

A SELF-SERVICE GUIDE TO GROWING CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Understand your members to find more of them

INTRODUCTION

For our sport to thrive, it is essential to nurture a love for tennis in your local community. Attracting new players and members is one of the biggest challenges but as a registered club you have the support and benefits from the LTA to help you. Opening tennis up is the LTA's vision and your club plays a huge part in making tennis a sport for all.

This self-service guide is packed full of marketing resources and techniques that you can leverage to promote your own club. Identify your prospects and messaging to set up campaigns that will start or rekindle a life-long love for tennis. Retaining your existing members is also key to sustainability and you will find tips for this too.

As a club or committee, investing time and effort in marketing means you can achieve results to be proud of. Ensure the future of your club and make it the number one choice for players in your area.

This guide provides clubs with the following:

- What to consider when attracting new members and players
- Practical tools to help clubs understand;
 - their local catchment area
 - their local competition
 - their existing membership and player base
- Step-by-step guide to launching a marketing campaign
- On-going engagement and retention



WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS AND PLAYERS

LEARNING FROM SUCCESSFUL CLUBS AND THE BUSINESS WORLD

If you want to keep your members and visitors happy and coming back for more, you need to understand them and what they want from your club. This valuable knowledge can inform the creation of new playing opportunities as well as help retain and satisfy your existing members.

Tennis clubs, like small businesses, can gain a competitive edge by focusing their efforts on specific segments of the market instead of trying to appeal to everyone. This could be as simple as separating your competitive players from your social members or looking at

geographic location or demographics. Grouping different people based on their characteristics and behaviours allows you to market to (talk to) people with engaging and relevant information.

Utilising your existing members is more cost-effective than wide reach marketing campaigns as they are your best salesforce. In commercial tennis centres, approximately 50% of new members come from member referrals, friends and family, as well as lapsed members re-joining.

top tip
In commercial centres, 50% of new members are generated from existing members



UNDERSTANDING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

A successful membership drive needs to be backed up with high quality customer service, which starts before they even step on court. If a new member's experience is disappointing, they may not return, and may tell others about their negative experience.

Consider the new member experience at your club – there are many touchpoints from their initial search for information through to first interaction at the club and then follow up communication. Getting the customer journey right will help you meet and exceed customer expectations and membership growth in the long-term.



FLEXIBLE MEMBERSHIP OFFERS

Tennis players come in all shapes and sizes and will be at different stages of their tennis journey. Clubs need to recognise this and make it easy for people to play tennis in formats and at times that suit them.

Offering a range of flexible membership packages that accommodate different lifestyles may alleviate commitment concerns, reassuring new players that they will have the opportunity to play frequently enough to justify their membership.

As well as offering different types of membership, you also need to consider payment options. Whilst annual subscriptions provide cash flow and help the club budget, this sort of long-term commitment isn't going to appeal to everyone. Offering three-month memberships and even a one-month rolling membership can be an effective way to introduce new players to the club.

Some clubs are even creating 'coaching memberships' whereby members can access the programme for a monthly fee outside of court bookings. This is particularly helpful for beginners who want to play regularly, but need access to players and coaching. Once familiar with the club, these members are more likely to stay as they have a ready-made social group of similar tennis ability.

top tip

Make a conscious effort to integrate new members into the club as soon as they join.



PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITY TO GET PEOPLE PLAYING QUICKLY

How members use the club is also an important factor to consider and you need to prepare different options for different types of members. A clear participation journey makes it easier to integrate new players into the club and get them on court enjoying tennis as quickly as possible.

We know that hundreds of thousands of members take part in County and District Leagues every year, but what do less competitive members want from their tennis experience? Virtually all clubs continue to offer social nights, team practice and group coaching, but the activity programme needs reviewing periodically to make sure it meets the needs of the whole membership.

One of the biggest barriers to tennis participation is finding other people to play with, and simply joining a club doesn't make this problem go away. If a new member fails to find a partner or opponent, their tennis experience will be poor and short-lived. Therefore, making introductions early on and welcoming a new member into the fold is just as important as signing them up.

SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE

To maximise your effort, time and resources spent on marketing, it is essential to plan and consider what will actually benefit your club and grow your membership.

Taking time to review your current situation may seem arduous, but this type of insight combined with local knowledge and experience will provide clubs with a greater understanding of their existing member and player base, as well as their local catchment. You will be able to progress by:

- Identifying what's special about your club
- Presenting your club in the best light both online and offline
- Reviewing the playing programme to ensure it meets the needs of all members
- Developing new membership packages to meet the needs of different players
- Understanding where and how to promote your offers

KNOW YOUR CATCHMENT, KNOW YOUR COMPETITION AND UNDERSTAND YOUR MEMBERS

The first (and often overlooked) step is reflecting on the current position of your tennis club.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR LOCAL CATCHMENT?

Is there a lot of tennis provision in your area or are you the only club for miles? How far away do your members travel to get to the club, and do they drive past other tennis clubs to come to yours? Based on the size and shape of the local population, is there enough of the right supply to meet the demand for tennis?

Our national mapping tool breaks down the current UK tennis membership into six profiles and plots them by postcode, alongside the local population, showing where your undiscovered 'lookalike' members and players may be found. The tool also plots all other local tennis facilities which will allow you to do a competitor analysis.

To acquire a tailored report for your club, please speak to your Participation Development Partner (PDP) in your regional delivery network.



TENNIS TITANS

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND

Learned as children, had lessons and coaching
Have played all their lives – even after lapsing (e.g. injury, pregnancy) they come back to tennis
Titans are formed early & 1 in 3 are advanced or County level or above

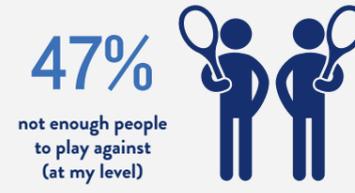
LIFESTYLE



MOTIVATIONS



BARRIERS



HABITS & PREFERENCES



TENNIS TROUPERS

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



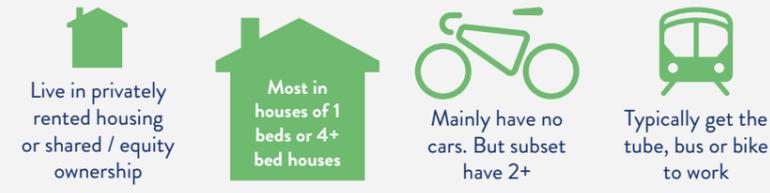
FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND

Most are developing or intermediate
Slight skew to playing on Sundays ('family time')
Playing frequently in spring and summer, dropping off in winter

LIFESTYLE



MOTIVATIONS



BARRIERS



HABITS & PREFERENCES



SEASONAL SPINNERS

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND

Play tennis for fun and to have a fitness activity that includes socialising
They don't want tennis to be a family sport – it is their sport
Playing frequently in spring and summer, dropping off in winter

LIFESTYLE

Live in privately rented housing or shared/equity ownership
Mostly all student households or one person household
They don't usually own a car but if they do it's luxury or executive. Getting to work they take the train/tube or tram
Largely professionals or shop or office workers

MOTIVATIONS

94% play for fun
81% would be interested in a group lesson

BARRIERS

69% not enough friends to play with
62% clubs too expensive

HABITS & PREFERENCES

Still use internet weekly (but to less an extent as troupers), using it for more than 20 hours a week
Preferential marketing channels include Email, Telephone, TV, Newspaper and Posters. And they respond particularly well to TV
Local businesses are the most compelling sectors that this group would purchase from
Gadgets are very important and they couldn't live without their mobile and keep up to date with latest tech
They would prefer to go to premium stores rather than highstreet chains and feel online shopping makes their life easier. If they were to go to a highstreet retailer it would be H&M
Most likely to watch TV on a mobile phone / device or PC
Banking, Holidays and Tech are all purchased on the internet for this group
Waitrose, Sainsbury's and M&S are their preferred shop
Use social media to look for business contacts or a job, particularly using LinkedIn and Foursquare

