Pittsburgh Pirates
2018 Marketing Plan

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Pittsburgh Pirates Baseball Marketing Plan

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I. Executive Summary

Under the direction of Chairman of the Board Bob Nutting, the Pittsburgh Pirates organization's mission is to strive for excellence in every aspect of the organization, including the way the organization interacts with the community, its business partners and its fans.

In the 2017 season, our attendance ranked 25th out of 30 for the entire MLB. We drew 1.9 million people to the ballpark, which is approximately 23,700 a game. The Pirates finished the season with a 75-87 record, fourth in the NL Central. This past offseason saw the trading of two of the franchise’s biggest names, Gerrit Cole and Andrew McCutchen. These trades were not well-received by fans, who believed that the ownership did not value winning. This season, we need to come up with a plan to increase attendance and regain our fan’s loyalty.

Our goal is to increase attendance by 5%. In order to do so, we will need to be innovative in our sales efforts. Pittsburgh is a smaller market, so we must target local fans and visitors to sell single game tickets. We will also target area groups in an effort to sell more group tickets. We also need to come up with more benefits to attract and retain season ticket holders.

Part of our mission is to create a fun environment for fans. We will do so by creating new promotions pregame, in game, and postgame. We will evaluate our current practices and make changes as we see necessary to attract more fans. Fans love receiving free items, so we will create lots of giveaways to increase our attendance.

In order to draw people into the ballpark, we need to advertise. We will continue to advertise using our current channels, and we would like to create a stronger social media presence that allows fans to interact with us more. Advertising our games is an important part of increasing our attendance, so we will do everything we can to promote our games on as many mediums we can.

Merchandise plays a large role in promoting our brand. The more people that wear our logo, the more people that will see it, and in return, might attend a game. We are looking to increase our merchandise sales by targeting specific groups of people and by utilizing star power.

Maintaining a good public image is an extremely important aspect of our mission. We are always looking to improve our image and will do so by continuing Neal Huntington’s radio show. Social media plays a large role in how players are viewed and we will ensure that all players maintain a clean public image, and help them fix their image if something goes wrong.

Part of our mission is to have a strong relationship with the surrounding community. Therefore, we are looking to give back to the community and maintain our image as a charitable organization. We will do so by promoting youth baseball, partnering with MLB’s service partners, and sending our players to participate in charitable events, such as visiting local hospitals.
II. Sales

In the area of sales, we would like to increase our attendance by 5%. Attendance last year was 1.9 million, so we would like to draw an additional 95,000 people this season. This would be an average of a little over 1,000 people a game.

In order to do draw this 5%, we will increase ticket sales in all types of tickets. First, season tickets. We want to increase our full-season season ticket holder number by 1%. We realize that due to offseason trades, many fans will not be renewing their tickets. However, we will try to retain these fans along with increase our season tickets by a small number.

We will increase our ticket sales by offering the following ticket options and targeting specific groups for each type of ticket.

I. Season tickets
   a. We will maintain our current season ticket packages of full season, half season and 20-game plans.
      i. Fans have four options in our 20-game plan. They can choose a Saturday, Sunday or two different weekday options.
      ii. Half season plans will give the fan tickets to 41 of our home games, and they will have the option of choosing either weekend or weekday games.
      iii. Our full season plan will consist of tickets to all 81 games.
   b. Along with tickets to the game, season ticket holders will also receive exclusive benefits. All season ticket holders will receive a parking pass to each game, priority access to playoff tickets, ability to purchase additional tickets at the season ticket holder rate, early access to PNC Park on Game Days, exclusive newsletter, special pricing for PNC Park events (tours, facility rentals, concerts), discounted food and merchandise at the ballpark, and exclusive experiences, such as player meet and greets.
   c. We will offer seat upgrades to current season ticket holders to show our appreciation for their loyalty.
   d. We will target Penguins, Steelers and Pitt Football and Basketball season ticket holders to purchase one of our plans.
   e. We will also offer companies the opportunity to become one of our sponsors if they purchase full season tickets. This gives us the best opportunity to sell our club and luxury suite seats.

