

# 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.



#### HOW DO YOU COMPARE TO THE COMPETITION?

When you look at the other tennis facilities in the area, how well does your club measure up - what is your place in the market? Successful clubs focus on promoting their unique points of difference to stand out from competitors. Think about your advantages including location, facilities, accessibility, target market, programme of activity and price point (value for money).

Undertaking a 'mystery shopper' experience can provide an independent perspective of how new participants view your club. This could simply be asking a non-tennis playing friend or colleague to act as the mystery shopper and to provide you with their experience and challenges in trying to join the club. Selecting somebody from the same demographic as the audience that you are trying to target would be ideal.



#### HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR MEMBERS?

Knowing the demographics of your current player base will help you understand who your club currently appeals to and how you can use this information to attract new players.

The LTA has worked with a behavioural research company to create profiles of 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 as a club when targeting prospects you might not have considered, or by engaging members with similar characteristics.



# 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

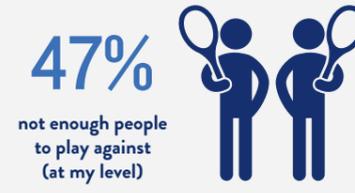
## LIFESTYLE



## MOTIVATIONS



## BARRIERS



## HABITS & PREFERENCES



# TENNIS TROUPERS

## KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



## WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



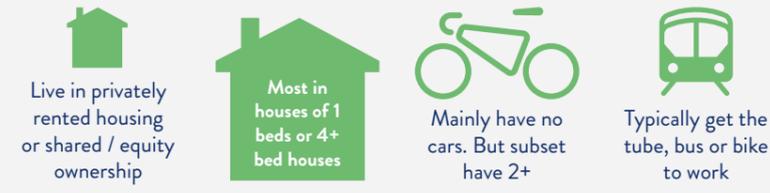
## FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



## 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

Live in privately rented or social renting households

Mostly in terraced housing with more than 5+ people

Most likely not to have a car, if they do work they'd go on the bus, on foot or get driven

Typically pay cash for everything they buy and look for lowest possible prices

## MOTIVATIONS

90% play for fun and to socialise

76% to be outside

## BARRIERS

74% not enough friends to play with

## HABITS & PREFERENCES

They do not enjoy seeing any types of marketing from any specific sectors but do buy after seeing leaflets and text messages

Gadgets are very important and they couldn't live without their mobile and keep up to date with latest tech

Frequency of internet use is lower (skewing towards monthly / less than once a month), but weekly usage is largely consistent with national average

They enjoy reading about health, romance and fantasy

They'd use social media to meet new people or follow a brand typically on channels such as tumblr or viber

Enjoy shopping in New Look, Poundland and ASDA when it comes to food

Enjoy reading Daily Star, The Sun, Daily Mirror, Daily Record

Love to gamble as a hobby

They'd use the internet to purchase computer games and research computer software

# SENIOR STALWARTS

## KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



## WHERE DO THEY PLAY?



## FREQUENCY OF PLAY?



## PLAYING BACKGROUND

See tennis providing a gentle form of exercise, not an intense workout

Strong commitment to playing with same people regularly

Play much more in spring and summer than in winter

## LIFESTYLE

Live in owner occupied or own outright houses

Particularly bungalows or detached houses with 2 people in the house

Most likely to be a couple with no children or an all pensioner household

Usually have 2 or more cars set for a small or large family or sports / 4x4s

## MOTIVATIONS

86% expect to play the same amount next year

37% expect to play less in five years time

## BARRIERS

37% not enough people to play against

## HABITS & PREFERENCES

Personalised mail, newspapers and email are the channels they respond best to

Less likely to have a mobile phone than other groups with very few apps, but would have a tablet

Also less likely to use social media. If they do it's typically Facebook.

Split internet usage, some weekly others not at all. However, weekly usage is a lot lower (less than 2 hours, or from 8-19 hours)

More keen to buy local goods and would pay extra for quality

Waitrose is the most popular food shop amongst this group

Would usually read the Daily Express, Daily Mail or Daily Telegraph and gardening magazines

More likely to do Staycations than go abroad. If they do go further afield it would be on a cruise of package holiday

Slightly less computer literate and they're also concerned with their personal information online

# 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.



