



Australian Bridge Federation

Marketing Tips

**Promoting bridge –
*in your local
community***

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Background

1. ABF Marketing Sub-Committee – Mission Statement

The overall mission for the ABF Marketing Stream is to make a valuable contribution to the wellbeing of the Australian community by promoting membership and involvement with the Australian Bridge Federation Inc (*through its State and Territory affiliates*).

2. What is promotion?

Promotion is about keeping bridge in the minds of the community and helps stimulate demand for the *sport*.

To provide an idea of what promotion is: "... if a circus is coming to town and you paint a sign saying 'Circus Coming to Memorial Park on Saturday', that's **advertising**. If you put the sign on the back of an elephant and walk it into town, that's **promotion**. If the elephant walks through the City Hall's flower bed, that's **publicity**. If you get the local mayor to laugh about it, that's **public relations**." If lots of community members go the circus, you show them the many entertainment booths, explain how much fun they'll have spending money at the booths, answer their questions and ultimately, they spend a lot at the circus, that's **sales**.

3. The ABF's Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

A USP is one of the fundamental pieces of any solid promotional campaign. Simply stated, it is a summary of what makes learning and playing bridge unique and enjoyable for potential players and members. Our USP should be incorporated into all of our promotional efforts.

So, what is the ABF's USP?

Bridge is the most popular mind sport in the world.

Introduction

The Australian Bridge Federation (ABF) is responsible, in partnership with our affiliated clubs, for *brand engagement* with the Australian community. Brand engagement is a term loosely used to describe the process of forming an attachment (*both emotional and rational*) between the Australian community and the ABF. It comprises just one aspect of brand management. What makes the topic complex is that brand engagement is partly created by the ABF but is equally created by the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of those with whom the community interact – *ie our clubs and our members*.

Reputation management involves brand engagement, tracking the ABF's profile within the Australian community and taking any necessary actions to protect the brand in Australia. It can be separated into three different categories:

1. **building** – this type of reputation management has to do with building the reputation of the ABF in Australia. The ABF seeks to build a positive reputation for the world's most popular mind sport and our affiliated clubs can play a very important role in contributing to this outcome.
2. **maintenance** – reputation management designed to keep the ABF's positive image in the public eye is called maintenance. The ABF currently has a low community profile

but we all need to ensure that as the image of bridge grows within Australia that it is promoted in a positive way.

3. recovery – should the ABF should encounter negative coverage then we will need to take timely recovery action to undo negative perceptions. This aspect of reputation management is the responsibility of the ABF.

So that the ABF can effectively carry out its responsibilities in regard to brand engagement and reputation management, it is **imperative** that all promotional activities undertaken by affiliated clubs be reported to the ABF National Marketing Coordinator at marketing@abf.com.au or telephone 0417 920 816 at the earliest possible opportunity.

This will position the ABF to undertake its responsibility in terms of reputation management - ie to monitor, report on and where necessary to take action to undo any negative perceptions which may result from promotional activities undertaken by ABF affiliated clubs.

We need to work together in a collaborative and cooperative way if we are to be successful in promoting membership and involvement with the ABF to the Australian community.

What can you do to promote bridge in your local community?

Research indicates that the average person needs to see or hear of a 'brand' more than five times before it *sticks* in their mind. This means that the more (*positive*) information we can get out to the broader community about bridge and its benefits the higher the possibility of attracting people to our sport.

There are all kinds of ways that you can bring your bridge club to the attention of your local community but positive, free, promotional information is one of the most valuable.

Promotional activities at a local level can contribute to increased membership loyalty, awareness of bridge in the broader community, making your club more attractive to prospective sponsors and hopefully to a higher level uptake of your beginner classes.

So, how can you promote bridge in your local community? Here's two suggestions.

1. Make it Easy for Others to Toot your Horn

Word-of-mouth referrals are the best kind of exposure you can get. Nothing is more powerful than a personal endorsement from a satisfied, enthusiastic bridge player. Bridge clubs need to make it as easy as possible for their club members to tell their friends and family about their club and the sport.

Suggestions for how you can achieve this include:

- a) First, make sure that the club '*experience*' your members have is a positive one and that your beginner classes are effective (ie have an acceptable retention rate – *over 60%*). (See *Marketing Tips for retaining members on the ABF marketing web site at <http://www.abf.com.au/marketing/docs/MarketingTipsRetainMembers.pdf> for suggestions.*)

- b) Equip them with relevant information - regularly promote within your club when beginner classes are about to commence and encourage members to bring a friend/family member along. Make announcements before sessions begin and place information on the club notice board. Include dates/times in your club Newsletter. Perhaps reward members who successfully '*recruit*' beginners with some *free game* vouchers and provide a *first lesson free* incentive for their referrals. (See Attachment A for suggestions.)
- c) Regularly email your club members with information about upcoming events and beginner lessons so that they in turn can email a friend/family member who may be interested. Include a '*downloadable*' voucher for a free lesson. Effective emails should:
- ✓ have the most important content in the first two sentences. Most email readers give you 2-3 sentences, but if they don't find value almost immediately, they will delete it.
 - ✓ have information provided in easy-to-grasp chunks. Use headings, sub-headings, bullet points, short paragraphs and white space.
 - ✓ be personalised.
 - ✓ always include a link back to your club web site (*and test the link before sending*).
 - ✓ be proof-read before sending. Typos undermine your professionalism and credibility.