II. Group Sales
   a. If fans purchase 15 or more tickets together, they are considered group tickets
   b. Currently, there is a discount of about 10-15% on each ticket, depending on the seats. We would like to implement a plan that gives a larger discount for the more tickets bought.
      i. 15-49 tickets- get a 10% discount per seat
      ii. 50-100 tickets- get a 20% discount per seat
   c. We will target businesses, schools, clubs, and sports leagues in the tristate area through mailings, meetings and phone calls.
III. Individual Game
   a. We will keep the dynamic pricing method.
   b. We will partner with area hotels, restaurants, bars, and attractions to create packages that will attract tourists. Packages could include tickets to a game, discounts on hotel stays and dining, and admission to a museum.
   c. We will also make fans aware of our various promotions, theme nights, and giveaways that will take place throughout the season. We will target these promotions to fans who are not season ticket holders and get them to buy tickets to a game with a promotion that appeals to them.
   d. Our goal is also to target fans who game to one game last year and try to get them to come to more than one game this season

III. Promotions

Promotions are an essential aspect of a game. Promotions create a fun environment for fans, turning a game into an event. It is essential to us that our fans have fun at our games because it will make them want to come back to another game. Promotions can also get people to come to a game because they like the giveaway, or want to experience a postgame event, such as fireworks or a concert.

I. Theme Night
   a. Theme Nights are fun promotions in which we focus on different groups of people who do not usually attend games to attend. Our theme nights range from small, such as pup nights, to large scale, such as our Star Wars night.
      i. Pup Nights- We will keep the nights where fans can bring their dogs to the ballpark.
      ii. College Nights- We will give discounted rates to students and alumni of local colleges along with a hat that is in their school’s colors. Our goal this season is to also include smaller schools in the area, such as Carlow, Point Park and LaRoche.
      iii. Nurses Night- Pittsburgh has a very large concentration of hospitals, so we will have a night where nurses can take a night off and attend a game with their families. Nurses will receive a discounted ticket, along with a free Pirates scrub top.
      iv. Star Wars Night- We have hosted a Star Wars night for the last couple of years, and fans love it. They are encouraged to dress as their favorite character and we have a costume contest.
      v. Game of Thrones Night- One of the most popular shows on TV right now is Game of Thrones. We will create a night where everything is Game of Thrones themed, such as the big screen, our warm up jerseys, and the food.
II. Ticket promotions
   a. In order to get more fans into the ballpark, we will offer a variety of discounts and opportunities for free or discounted tickets.
      i. Buc Nights- Each month, a select weekday game will be a Buc Night. During these games, fans can get tickets in the Upper Grandstand for $1. Hot dogs and small soft drinks will also be available for $1.
      ii. Ticket lottery- Much like the Broadway version, we will offer a lottery where fans can enter an online lottery to win $10 tickets to the game. These seats will be Lower Infield Box seats and there will be 21 tickets available each game, in honor of Roberto Clemente.
      iii. Social Media tickets- We want our fans to interact with us on social media, and one way to do this is by posting the location of the Pirate Parrot on Snapchat, and the first 10 fans that find it will win a pair of tickets to that night’s game. This will encourage social media interaction along with get more people into the ballpark, especially on weekday games.
      iv. Military/First Responder nights- Every Thursday, we will offer members of the military and first responders free tickets for a game. They will also all be recognized in a pregame ceremony.

III. Pregame Promotions
   a. Before games, we will provide fans with an experience or a giveaway. By offering giveaways, we hope that boosts attendance and enhances the fan’s game day experience.
      i. Federal Street Block Party- We will continue having bands and family friendly events on Federal Street before games, especially weekend games.
      ii. Free Shirt Fridays- As we have done in previous seasons, every Friday we will give away a different free shirt to the first 20,000 fans that come through the gates. The shirts will be sponsored by one of our many corporate sponsors.
      iii. Kids Day Giveaways- Every Sunday is Kids Day at PNC Park, so we want to encourage families to attend games by offering exclusive giveaways to kids, such as lunch boxes, backpacks and gloves.
      iv. General Giveaways- We will choose certain games, usually weekday games, to give away various items to the first 20,000 fans in the gate. Some items include bobbleheads, replica jerseys, and gloves.

