

TENNIS CLUBMARK – Section 4.2.1 - Ideas to help you promote your club

Introduction

Clubs use many different methods to promote themselves and grow their membership. Promotional ideas will differ depending on your facilities and the location of your club, but here are some ideas that clubs of any size can use to raise awareness and attract new members.

Clubmark Suggestions		How WTC already achieves or plans to achieve this
Planning	It is important that someone in the club takes responsibility for making things happen. This may be a co-ordinator who gets others to take action, or the club manager, secretary or coach. To make sure your promotional activities are successful, you need to set goals and agree actions. Some of your ideas may need financial investment and one of the important things for any club is to agree a budget for marketing costs.	The committee meets on a monthly basis to both assess its response to past events, as well as to take a pro-active role in handling those in the future. The Club maintains an Action Plan which dictates the main areas to focus upon. Larger, detailed projects are handed over to a dedicated sub-committee who then assess the implications and report back to the main committee. Major financial outlay is always discussed at length and only approved following a vote.
Raising awareness	Most people do not know where their local tennis club is, or have any idea what it can offer them, beyond a tennis court. It's important to find cheap ways of raising awareness of the club, such as newsagents' windows, coffee shops and railway stations. Make sure your flyers and adverts summarise what's available: mention coaching opportunities and competitions (both internal and external) and say who these activities are aimed at. For example, 'Mini Tennis coaching – ages 4 to 10 – every Saturday morning'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website (ranked no.1 on Google search engine), including a section named <i>Action For the Week</i>. • Regular local press exposure via results, tables etc. • Schools outreach by club coach • Annual feature in the "Walsall Pioneer"
Using our existing members	One of the best ways to find new members is by word of mouth. You should positively encourage your existing members to find new members, by asking them to promote beginners' lessons or arranging bring-a-friend nights. You can offer incentives, such as prize draws or discounted membership. Even the smallest club can encourage members to deliver leaflets on coaching opportunities to their workplace or street. Make sure your members know what's on offer so they can be your unpaid salespeople!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular contact with all members via bulk emails re upcoming events • "Open Days", including mail-drops and advertising boards along Birmingham Road • With increasing junior membership, we need to welcome any friends they introduce as likely members. • Discounted membership is a possibility for discussion in readiness for next season

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<p style="text-align: center;">Making it easy to join in</p>	<p>Very few non-players will join a club straight off. Try to get people involved gradually, by offering group coaching programmes to non-members, and encouraging them to take part in club nights for a nominal fee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular coaching attendees are always encouraged to join the Club, often at advantageous rates. • Club coach has instigated a “junior development” programme in 2010, aimed at offering “free” lessons (subsidised by the Club) to encourage interest in tennis and membership of our Club at discounted rates • Regular emails to the Membership encourage participation in club sessions, social tournaments and events.
<p style="text-align: center;">Charging realistic and tailored subscriptions</p>	<p>Most non-members believe tennis clubs charge significantly more than they actually do. For instance, the average price for junior membership is less than £1 per week. You should charge realistic fees, by balancing the cost of maintaining courts and other facilities with the need to attract new members. Offer different subscription levels, to suit different categories of membership: think about senior citizen, junior and students rates, and midweek discounts. Ensure payments are made as flexible and straightforward as possible. Consider monthly direct debit options, if your club can deal with this – it’s easy for your members, helps them spread the cost and will boost your annual renewal figures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club has reduced fees by 30% in recent years to reflect difficult economic climate • Pro-rata discounts are made to fees from August onwards, to encourage participation. • Discounts on subscriptions are offered provided payment is made punctually. Staged-payments are accepted under certain circumstances.
<p style="text-align: center;">Using our community</p>	<p>Try to implement a regular and effective advertising campaign. It doesn’t need to be expensive. Consider local newspapers, websites, Yellow Pages/Thomsons directories, and newsagents’ windows. Remember to make the most of free publicity at local schools, universities, libraries and offices, and to pin information on other sports club noticeboards. Also bear in mind the time of year: just before and after Wimbledon is usually a great time for advertising.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach maintains a high profile for the Club when visiting schools • Club website attracts a regular flow of enquiries • Regular local press exposure via results, tables etc. • High profile advertising of our annual “Open Day” to coincide with Wimbledon
<p style="text-align: center;">Spending money on advertising</p>	<p>A modest marketing budget can help a club grow. This will mean more people paying for coaching programmes and more money towards the maintainance of 2 facilities. Use adverts in local papers and try posters on local railway stations. For larger clubs, radio advertising can have a positive impact on membership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual feature in the “Walsall Pioneer”

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Using the local media	<p>Promotion does not have to be expensive. Many local papers, particularly free ones, are constantly looking for stories from sports clubs, so make sure you communicate with them regularly. Get in touch with local sports editors and keep them updated with new coaching programmes, club successes, forthcoming competitions and sponsorship opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good relationship with the Sports Desk at the “Express & Star” which allows us to get publicity as and when we run major events.
Using sponsors	<p>If you are promoting your club widely, or running a schools programme, you may be able to get local businesses to sponsor your activity. Sponsorship reflects well on the sponsor, and raises their profile in the local community. Schools programmes around the country are sponsored and this can make your money go a lot further.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current sponsor is a local insurance broker although the financial benefits to both parties has diminished in recent years. • The Club is actively seeking new sponsors, particularly for the supply of windbreaks for our 5 courts.
Open Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run open days to promote your club to the local community and enable non-members to try out tennis at your club • Ensure you have a range of activities on offer, e.g. adult social sessions, mini tennis, BBQ • Schedule open days at the beginning of the season or either side of Wimbledon • Run open days after schools to target local children and their parents • Make sure people can join on the day and consider using special membership offers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already in place and very successful in terms of organisation, volunteer efforts, and the numbers attending. However, the subsequent “take-up” of memberships (even after offering free coaching and discounts) is often disappointing. • Coaching programmes aimed a encouraging interest also include “Tennis Camps” during school holidays, as well as regular “School’s Out” sessions during term-time.
Welcome packs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome packs give new members a clear picture of the activities and opportunities available to them • Things to include: details of your club’s facilities, coaching programme, competitive opportunities, social tennis and social activities, plus information on your fees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much research and effort has been undertaken in providing all members (whether re-joining or new) with adequate information on what is available at the Club, when it takes place, and how much it costs (when not free).

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Other ideas ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Club maintains a healthy relationship with Mike Gaffney, Capacity Funding Manager at Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council. Mike has had a close relationship with our Club over many years, and was instrumental in paving the way for the funding received by the Club in the late 1990s for the capital expenditure sought to have our current artificial turf court laid. <p>Currently, there are meetings with Mike taking place and are aimed at seeking grant funding for both small- as well as large-scale projects which the Club anticipates having to confront in the coming months and years.</p>
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