In the end, the name of the game is repeatedly exposing members of your local community to positive information about our sport.

2. Learn how to *Toot your own Horn*

a) Brochures / flyers

Produce some brochures or flyers to promote your beginner classes /bridge club to members of your local community. See if you can get agreement to place them in local doctors' surgeries, shop windows, RSL Clubs, Bowling Clubs, caravan parks (*for grey nomads*) etc.

(See promotional flyer example created for Queensland's seniors week at <http://www.abf.com.au/marketing/promotion.htm> - if you would like something like this tailored for use by your club contact the ABF National Marketing Coordinator on marketing@abf.com.au .)

b) Community Newspapers

Australia's community newspapers enjoy a special relationship with their readers. Valued for covering local issues, events and news that really matters to their community; they are perceived to be without bias, agenda or sensationalism.

These papers cover local stories, schools, sports and community activities focusing on local people, while the larger daily newspapers face a gloomy prediction of their demise (*falling*

circulation and advertising revenue) because they have lost their focus on local issues. Most of their stories can now be viewed in real-time either on television or on the internet.

A study undertaken in 2010 revealed that locals think their community newspaper is:

- honest 58%
- trustworthy 57%
- friendly or caring 63%
- down to earth 72%
- informative 72%
- relevant 74%.

The papers have strong engagement measures with 79% of readers saying they read most issues or every issue and for an average time spent reading of 28.5 minutes. The study also measured advertising effectiveness. Readers indicated that as a result of reading an ad in their local newspaper, they have:

- picked up new ideas on things to buy 57%
- gone online and looked at a website 51%
- added something to their shopping list 47%
- talked about the ad with friends or family 50%

giving a net score for raised consideration (*using the above four actions*) of 82%.

A net score of 74% was recorded for purchase influence, based on people who did any of the following as a result of reading an ad in their local newspaper:

- bought a product 52%
- went out and got a bargain 41%
- purchased from a store they don't normally go to 48%
- tried a new brand 33%.

Community newspaper journalists mine their community for *little* stories about people and events – eg holes-in-one at golf, births, deaths, marriages, charity events, sporting achievements, significant birthdays, someone who grows a huge pumpkin in their back yard etc. Essentially, they seek to capture a slice of community life. They want to provide their readers with stories that contain drama, conflict and/or human interest etc – especially when they involve ordinary community members.

Editors and reporters are constantly searching for stories. That's what they do. If you want free promotion for your club, you have to capitalize on events that editors and reporters will find newsworthy. However, be mindful that reporters are busy people. They may not have or take the time to discover your story themselves. You have to **blow your own horn** by letting them know about it. Give the newspaper's editor a call, or send the appropriate

reporter a press release. Make sure that you give plenty of lead time if your story is relevant to a particular date or timeframe.

Issues and events which may be of interest to your community newspaper could include:

- a) the fact that you relocated your club is not a story; it is just an event. If you want free publicity, you have to come up with an angle that makes it a story. Capitalize on the event by holding a grand re-opening party and you've got a story that the newspaper may be interested in.
- b) a club member's milestone birthday – ie 90 or 100 years of age. Acknowledge and celebrate such an event at one of your bridge sessions.
- c) the club itself may be celebrating a milestone 'birthday'. Acknowledge and celebrate the event.
- d) a specific social event at your club. This may cover events such as Melbourne Cup, Christmas, Chinese New Year, bring a friend day etc.
- e) a specific charity event at your club. This may include participation in the ABF's yearly 'Bridge for Brains' campaign or an event for a local charity.
- f) a specific bridge event – a red or gold point competition, a teams of three event, a novice event etc.
- g) events undertaken by your club to participate in Seniors' week (*not necessarily held in the club premises but rather in a shopping centre, retirement centre etc*).
- h) presentation of certificates/rewards to your volunteers during the International Volunteers' Week or an Volunteers' Day in Australia.
- i) a 'graduation' party held for people who have completed their beginner classes.

Also, consider whether it would be beneficial to offer the staff of your local community newspaper/s free bridge lessons so that they are familiar with our sport and therefore more likely to promote it! Involve them in your club's activities. Check on whether it would be possible to have your club's results published each week (*this also raises the profile of bridge within your local community*).

Notes:

- It would be useful to network with other bridge clubs in your area if they share 'coverage' with a community newspaper. Let the paper know how many members your combined clubs represent and perhaps alternate story suggestions. Work together to raise the profile of bridge within your community! Act local, think global!
- Encourage your members to write to their community newspaper requesting coverage for bridge if you are not successful in gaining coverage for events.
- Give a lot of consideration before making any request for a regular bridge column in a community newspaper. Whilst this is an excellent way of promoting bridge it also requires a **huge** time commitment by the person providing the information.

