, this disposable income is fairly small and very valuable to that individual. The task of the tennis manager therefore to offer what the client needs and wants, ensure that the client is willing to exchange his valuable disposable income for something he/she perceives will add value to his/her life. The first P thus focuses on the creation of a tennis programme that will satisfy the needs of the tennis client.

Once the suitable programme has been developed, again the target group's characteristics and needs have to be taken into account when determining the price to be charged and the place to offer, or method of distributing the programme. Finally, the promotional method to be used will have to fit the programme, its price and the place or channel/ method of distribution. So the question arises, what does all this mean?

A tennis club offering programmes specifically designed and developed to satisfy the needs of junior beginner tennis players in a middle to high income bracket community, will set a price which is not the lowest for similar programmes in the industry,

and that will ensure the club will make a profit. The programmes will be offered where these clients are because they are most likely willing and capable of paying a price premium for the comfort of having it brought to them (for instance at the child's school). Junior beginner tennis players will need to be told why they should play tennis, and considering these are kids, one of the most effective promotional tools would be to use a well-known and successful tennis player to tell them how much fun tennis is, and what it can bring to their lives. However, remember the parents still pay for the coaching lessons, therefore your promotion also needs to ensure them that their child will acquire the needed sporting and life skills such as ball skills, hand-eye-coordination skills, discipline, motivation and at the same time they will have the opportunity to socialise with other children in a healthy and safe environment.

It is very important to recognise that for a manager to successfully promote any programme and to create the desire within the client to become involved in the programme, he/she needs to indicate the benefits of such involvement as the incentive to act upon the desire. Additional communication tools such as pamphlets, brochures and newspaper advertisements could also be considered. Although television, radio and internet advertisements are very effective communication or promotional tools, they might not be the most suitable for this specific target group.

On the other hand, the approach used above will not be equally successful when a tennis federation aims to attract advanced or elite tennis players. The focus here, to guarantee that the player become involved with your programme, would be placed on the top class facilities, coaching and/or additional services your federation and programme can offer, compared to any alternative options he/she might have. You will attract them with the possibility of superior exposure together with the insurance that the advancement of their career as a professional tennis player is your priority.

CONCLUSION

When taking the theoretical principles provided here into account, and when looking at your tennis club or federation from a business perspective, your attention is required in the identification of the gap.

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