



Australian Bridge Federation

Marketing Tips

Attracting new members

May 2011

There are two key elements to 'growing' club membership. Firstly, the difficult prospect of attracting beginners and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, retaining new players.

The following information on how to attract new members is based on research undertaken with ABF members at the Summer Festival of Bridge in 2011, with Youth Bridge participants during January's Youth Week and also from information gleaned from the ABF Club survey program which was undertaken earlier this year.

A separate **Marketing Tips** flyer will be distributed on the topic of *how to retain members* and this will also be informed by research undertaken to date.

1. Promotional material

From research findings, promotional material should stress all or some of the following in terms of what people will enjoy about bridge:

- ✓ it is mentally challenging
- ✓ provides ongoing learning (*good for mental health*)
- ✓ provides social interaction and fun
- ✓ is an inexpensive hobby
- ✓ offers travel opportunities (*local/State/National/International*)
- ✓ is a hobby which can be enjoyed with your partner.

Consider whether you want to offer:

- first lesson free (*this will let people see whether they will like the game and the club environment without having to pay up-front for the beginner classes*)
- free classes to anyone under 25 years of age (*to encourage youth involvement in the sport*).
- offer classes at ½ price once a year.

2. Event based promotion

Rather than focus solely on promoting beginner classes, consider 'event' based approaches – eg a free bring a friend day (*including family members/work*

colleagues). Reward members who ‘recruit’ participants with free playing vouchers for five sessions or something similar.

This will provide prospective members with an opportunity to experience your club’s culture and better understand what the sport is all about. The focus should be on enjoyment and the mentally challenging aspects of the sport. Stress that anyone who has played cards would be able to learn and enjoy bridge.

Survey results to date reveal that people who are existing members were attracted to bridge by:

- ✓ a friend (37%)
- ✓ a family member (23%)
- ✓ self motivated to learn (6%)
- ✓ University environment (5%)
- ✓ work colleagues (4%)
- ✓ an advertisement for beginner classes (4%).
- ✓ other (11%) – eg bridge column in newspaper/ mentioned in a book they were reading/ heard about it during a conversation etc.

Interestingly, research also reveals that approximately 90% of respondents played cards when younger and that approximately 70% of respondents had parents who played bridge.

3. Advertising beginner classes

There are various ‘market segments’ associated with any advertising campaign. It is suggested that initial focus be on the following segments:

Youth

If your club is interested in conducting specific events for youth, you will need to ensure that your club and the people involved are legally protected by checking first with your State Government on any requirements for a ‘blue card’ or something similar.

For example, in Queensland volunteers and trainee students who work with children and young people must hold a blue card regardless of how often they will come into contact with children or young people, unless an exemption applies (*exemptions could be for Police Officers or registered teachers*).

Strategies for attracting youth include:

- Offer free classes to anyone under 25 years of age (*all beginner classes*)
- Conduct a youth mini-bridge event similar to the May 2011 Brisbane pilot (*details available from your State/Territory secretary or contact marketing@abf.com.au for information package*)
- Conduct free beginner classes during school holidays
- Place flyers at high schools/Universities
- Promote at ‘bare foot bowls’ events at local bowls club (*if applicable*)
- Promote at local poker and chess clubs

For further information and/or assistance on youth bridge issues contact David Thompson, the ABF National Youth Bridge Coordinator at dave@amontay.com.

People who are employed – including pre-retirement phase

- Seek interest from people in Lions and Rotary Clubs and such like community organisations.
- Promote beginner classes at golf and bowls clubs – *these pursuits keep people physically healthy but bridge keeps people mentally healthy – this applies to retired segment also*
- If your area has a large employer, offer to conduct lunch time lessons and sessions at their premises for interested parties (*contributes to health and wellbeing of their employees*) – eg large local/State/Commonwealth Government Department
- Advertise beginner classes in train papers (eg *MX at Central Station, Brisbane*), lifestyle magazines, weekend newspaper magazines, City News type papers distributed to coffee shops etc – liaise with other clubs (*through your State secretary*) to advertise a number of options (*locations/times*) for interested people to choose from. Share the cost.
- Advertise in your local suburban/Region newspaper
- Conduct a weekend demonstration of bridge at local shopping centre
- Place flyers in doctor surgery/dental surgery/ chiropractor premises (*linking bridge to mental health and general wellbeing*).

Retired

- Offer to conduct introductory sessions at local retirement village (*50+ years of age*)
- Place flyers in local caravan parks (*in country areas*) to attract interest amongst the grey army.
- Advertise in any local seniors’ newspaper.

Notes:

- Research indicates that **country** area bridge clubs should establish whether their local newspaper would be interested in publishing weekly results (club surveys *highlighted that this stimulates interest within the community and therefore raises the profile of bridge*).
- Advertising tips have been restricted to those things which can be done by our clubs. Some initiatives (*Regional/ State or National focus*) have been excluded as they will need to be undertaken by either State Associations or by the ABF.