Key Messages

Key messages are the core ‘issues’ you want your local community members to hear and remember. They allow you to control communications and build a relationship with your community.

Before contacting your community newspaper journalist or editor, work out what key messages you really need to get across about bridge. These are what you will want to say and get across to the newspaper – irrespective of whether they ask you specifically about the issue/s or not!

It is best not to have too many key messages – limit them to no more than seven. Consider developing a brochure or handout to provide to the journalist to ensure that they have the necessary information about bridge.

Your message must be truthful and honest. If you are claiming you have the friendliest sporting club in the area make sure that reflects reality. If it does not, people who sign up for beginner classes (*or to transfer their membership from another bridge club*) and encounter an unfriendly environment are not only unlikely to return to your club but they are likely to communicate their disappointment to their friends and family.

This will quickly spread a negative brand association with bridge not only within your community but more broadly as well.

To assist in deciding on your key messages some suggestions are provided below.

- i. Firstly, there’s our Unique Selling Proposition (USP) which should be included, by all ABF affiliated clubs, in **all** promotional material around Australia.

“Bridge is the most popular mind sport in the world.”

- ii. From research undertaken by the ABF in January 2011, the aspects of bridge which are the major *selling* points to attract people to the sport include:
 - it is mentally challenging
 - it’s a great retirement hobby (*and something you can share with your life partner*)
 - it provides extensive opportunities to play competitively (*for those who are interested*)
 - it offers lots of social interaction with people of all ages and from all walks of life
 - it can be played on-line as well as in a club
 - it is inexpensive
 - it can be enjoyed anywhere in the world (*including on cruise ships!!*); *and*
 - it is lots of fun!!!
- iii. For mature members of your community bridge is a great way to improve:

- ✓ *logical thinking skills*
- ✓ *memory*
- ✓ *teamwork*
- ✓ *social skills*
- ✓ *concentration*
- ✓ *critical thinking ability*
- ✓ *communication skills; and*
- ✓ *problem-solving ability.*

Note: The medical profession is only now coming to realise that, as people are tending to live longer, remaining mentally fit may be as important as maintaining levels of physical fitness. More and more often chess, bridge, backgammon and crossword puzzles are being cited as excellent activities for keeping the brain exercised and stalling the onset of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

- iv. If you are promoting a youth event for school age children (*eg vacation period lessons/ mini bridge*) stress that bridge is a game full of strategy and tactics. (You will need to convince parents that the sport is extremely advantageous for their children.) According to the School bridge League it is part science, part math, part logic, part reason. Bridge embodies cooperation, logic, problem-solving and has even been linked to higher test scores among children.

Bridge is also a partnership game. Trust, communication and patience are the essential attributes of winning at bridge. Bridge will develop:

- mathematical applications – bridge is a game of mathematics. The game is a vehicle for introducing concepts such as percentages, data analysis, reasoning and proof, assessing value and applying this assessment to problem-solving, and practicing inferential reasoning skills.
- numbers and operations – students incorporate multiple evaluation methods to assess the value of their hand as well as their partner's and how to weigh these values.
- data analysis and probability – students confront situations in each hand (game) which require them to assess the probability of certain outcomes and make decisions accordingly.
- algebra – players reason from the communication skills learned in the bidding (auction), the value of their hand (a), plus the value of their partner's hand (b), must equal a specific total (c).
- problem solving – each hand (game) amounts to a set of problems that must be evaluated and re-evaluated in the span of a few minutes.
- reasoning and proof – based upon communication skills learned during the teaching process, students learn that they can achieve a stated goal (*contract*), which they set out to prove. Flaws in the proof result in some adjustments.
- communication – students are taught the 'language' of bridge which they use to communicate the value of cards, formulate a goal (*contract*) and set out to prove.

- v. Bridge is the most popular card game in the world with over 100 countries as members of the World Bridge Federation. The estimated number of bridge players world-wide exceeds 60 million. The Australian Bridge Federation has over 34,000 members and approximately 350 affiliated clubs around Australia. It is estimated that five times this number play bridge in Australia – *this includes on-line players, social players, non-affiliated club members etc.*
- vi. The appeal of bridge is that it is an easy game to learn, a hard game to master and you don't have to be an expert to enjoy it!
- vii. The XXXXXXXXXXXX Bridge Club is committed to providing the best possible playing environment where its members treat each other with respect and dignity at all times.

Remember, the more times our sport is mentioned in community newspapers the better, as long as the free publicity is positive.

But – to get this kind of publicity your club has to be newsworthy and you have to ***toot your own horn!***

MEMBERSHIP REWARD – FREE BRIDGE SESSION

This voucher entitles the holder to 1 free game of bridge at a regular bridge session.



Signed

President

FIRST LESSON FREE



This voucher is for one free bridge lesson.

Where:

When: