

A SELF-SERVICE GUIDE TO
ATTRACTING
& RETAINING PLAYERS
AT YOUR PARKS

Understanding your customers to
help more people play

INTRODUCTION

For tennis to thrive in Park venues, it is vital that parks provide an opportunity to play that appeals to the players in your community. Attracting and retaining players can be a challenge for Park Operators and Local Authorities, but as a registered Park site, you have the support and benefits from the LTA to help you. Opening tennis up is the LTA's vision and your park venue plays a huge part in making tennis accessible to all.

This self-service guide is packed full of marketing resources and techniques that you can leverage to promote the opportunities to play at your park. Identify your prospects and messaging to set up campaigns that will start or re-kindle a life long passion for and participation in tennis. Retaining existing players can be a key factor in making parks financially sustainable, as well as helping your park users sustain a good level of mental and physical health, and form social groups that support each other.

As a Local Authority or Parks Operator, investing time and effort in marketing the opportunities to play that you provide, means you can achieve higher attraction and retention rates, ensuring that your park is utilised by many players, for years to come.

This guide provides parks operators with the following:

- What to consider when attracting new players
- Practical tools to help parks operators understand:
 - their local catchment area
 - their local tennis landscape
 - their existing player base
- Step-by-step guide to launching a marketing campaign
- On-going player engagement and retention strategies



WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN ATTRACTING NEW PLAYERS TO YOUR PARK

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.

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.

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.

TOP TIP:

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



Understanding the customer journey

A successful player recruitment drive needs to be backed up with high quality customer service, which exceeds the players expectations, and begins before the player even steps on court. If a new players experience is below their expectations, they may not return, and may tell others about their negative experience.

Consider the initial experience of new players at your park - there are many touchpoints from their initial search for information which may possibly occur online - through to their first interaction with someone or making their first court or coaching booking, then follow up communication. Getting the customer journey right will help you to meet and exceed your players expectations and expand your active player base in the long-term.



Flexible and modern membership playing opportunities

Tennis players all have different wants and requirements, and will all be at different stages in their tennis journey. Parks need to recognise this and make it easy for people to play in non-traditional formats and at times that suit them - for example even the word 'membership has negative connotations for some people and may deter them from participating. Using words such as 'Season Ticket' can be more welcoming and less scary for some players.

Offering a range of ways to play, that accommodate who your customers play with, their frequency of play and their lifestyles, will help more customers to take the first step and engage with your venue.

Nearly all parks offer the opportunity to book courts on a 'Pay & Play' or 'Book & Play' basis, and allows player to book a one off court for a set period of time. Bookings are nearly always made online, using a modern and professional platform - such as ClubSpark and LTA Rally. This option appeals to players who may be hesitant about signing

up to anything longer term, or who may not know how frequently they will want to play. However this option is a great way of getting people to try the sport commitment free, giving you the opportunity to market the other opportunities your venue has to play to them.

Many successful park sites allow players to sign up to a 'Season Ticket' which allows players to play on the courts for a set period of time - usually a year. Season Tickets can be set up to allow either a whole household access to the park courts, or an individual person, depending on the demographics of your area, and could also be configured to allow a set number of bookings per week or month. Season Tickets can be a great way to create revenue, and also provide players with great value for money.

The majority of park tennis players will wish to participate in this way - rather than attending coaching for example - so it is vital that this offer is fit for purpose.

Programme of activity to get people playing quickly

For some players who may be nervous about their ability or who may not have a network of people to play with, a great way to entice them on to court is in an organised group session. This could be in the shape of an organised coaching or tennis activity session, which could be free to access or paid for. Once players have participated once, and met others of a similar ability, they may feel more confident to book courts and play again.

Other players may be striving to improve, and by offering a consistent coaching programme you will cater for their needs, attracting them to not only attend these opportunities but also to others that you offer such as court bookings and season tickets.

Some parks operators have achieved great success by setting the goal that most coaching sessions should have the goal of helping the player to get on to court again soon and making court bookings; By introducing players of a similar standard to each other, and giving people a few tips to improve their ability to rally, players feel more confident to book courts and play outside of organised sessions.

We know that lots of players want to play competitively, and offering the opportunity to meet and play matches against new players of a similar standard, will help to keep these participants engaged. The LTA can help to offer this at registered venues at no cost to the venue in the form of Local Tennis Leagues.

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 park and grow your active player base.

