Marketing Plans in Sports

Just as in every business, the marketing department of a sports team must create a plan to help them accomplish what they want to accomplish. This plan is called a marketing plan and it helps an organization outline their goals and strategies throughout the season. While each marketing plan can be a little different, most plans have the following elements.

- Introduction
- Data and analysis
- Goals and objectives
- Target markets
- Marketing strategy
- Implantation
- Evaluation
- Summary

In order to create the plan, members of the team’s front office will often brainstorm together and take their creative new ideas to solve problems.

When creating a marketing plan it is important to have an introduction to provide a basis for understanding the plan. It typically includes with the organization’s mission and background information on their products and customers. This information allows the reader to see what the organization’s previous marketing efforts have been and where they are going.

The data and analysis section is an extremely important section because the data will show how internal and external environmental factors interact with the organization and how they can use that information to market their product better. The internal environment consists of influencers inside the organization, such as the mission and vision, as well as the culture of the organization and their resources. Sports marketers must take these factors in to account when creating their marketing plans to ensure their plan will align with the organization. External factors may consist of the economy, social and cultural norms and competition. Although sports markets have no control over any of these factors, they still must be aware of them and how they will affect their organization. After identifying these factors, marketers will often choose to conduct a SWOT analysis, or an analysis that shows the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of their organization. This analysis can help identify any issues they may have and allow them to capitalize on their advantages.

The goals and objectives section is equally important because it provides the direction for the marketing department. The large goals are broken down into objectives which represent specific performance targets needed to achieve each goal. These objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely. If they follow all five characteristics, their objectives should be easily measurable and allow for an analysis of if the goal is achievable.

The next step is to identify your target markets. In order to decide if you want to target a certain market or not, a detailed analysis of it should be done, in which information such as market size, market trends, and purchase patterns are studied. After analyzing the markets, the marketer will then pick a market they want to target. A target market is a market the organization feels they will have the most success pursuing.
The marketing strategy section marketers discuss how to execute their strategies. Here is where most of the brainstorming ideas are able to be used as marketers come up with ways to creatively market their team. This section contains the promotion, price, place and product decisions that will be used. Promotions relate to communication with their target markets. In sports, promotions typically tend to be giveaways or theme nights. Price decisions involves deciding how much will be charged to spectators or sponsors. On the spectator side, things like ticket prices, merchandise prices and concession prices are discussed, while on the sponsor side, things like ad placement prices and signage prices are discussed. Place decisions are where marketers determine how they will get their product to the product. Dealing with things like limited parking and venue/stadium conflicts are detailed in this section. Finally, product decisions are related to what the organization offers. In sports, marketers have no control over how the team performs, but they can influence how fans feel about the team though benefits and extra amenities at the game.

Not only do sports marketers have to identify what strategies and tactics are necessary, they also must identify how they are going to implement these tactics, which all comes in the implementation section. An implementation plan should include each task necessary to implement the tactic, a person or many people in charge of it and a timeframe for each task. This will ensure that tasks are done efficiently and successfully and lead to happy fans and a happy organization.

As phases of the marketing plan are completed, as well as at the end of the year, the marketers must evaluate the success of their plan by comparing the results against their original objectives. Based off of these results, they are able to determine what went well and what did not, and act accordingly. This phase is important because you want to know if your plan was a success or not, along with what you will need to change for the next year.

The final section in a marketing plan is the marketing plan summary. This section briefly sums up the key elements of the plan and reminds the reader of the general goals and objectives along with the activities necessary to reach those goals and objectives.

While putting together a marketing plan will take some time, it is an extremely important component of marketing in sports. It helps keep the marketing team on track and gives them goals to work towards with an efficient method of doing so.