WIMBLEDON WARRIORS

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND

35% play in clubs even though only 22% are members – some using pay-as-you-go
Play regularly in the summer but almost not at all in autumn and winter

LIFESTYLE

Live in Privately rented, social renting or Share ownership
Most likely to live in Terraced housing, mostly likely have 5+ people in the house.
They don't usually have a car but if they do it's a mini or supermini
When going to work (if they work) they'd predominantly go on foot and to less an extent bus or taxi

MOTIVATIONS

96% play for fun
92% would be happy to play with strangers of same ability

BARRIERS

79% not enough friends to play with

HABITS & PREFERENCES

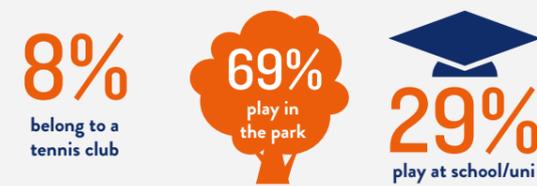
Text messages and telephone are the acceptable marketing channels
Most likely to have over 30 apps on their phone
Would be happy to see advertising from utilities and tv servies, supermarkets and banks
While not popular, they do respond well to cinema advertising
Gadgets are very important and they couldn't live without their mobile and keep up to date with latest tech
When shopping they look for the lowest possible price, going to places like New Look, ASDA and Morrisons
They are slightly environmentally conscious
Use social media to become a fan, look for a job. Typically on sites such as Tumblr, Snapchat, Twitter
Love to gamble as a hobby and are typically a football supporter

SOCIAL BUTTERFLIES

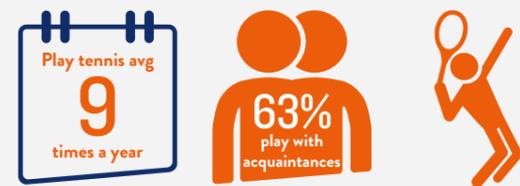
KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND



LIFESTYLE



MOTIVATIONS



BARRIERS



HABITS & PREFERENCES



SENIOR STALWARTS

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



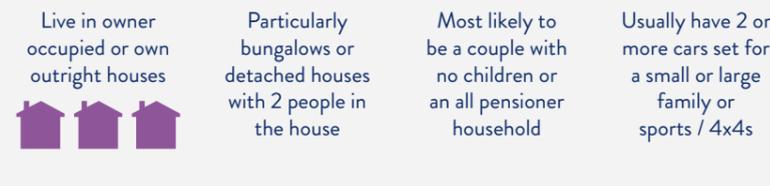
FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND



LIFESTYLE



MOTIVATIONS



BARRIERS



HABITS & PREFERENCES



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO LAUNCHING A MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Building your marketing plan around the audience that you are trying to engage gives you a greater chance of success and maximises your budget, compared to a 'scatter-gun' approach. In addition to raising awareness and generating leads, the club needs to be prepared for handling enquiries and processing potential members.

Make sure you use a contact method that will be answered (or where a message can be left and swiftly followed up). If someone has made the effort to enquire, it's critical to respond within a short timeframe. They may be contacting other venues simultaneously so this is a major opportunity to win them over with what your club can offer.

Your joining process should be as clear and concise as possible without superfluous or confusing questions. An online form is preferable as members can complete this anytime. If there are paper forms involved, ensure these are easily locatable in the club and that someone is available to promptly process memberships to avoid delays, frustration or a new member walking away.

Based on the available resources including the mapping tool and six tennis profiles, consider the following points when developing your marketing plans to engage your target audience:

DEFINING YOUR CATCHMENT

A catchment area is fixed by how far a prospect is willing to travel for your product or service. Within that radius, certain areas will be richer in prospects. Think about different locations or pockets where you might find a higher concentration of your ideal customers. Use the mapping tool to also identify competitor tennis venues.

KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

Think about your ideal customer – the market segment that is most likely to want what you have to offer. You will probably already have existing members in this market segment. You can use the tennis profiles on pages 8 to 13 to help ascertain what they like, what motivates them, where they frequent, what they are willing to spend etc.

DEVELOPING AN APPEALING OFFER

Different people will find different offers appealing, so researching your audience and their interests is essential. Whilst price and discounts play an important part in establishing an attractive offer, it is not the only way.

Outlined below are some effective offers that tennis clubs use to attract new members:

- Short-term membership
- Discounts on the annual membership
- Flexible memberships
- Monthly payment options
- Discounts on the coaching programme
- Pay & Play opportunities
- Family-based memberships



CREATING THE BRAND POSITIONING, PROPOSITION AND MESSAGING

Brand positioning is the process by which marketers create an image or identity in the minds of the target market for their product, brand, or organisation. This is what adds perceived value to customers.

When you've identified your prospective customers and developed an appealing offer, you then need to create a proposition to appeal to that target audience. This will be the main message in any communication and is based on the following considerations:

- Who are you targeting with your proposition?
- What do you want them to think, feel or do when they see it?
- What are you offering?
- Why should people choose your product or service?

When building a new proposition, it is important to consider how this fits with your club's current brand and values. Decide on your club's USP (unique selling point) which differentiates you from the competition. This can form the basis of brand positioning which will characterise your tennis club's image or identity as a sub message in any communication.

Then construct a headline that sells the 'sizzle' - the biggest selling point in your proposition and main reasons why your prospects will want to buy your product or offer over someone else's.



SELECTING YOUR MARKETING CHANNELS

When deciding on the best method of communicating your offer to your target audience, consider online (digital) and offline media. Find out which media channels your target audience responds to and then select the right marketing mix for your promotion.

Offline

- Posters
- Local notice boards
- In-store
- Community centres
- Door drops
- Events marketing
- Press releases (e.g. forthcoming events, positive new stories, facility developments)
- Outdoor banners in high traffic areas
- Direct mail
- Personal selling (contacting prospects)
- Magazines and newspaper advertising

Online

- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram)
- Google Ads and banner ads
- Email marketing
- Website
- Mobile messaging (SMS)
- Video Ads
- Blog or Vlog

You could use owned media, earned media, paid media or a combination:

Owned media is when you control a channel you create. This could be your club website, Facebook page, Twitter feed, blog or YouTube channel. If you are directing the audience to find out more from your website, then make sure the website reinforces the tone and content of your offer or promotion and has the information you're signposting.

Earned media is when members, visitors and the general public share your content and speak about your brand via word of mouth or reviews. In other words, the mentions are voluntarily given by others.

Paid media is when you pay to influence a third-party channel, such as sponsorships and advertising offline or online like Google and Facebook websites.

top tip

It's common to use a combination of all three as one can amplify another.



DEVELOPING THE CREATIVE AND COPY

Once you've developed a proposition for your target audience, you need to present this in a simple, attractive format. The design and layout are referred to as the 'creative' and the words are the 'copy'. Remember that people are bombarded with adverts, so your content needs to grab their attention and keep it.

Take the following approach:

- Start with the layout and think about where and how the design will be seen (from a distance, or amongst other adverts for example?)
- Make the headline large and legible
- The layout should guide the reader visually from headline through the copy and on to a call to action
- Quality imagery adds visual impact and twice as many readers will look at a picture than will read your headline
- Give the web address or phone number prominence and check details are correct
- Use the same creative style for adverts regardless of channel to show that they are part of the same promotion

top tip

Always focus on benefits as opposed to features. For example: "We have 8 all-weather tennis courts" is a feature. "You can play tennis anytime" is a benefit.