Taking time to review your current situation may seem arduous, but this type of insight combined with local knowledge and experience, will provide park operators with a greater understanding of their existing player base, as well as their local catchment.

You will be able to progress by:

- Identifying how your park meets the needs of players in the area
- Presenting your park in the best light, online and offline
- Reviewing your opportunities to play, to ensure they meet the needs of your player base
- Understanding where and how to promote your offers

TOP TIP:

Make an effort to communicate with players as soon as they have made their first booking / interaction with you.



KNOW YOUR CATCHMENT, KNOW YOUR COMPETITION AND UNDERSTAND YOUR PLAYER BASE

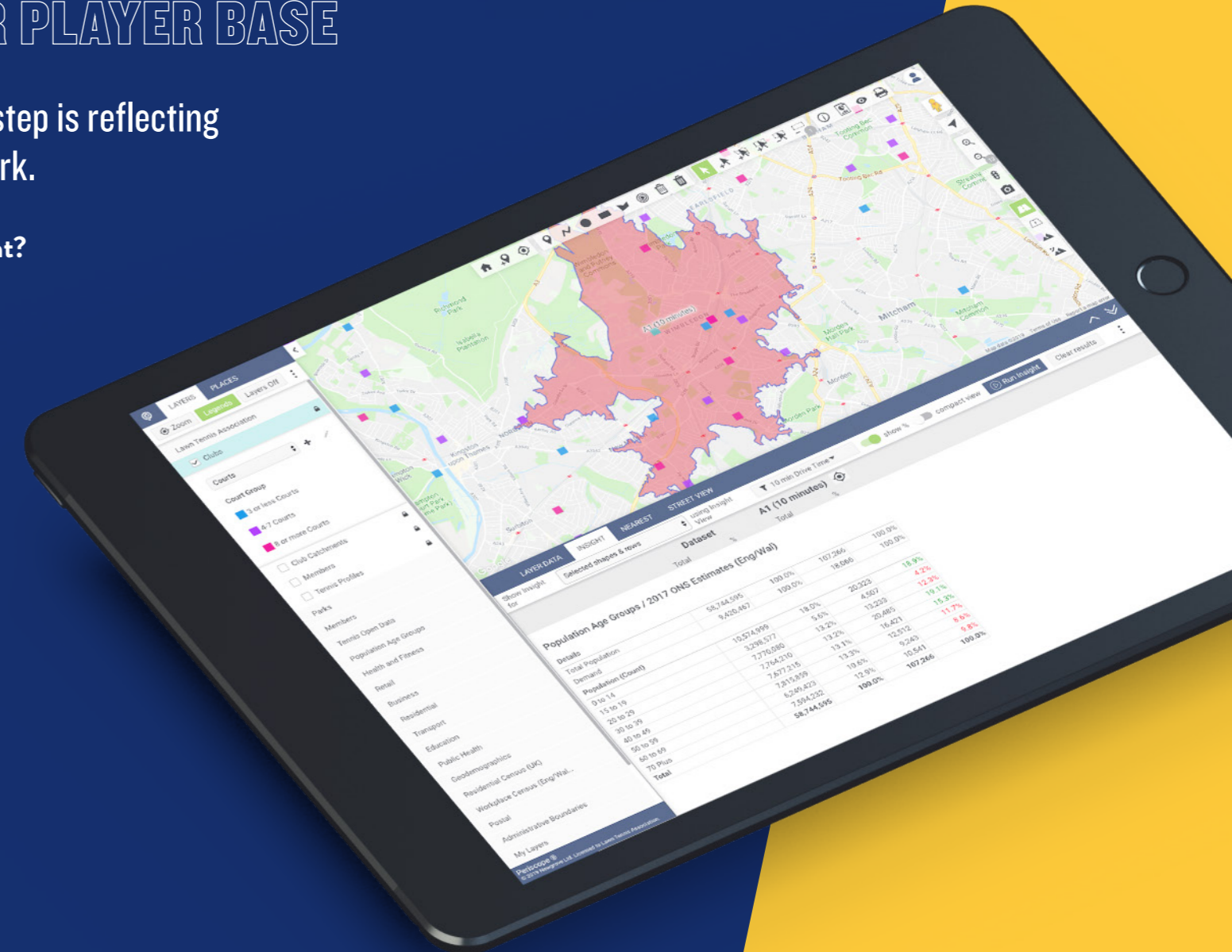
The first (and often overlooked) step is reflecting on the current position of your park.