IV. In Game Promotions
   a. It is important to keep fans engaged in the game and having fun at the ballpark. Our in game promotions are engaged to keep fans attentive and create a fun atmosphere.
      i. T-shirt toss- Members of our game day staff will toss t-shirts to the loudest fans in the crowd.
ii. Pierogi race- A fan favorite, pierogies will race around the outfield wall, and fans always pick their favorite to win. The pierogi race is also great for one of our sponsors, Mrs. T’s Pierogies, to get their brand known.

iii. Dance cam- the cameras will scan the stadium for fans who are dancing, and pick two people. Fans will cheer for whichever one they think is best, and the winner will receive a Pirates prize package.

iv. Corporate Sponsor giveaways- We have numerous corporate sponsors, and giveaways during the game are one way we are able to get their brand out there. Chick Fil A’s Spot the Cow is one promotion we do that brings attention to Chick Fil A. Sponsors such as Denny’s, Sunoco, and McDonald’s.

V. Postgame Promotions
   a. We want to make our games an event, and one way we can achieve this is by offering postgame promotions. Not only do these promotions encourage fans to stay in the park, they also help boost ticket sales because fans want to experience the event after the game.
      i. Concerts- Concerts are always a big hit, and we want to get big name artists to perform.
      ii. Fireworks- Fireworks are a fan favorite in Pittsburgh. Fans love seeing the fireworks with the skyline of Pittsburgh in the background.
      iii. Movies- After a few games, we will show a movie on the big screen. We would like to show movies that were shot in Pittsburgh.

IV. Advertising

In order for fans to know about our games and promotions, we need to advertise. We will do so through a variety of mediums.

I. Billboards
   a. We will take out ads on print billboards throughout the county. They will not advertise specific games, but they will advertise our team in general.
   b. We will also run ads on digital billboards. Those can be changed much easier, so we will advertise an upcoming homestand before said homestand.
   c. The billboards we choose will be on major roads and in areas that are close enough that fans will be able to attend the games. Target counties include: Allegheny, Westmoreland, Washington, Fayette, Butler, Clarion, Beaver, Lawrence, Armstrong, Mercer, Greene and Somerset.

II. Radio
   a. All of our games are broadcast on 93.7 The Fan. During each game, we will advertise the next game, including what promotions we have happening, who will be pitching, and why that game is important.
III. Social Media
   a. Advertising our games on social media is extremely important to draw fans to the ballpark.
   b. Facebook
      i. Our Facebook page currently has over 1.2 million likes.
      ii. We will promote our upcoming games by creating engaging posts with all of the game day information, a link to buy tickets, and the phone number of our ticket office.
      iii. Facebook is now primarily used by middle aged adults and older. We will keep our posts simple and informative to best reach this demographic.
   c. Instagram
      i. We currently have over 550,000 followers on Instagram.
      ii. We will promote our upcoming games on Instagram by posting a picture of the pitcher for that game with their stats. We will create fun and creative captions that engage our followers and make them want to purchase tickets. We will also include a link to our ticket site on the post.
   d. Snapchat
      i. Snapchat is a pretty new form of social media that organizations are still learning how to use.
      ii. We will use Snapchat’s new feature of linking a webpage by posting a snap of a player’s gameday routine with the link to the ticket site.
      iii. We can also post a picture of that night’s giveaway to try and gain excitement about it.
   e. Twitter
      i. We currently have over 700,000 followers on Twitter.
      ii. We will promote our upcoming games by tweeting who we are playing against, the key matchups, any promotions and a link to buy tickets.
      iii. Our target audience on Twitter are students and young adults.
V. Merchandising

I. Goals and Challenges

a. Since the Pirates traded Gerrit Cole and Andrew McCutchen, we are lacking a star player whose jersey we can promote. In 2016, McCutchen’s jersey was the 14th most sold jersey in the MLB. However, in 2017, no one from the Pirates made it on the top 20 jersey sales of the year. Because we lack the big name, we need to make up for this elsewhere.

b. We need to increase our sales of other merchandise with just the Pirates logo on it, such as sweatshirts, polos and t-shirts.

c. We can sell our merchandise in the ballpark, online, through sporting goods stores such as Dick’s Sporting Goods, and through satellite stores in malls and outlets.

d. We will focus primarily on selling online. Because it is online, we have the ability to reach fans worldwide. We will offer the most amount of merchandise online, and have a larger variety of sizes and styles to choose from than we will in-store.

e. We would like to target our merchandise towards kids and young adults. We would like to keep building our fanbase, and by having young children wear our logo, they are more likely to come to games.

f. Midway through the season, we will evaluate who is performing the best or if someone makes the All-Star Game, we will focus on promoting their jersey.

g. In order to increase our merchandise sales, we will offer discounts throughout the year.

   i. We will mail out coupons around Christmas in order to get people to buy their loved ones Pirates gear as gifts.

   ii. We will also choose a day just before Opening Day where the entire Pirates Clubhouse store at PNC Park is 20% off. This will encourage fans to come to the store, which is in PNC Park, and maybe want to attend a game that season.

   iii. If have bought a certain number of tickets from us, we will send them coupons throughout the season for discounts on certain products, such as jerseys and hats.
VI. Public Relations

Public Relations deals with how the team is viewed. Our PR team is tasked with generating positive publicity surrounding our games, athletes and team news. Currently, our image is a bit tarnished. Fans believe that our ownership does not want to win and is not doing anything to improve our chances of a World Series title. This season, we hope to regain the trust of our fans and will do so using a variety of mediums.

I. Mission Statement
   a. Pittsburgh Pirates organization’s mission is to strive for excellence in every aspect of the organization, including the way the organization interacts with the community, its business partners and its fans.

II. Social Media
   a. Social Media is the fastest growing form of communication and we have a large fanbase who follow us on our social media accounts.
   b. We will use social media to interact with fans. Fans will be able to see glimpses into player’s pregame and postgame routines on Snapchat, chat with a player during a Twitter Q&A session, and view live postgame conferences on Facebook Live.
   c. Not only are the team’s social media accounts essential for a positive image, so are the players’ personal accounts. We will do our best to make sure they do not post anything that reflects badly on them or the organization.

III. General PR
   a. One way to maintain a good image is by having members of our team speak to the media.
   b. Neal Huntington currently has a radio show on 93.7 The Fan. On his show, he discusses what is happening in the industry and in the organization. By discussing these issues on air, we are able to control how the information gets out and how we want to spin certain issues.

VII. Community Relations

Community Relations is one area that the Pirates have always excelled at. We have a great relationship with the Pittsburgh Community and have always strived to be active members. In 2006, we formed Pirates Charities, which is the philanthropic arm of the Pirates.

I. Pirates Charities Mission Statement
   a. Pirates Charities is committed to strengthening the community by supporting organizations and programs aimed at improving the lives of children and adults in the greater Pittsburgh region. Pirates Charities places a special emphasis on supporting youth programs focused on health, fitness, and education by developing partnerships with those who share in our mission.
II. Current Initiatives- Pirates Charities support numerous causes, and its major projects and programs are listed below.
   a. Miracle League- provides support to children and adults with special needs to play baseball by providing fields and equipment.
   c. Education Days- during a day game in May, kids from over 125 local schools come to the ballpark for a game where they participate in an educational scavenger hunt and receive a workbook to complete with statistics and information from the game.
   d. 5K/10K- each year Pirates Charites support a run that raises money for Charites throughout Pittsburgh.
   e. Game Day 50/50- during all home games, fans can purchase a 50/50 ticket. The money raised through the 50/50 goes to support the projects and programs of Pirates Charities.

III. Proposed Initiatives- The Pirates have a very strong presence in the Pittsburgh community, but we can always improve or add new initiatives.
   a. Earth Day Clean Up- Once a year, around Earth Day, the team could sponsor a program where members of the community join members of the team to help clean up Pittsburgh. This would raise awareness about keeping the earth litter-free along with allow fans to interact with some current or former players.
   b. Hospital Visits- One initiative that could be publicized more is the team’s visits to local hospitals. A few times a year, the team should visit local hospitals- particularly Children’s Hospital and take them various Pirates merchandise. Not only would this cheer up the patients, it would also be very good public relations for the team.