✓ DO	✗ AVOID
Focus on the target audience	Trying to appeal to all
Keep it simple and direct	Being too clever, cryptic or creative
Talk about benefits...	..not features
Keep the headline true to the content and relevant to the audience	Hyperbole, exaggeration or misleading offers
Keep it punchy – stick to your key messages	Adding waffle or too much information
Use quality imagery or photography	Grainy, distorted or childish imagery
Make the next step easy and obvious - 'the call to action'	Assuming the reader knows what action to take

The 'call to action' urges the reader to take an immediate action, such as ring now, visit now or join now along with a relevant webpage link or phone number.

IMPLEMENTATION

Before you start implementing your plan, wherever possible, you should test and learn. For example – take a small segment of the target audience and test three to four creative/sets of messaging to determine which one has the strongest response. This could be a percentage of a data set or a cross-section of your membership matching the same profile.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Marketing metrics allow you to gauge the success of your campaigns. Digital marketing is easier to measure in terms of clicks and email opens whereas it's difficult to know how many people read an offline (printed) advert. Email platforms usually offer basic metrics. You could measure:

- Reach – how many people were served your message
- Cost per click for banner ads and Google Ads (the cost of the ad split by the total clicks)
- Open rates for email (the number of recipients who opened the email, expressed as a %)
- Clickthrough rates for email (the number of recipients who clicked on a link within the email, expressed as %)
- Conversion rates (the percentage of leads who take up an offer)

You can also look at cost per acquisition, but this will vary depending upon the cost of the proposition or offer. When selling an expensive membership, the conversion rate is likely to be lower, resulting in a higher cost per acquisition.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

The LTA provide a range of different high quality, customisable marketing resources to support clubs in promoting tennis within their local community through My Tennis Toolkit. The LTA online club management tool, Clubspark, also gives clubs the ability to build your own website, with various support and templates to make it simple and straightforward - completely free.

Your local delivery team will also have examples of successful campaigns from other clubs.

ON-GOING ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION

As previously mentioned, new members are at risk of lapsing and leaving during their first few months of membership - perhaps the novelty wears off or they don't engage with the club. This is particularly common if the new player has joined on a short-term membership or has only signed up to the coaching programme.

A large proportion of new players drop out and discontinue with tennis at this point where they are required to commit to an annual membership. To successfully retain these new players, the club needs to consider how to optimise the new player experience in terms of welcoming and nurturing. It can mean the difference between a lapsed player and a valued member who becomes a strong advocate for the club, influencing more people to join.

To engage new players and embed them into the club, some advice follows.

CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Providing a welcoming environment is a fundamental element of growing and retaining your membership, but sometimes overlooked by clubs. If you are working hard to attract new members and participants, it is worth reviewing your club environment prior to a marketing campaign to ensure it creates a great first impression and helps retain new players over the long-term.

Clean, quality and modern tennis facilities play a key part but there are also a number of other important factors to consider, including:

- Club atmosphere and culture
- Playing, coaching, competition and social programme
- Accessibility
- Member communication and engagement
- Value for money

ENGAGE ALL MEMBER GROUPS

It is likely that you will encounter different groups of members who want different things from the club, but be mindful not to put the most vocal members first every time. To improve customer service and member retention, it is important to understand different groups and balance their interests and needs. Clubs often undertake the following:

- **Talking to members** – it sounds obvious, but as a committee it is important to make sure that you speak to people from different groups at the club (teams, social groups, juniors, older players, young adults etc.). This could be informal or via feedback groups.
- **Member surveys** – this is an easy and cost-effective method to gain anonymous feedback and opinions from members or those who have recently left, or joined, for insight into their actions. Free online survey services include MailChimp and Survey Monkey.
- **Committee reps** – ensure that you represent a range of groups from the club to provide a balanced view in decision-making. Some clubs have successfully engaged young people by inviting juniors to join the club committee or working groups.

Thank you

Thank you for helping us open tennis up, making it a sport for all without barriers to participation. Competing more than ever for people's leisure time, clubs need to work harder and smarter to find new players and make tennis relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable for everyone.

If you are passionate about your club, get to know your members and what they want. Plan your marketing campaigns, develop offers and optimise the club experience to attract new players and engage existing ones. It's a rewarding investment to assure the future of your club.