How do you define your local catchment?

Is there a lot of tennis provision in your area or are you the only park for miles? How far does your existing player base travel to get to the park, and do they drive past other tennis venues 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 playing population into six profiles and plots them by postcode, alongside the local population, showing where your undiscovered 'lookalike' players may be found. The tool also plots all other tennis facilities allowing you to do a competitor analysis.

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



How do you compare to others in your local tennis landscape?

When you look at the other tennis facilities in the area, how well does your park measure up - what is your place in the market? Successful park operators focus promoting their bespoke opportunities to play to their local residents, to make them stand out from traditional clubs and other venues. Think about all the advantages your park offers including, location, ease of booking, open access to all, target market, programme of activity and value.

Undertaking a 'mystery shopper' experience or by asking your existing player base to complete a short survey, can provide good insight on how new and existing players view your park. Surveys can be set up and completed easily online, and results can be aggregated to provide a great overall picture of how players perceive the service they receive.



How well do you know your player base?

Knowing the demographics of your current player base will help you understand who your park currently appeals to, allowing you to use this information to enhance and broaden your offer and attract more player if required.

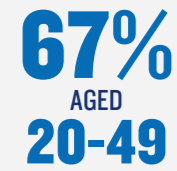
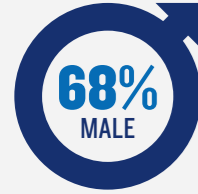
The LTA has worked with a behavioural research company to create six types of people who make up the bulk of the tennis market:

- Tennis Titans
- Tennis Troupers
- Seasonal Spinners
- Wimbledon Warriors
- Social Butterflies
- Seasonal Stalwarts

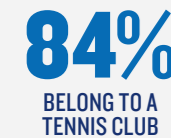
Find out more about these tennis segments on the next page, complete with tennis behaviours, marketing preferences and lifestyle choices. This insight will help you achieve more when targeting prospects you might not have considered, or by engaging players with similar characteristics.

TENNIS TITANS

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



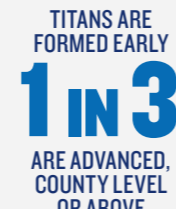
WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND



LIFESTYLE



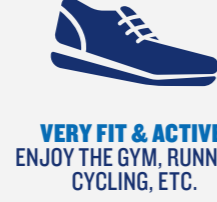
MOTIVATIONS



BARRIERS



HABITS & PREFERENCES



RESPOND BEST to personalised mail, email and cinema, with some also looking in newspapers.

THEY GO ONLINE TO BOOK TICKETS, check stocks and donate to charity.

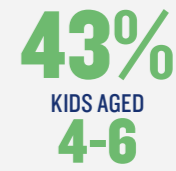
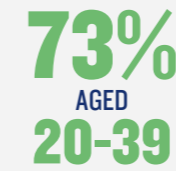
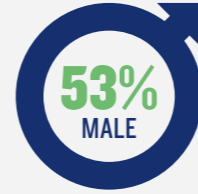
HAVE PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYERS at home and typically watch TV online or on a device.

HAPPY TO PAY MORE for products that make life easier, go for premium rather than standard, shopping online makes their life easier.

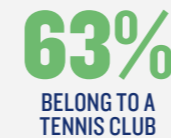
ENJOY READING the Times, Daily Telegraph and Daily Mail, subset also like the Guardian. Magazines include sport, motoring, food and cooking.

TENNIS TROUPERS

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND



LIFESTYLE



MOTIVATIONS



BARRIERS



HABITS & PREFERENCES



HAPPY TO RECEIVE MARKETING from shows and sporting events, charities and local government / businesses.

PRIMARYLY RESPONDS TO: Posters, emails and text messages. Subgroup also like personalised mail.

HAVE A PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER AT HOME and watch TV on multiple platforms.

WHEN ONLINE THEY RESEARCH TRAVEL, including airline, eating out, alcohol and investments.

SEASONAL SPINNERS

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



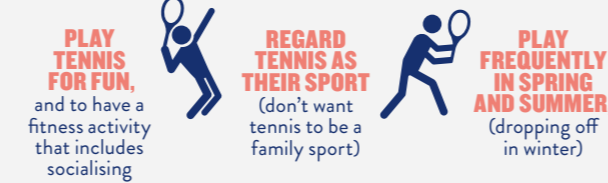
WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND



LIFESTYLE



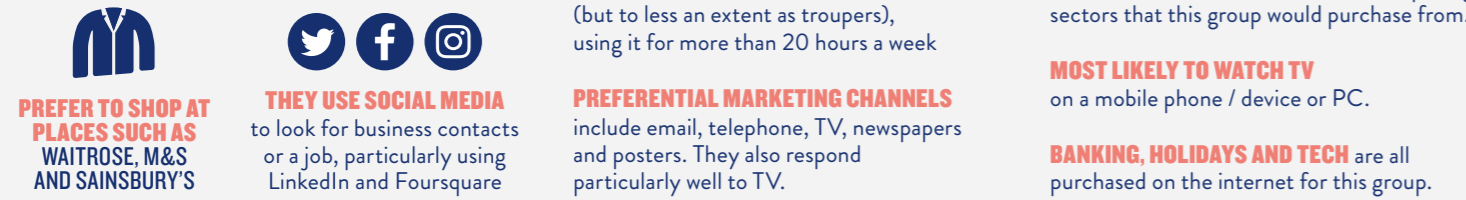
MOTIVATIONS



BARRIERS



HABITS & PREFERENCES



WIMBLEDON WARRIORS

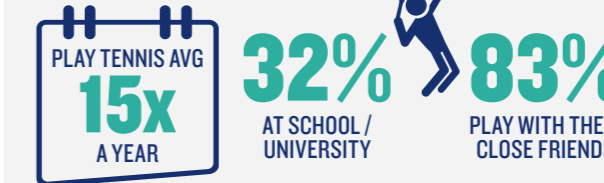
KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND



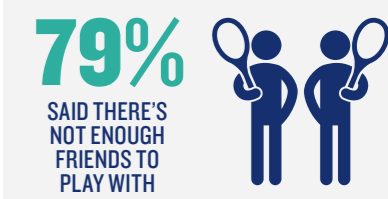
LIFESTYLE



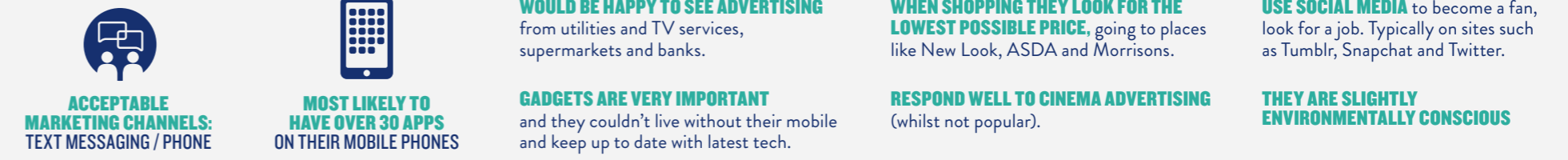
MOTIVATIONS



BARRIERS



HABITS & PREFERENCES



SOCIAL BUTTERFLIES

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND



LIFESTYLE



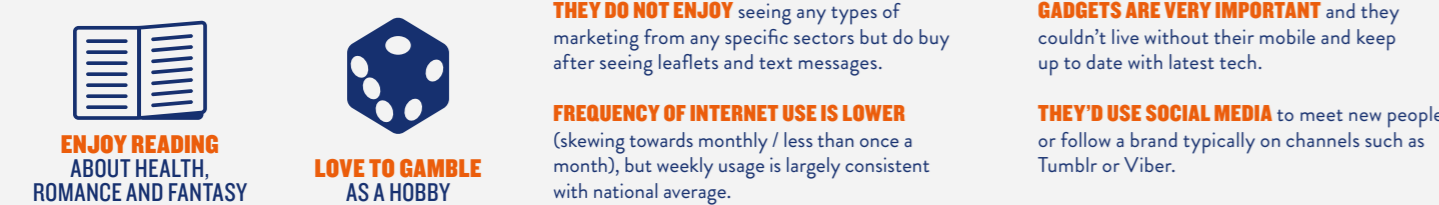
MOTIVATIONS



BARRIERS



HABITS & PREFERENCES



SENIOR STALWARTS

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



PLAYING BACKGROUND



LIFESTYLE



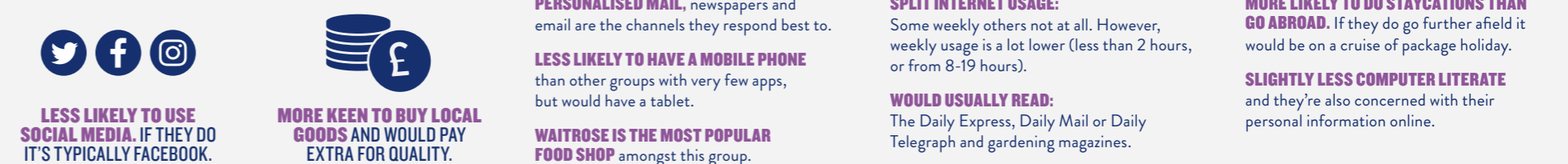
MOTIVATIONS



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 interest in the opportunities to play, you will need to be prepared for an increase in queries and interest from potential players, and be able to respond in order to meet their expectations.

If someone has made the effort to contact your park via phone or email, it is critical to reply in a short timeframe - it's possible that they have contacted other places to play simultaneously - this is your chance to exceed their expectations and entice them to your courts.

Your process to book courts, activity sessions or season tickets should be clear and concise and online in order to provide a modern and relevant experience. Your website should also simply display all the information that a new player might need about where the park is, how to access it and any other FAQs that they may have.

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:

- Discounted court booking rates
- Discounted season ticket rates
- Reduced activity programme rates
- Varied season ticket options i.e. family or individual etc.
- Free Introduction to tennis sessions
- Free court bookings (could be a specified times)



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 park 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 visit our website now, or book a court today along with a relevant webpage link or phone number.

Implementation

Before your 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 you existing player base with a profile matching those you wish to target.

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 a more expensive product, 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 parks in promoting tennis within their local community through My Tennis Toolkit. The LTA online club management tool, ClubSpark, also gives the ability to build your own website, with various support and templates to keep it simple - completely free to registered venues.

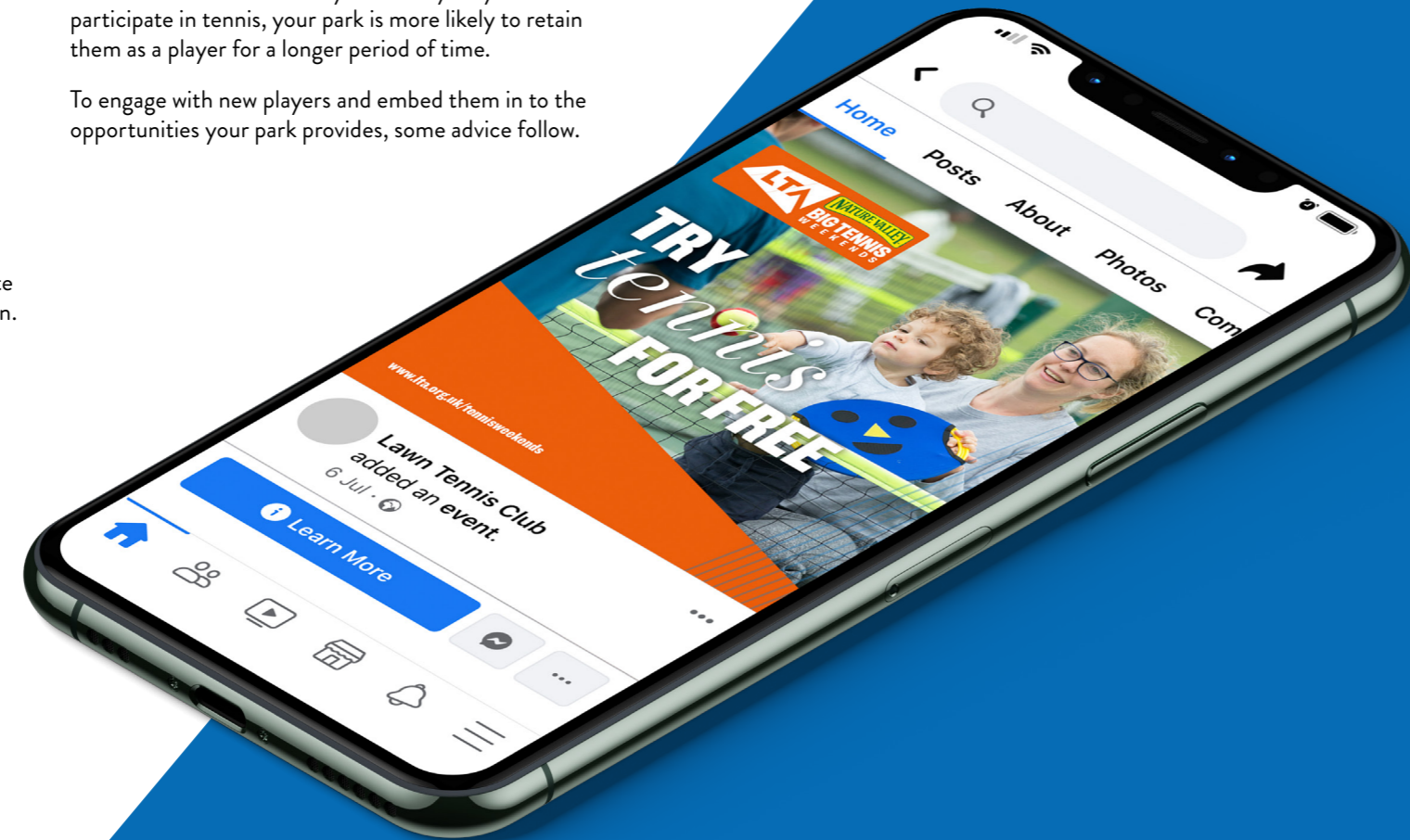
Your local Regional Delivery team will also have examples of successful campaigns from other clubs.

On-going player engagement and retention

As previously explained, parks often attract higher volumes of players who are maybe playing for the first time, who play less frequently, or who perhaps play only in the peak summer months. Often, the parks that have achieved greater court bookings over the course of a year have done so by engaging with, and retaining the customers interest, when it is at its peak - usually immediately after an initial booking is made, or the facility is used for the first time.

By targeting these new players, and providing them information about other ways that they may be able to participate in tennis, your park is more likely to retain them as a player for a longer period of time.

To engage with new players and embed them in to the opportunities your park provides, some advice follow.



Create an experience that exceeds expectations

Providing a level of service that meets and exceeds the expectations of your customer, from the moment they land on your webpage to the moment they leave the court - plus any follow up opportunities you communicate after new participants have played - is key to retention of players. If you are working hard to attract players to the opportunities that you provide, it is worth reviewing the journey that players will experience when using your park facilities.

Clean, functional and safe tennis facilities are a baseline requirement, but there are many other important factors to consider, including:

- Ease of finding out information about the park
- Ease of booking, is this a modern process?
- Is accessing the park easy, have you given help on where to park, or how to access the park using public transport?
- Was accessing the courts easy?
- Was the atmosphere at the park friendly?
- Perceived value for money
- Was the player offered or enticed in to making another booking?
- Were there any ancillary facilities such as toilets or a children's playground that added to the the experience?

Parks can also exceed player expectations by providing opportunities to play that build an identity that reflects the local area and its player's demographics. If players are able to meet others of a similar standard, they are more likely to be retained in the game - solutions such as Local Tennis Leagues and Tennis For Free, or a simple 'Social Tennis' session can help achieve this.

Engage all types of park players

As we have already established, parks tend to attract an extremely broad and varied cross section of participants, who may all have different needs and expectations from the park. Some of these groups may be more vocal than others, but it is important to understand and then balance the needs of all groups. Successful park operators often undertake the following examples of best practice:

- **Talking to existing players** - it sounds too obvious, but it is important to listen to the views of different existing players at your park. Try visiting the parks on different days and at different times to gather the opinions from a representative cross-section of your players. People often like to give their opinions in an informal face to face chat, or could be via feedback groups.
- **Existing Player Surveys** - this is an easy and cost effective method to gain anonymous feedback and opinions from players who may have recently used your facilities. Free online survey services include MailChimp and Survey Monkey.
- **Provide regular updates** - your players will feel more engaged with and have a greater affinity with your parks tennis programme if they know what is happening and the reasons behind those decisions. People will be far more accepting of a decision or action - even if it results in a decreased level of service for them - if they are informed of and understand the reasoning behind such necessary actions.
- **Talk to existing park groups** - engage with other groups that use the park - 'Friends of the Park' for example - to learn about how the park is used, and which segments of the population already use the site.

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, parks need to work harder and smarter to attract new players, and then retain them, making tennis relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable for everyone.

Helping to attract and retain new players is one of the most rewarding activities your park venue can undertake. Not only will you be helping your facility be used more, you will be positively impacting the lives of those you attract, and helping to create a tennis community that can continue to grow, support each other and thrive.

