

Best Practices Series

Compiled by Members of the AKC Delegate Companion Events Committee

Issue: Enhancing Show/Trial Revenues.

Clubs have many, often increasing Show/Trial Expenses, while being mindful of containing Entry Fees

Response: The Sale of Catalog Advertising

Submitted By James M Ashton, Obedience Training Club of Rhode Island

One need not be a Marketing Expert to be successful in selling Catalog Advertising. To begin, establish rates based upon ad size and location (quarter page, half page, full page, inside front cover, back page, inside back cover).

Establish a date by which responses must be returned in order to allow time to organize and print them.

Next, if you have had ads in the past, identify your previous advertisers, and contact them to see if they would like to renew for this event, and perhaps increase the size or location of their ad.

Solicit new advertisers by starting with businesses in your geographical area. Explain what your Club does, and its contributions to the Community. Have a Club Business Card, Brochure, and a copy of last year's catalog to leave with them. Describe your event, the customers who will receive the Catalog, as well as the Exhibitors listed within, and where they are from.

Call on Canine-related venues, (Kennels, Groomers, Doggy Day Care providers, Veterinarians, Pet Stores, Training Facilities, Pet Cemeteries, etc.) However, don't limit yourself! Also call upon those businesses that you and your Club frequent.....Trophy Suppliers, Dry Cleaners, Convenience Stores. Using your personal commercial contacts will be helpful, as they build upon your established relationships.

If you involve additional Club Members, coordinate which areas and businesses each member will solicit, to avoid duplicating contacts.

Finally, Follow-up! After the event, send a copy of the Catalog to each Advertiser, including a personal note of appreciation.

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Issue: Many Clubs are experiencing an Aging Membership

Many Clubs feel that they are not regularly attracting new, younger members

Response: Certain Activities may appeal to a younger audience of potential Members

Submitted by Dr. Joyce A Dandridge, Capital Dog Training Club of Washington, DC, Inc.

Regular communication with the Club Membership about a variety of dog related activities helps to keep an interest in the Club. A regular Newsletter helps to achieve this goal. Welcoming Parties for new members, at which they are warmly greeted by long term members as well as programs which Demo/Showcase all of the Training opportunities offered by the Club, such as Flyball, Freestyle, Rally, Obedience and Agility.

Additional activities to consider are:

- * Discounts offered to Juniors taking Classes
- * Actively facilitate 4H Groups, and youth organization participation
- * Class offerings for Juniors at Trial Events
- * Allow Junior Members to participate in Classes with Adult Mentors
- * Visit Schools, Libraries with Information and Demos
- * Provide Demos in Public Parks, at Parades, and other such Community Events
- * Visit Hospitals, Schools, and Nursing Homes
- * Use Social Media
- * Include Fun Classes, and Trick Classes
- * Ask New Members what they hope to achieve from the Club
- * Keep in mind that there may be other ways to do things, and younger Members may have some innovative ideas.
- * Offer some Perks, such as reduced fees for Instructors, or free attendance at Seminars
- * Assign jobs to new Members, and then not micro-manage

- * Focus on Member's strengths. Career skills might translate into Club jobs, such as Treasurer, Website maintenance, or Newsletter design
- * Advertise Club activities at Veterinarian Offices, Family Pet Fairs, and Expos
- * Offer Vouchers giving a discount to Club Volunteers
- * Establish a Mentoring Program, whereby a long term Member mentors a newbie for a year
- * Open some slots at Seminars to non-members
- * Broaden the content of meetings and newsletters to involve more people
- * Open the Training Facility on Sunday
- * Conduct an Annual Open House
- * Offer College Scholarships to students in a field pertaining to Animal Care

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Issue: People now obtain information through Websites, Facebook and other Social Media

Websites have been around for over 20 years now, making Yellow Page advertising obsolete. Additionally, many Not-For-Profit Training Clubs are in direct competition with For-Profit Training Businesses.

Response: Develop a Club Website

Submitted By Maureen R Setter, Cleveland All-Breed Training Club, Inc.

If your Club does not already have a website, there are several steps to be considered: Domain Name, Website Content, Website Host, and Website Builder. Should your Club decide to have a professional build your website, research all of the costs involved, especially when making changes.

Domain Name

Selecting your Domain Name requires a lot of thought. Google your proposed name to see if any other business/organization is already using that or a similar one. Once selected, you need to register your Domain Name. There are domain registering services that will charge a fee; registration can be for one or multiple years. Some web hosting sites will register your domain name for you. Be sure to understand your options for obtaining, registering, and paying for your Domain Name. Most non-profit groups use the TLD designation “.org”. TLD stands for Top Level Domain. Some of the free web hosts will use their name as the TLD.

Website Content

Gather the types of Club Information you would like to see on your website. Will your site be used mainly to promote your Club's Shows/Trials, Training Classes, Membership Meetings, and Community Events? Will you also have a Members Only Page for Club/Board Minutes and Treasurer Reports? Will you want the capacity for online Class registration, PayPal usage, and/or allow website visitors to e-mail you directly? Develop a Club Committee comprised of those Members who will be responsible for your website content, and subsequent updates. Periodically, check to see that any links are in working order.

Website Host

Search the web and look at various websites - especially for Dog Clubs that are similar to yours. Check at the bottom of their home page, and see if there is something like "Powered by Breederoo", or "Powered by Weebly".

If you find a Website that you like, e-mail the webmaster, and ask if they are happy with their website. Ask if it was easy to create; also ask about the ease of maintaining and updating. If asked, they may also tell you the cost. Google the web hosting service, and check out their website for additional information. Go to www.webhostingfreereviews.com for free reviews on web hosting sites. Check out the free web hosting sites. Some are VERY good, but others get "paid" by banners and pop-up ads on your website. You have no control over these ads, and some might not be to your liking. Some free websites make it difficult to transfer to another web hosting site...so you would have to start all over again in building your website. Also, they might not offer much technical support. Some might also own your domain name, so you would have to develop another name.

Website Builder

Since most of us are not website designers, or experienced in using HTML code, choosing a website builder is very important. Many website hosts supply a website builder for free, some even will install the builder for you. Some builders are easier to use than others, some have quite a few templates to choose from, and some provide PayPal capability. Some of the website builders can even get you up and running in several hours....using their drag n drop website builders. Again, do your homework when selecting a website builder

Conclusion

Determine how much time and money your Club has to implement and maintain a website. Assuming limited budgets, and that most Club members are not versed in HTML, there are definitely web hosting sites that would be a good fit for your Club. Exercise due diligence in researching a website host, selecting a domain name, and a website builder. Talk to friends about their Club's website, its ease of use, cost, and maintainability. Implement your website in stages. Upon completion, promote your Club's website by announcing it to all of your friends via Facebook, and your e-mail lists.

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Issue: Recruitment of New Club Members; Invigorating Current Members

In some Clubs, new Members are few and far between. Often, too, many current members are rather inactive.....the same few seem to do all of the work

Response: Develop strategies to re-invigorate Club Membership

Submitted By Betty M Winthers, Olympic Kennel Club

* Look for non-members who are actively showing in Companion Event activities and ask them to consider Club Membership; invite them to a meeting

*Have meetings at Dog Shows

*Offer Seminars that will appeal to your target audience

*Offer Matches, Run throughs, and Show-N-Go's

*Encourage current members to recruit their friends

*Encourage current members to be open, friendly and welcoming to potential new members. Present a positive image of the Club. Divide up tasks so that inclusivity is encouraged, and the same few people aren't overwhelmed with the bulk of the work.

*Develop a Mentoring Program to help new Members get acquainted with the Club, its Members, and its Mission

* Personal contact and outreach are more effective than blanket announcements in Newsletters

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Issue: Quality Assurance

Clubs may sponsor several events in a year: Shows, Trials, Matches, Show-N-Go's, Responsible Dog Owner Days, etc. How do we know if we are being effective in meeting the participants' needs? Achieving the goals of our Mission Statement?

Response: Post-Event Online Surveys

Submitted by Barbara L Mann, Dayton DogTraining Club, Inc.

OK...So now you are done - right? Your event is over, the clean-up and paperwork are completed. You have met with your Trial Committee and reported to the Board. It's time to sit back and relax!

Hold on just a minute! Now is the perfect time to survey the participants in your event and get feedback on what you did right, and what could use some improvement. Most of us are too busy on the days of the events to get much feedback except in informal ways, and so are the participants.

There is a lot of information that can be gathered from the participants and used to improve future events. The best time to get that information is very soon after the event, preferably within a week. If you wait too long, both memory and interest begin to fade. The ready availability of free and easy to use online survey applications makes getting this information relatively painless. All you need is a list of e-mail addresses, online survey software, and a few ideas about what sorts of information would be of use to you.

There are a few basic principles of survey design that can be helpful. First, keep the survey as short as possible, while still getting at the information that you want. While it is tempting to ask about everything at the Trial, a questionnaire that is too lengthy will most likely be ignored by many people.

A related principle is simplicity. Often, a Yes or No question will provide just as valid information as one that asks participants to “rate” some feature. Suppose you want to evaluate how welcome the participants felt at the event. One way to do this is to ask:

Did you feel welcome at the event? YES NO

Another way is to say:

Please rate how welcome you felt at the event, from 1 = not at all, to 5 = very welcome.

The first question is much simpler, and provides you with the information you need, especially if you follow it with a comments question about why they didn’t feel welcome if the answer was NO.

Try to avoid asking questions that give the participants the suspicion that they might be identifiable. People are likely to answer more honestly, if they feel comfortable about their anonymity .

Try your questionnaire out on some Club members, to be sure that your questions are clear, before sending it out to the actual participants.

Finally, focus on the things that you can actually change. Instead of the weather, ask about the dates. If you are already committed to the site, ask about the ring and crating configuration. Instead of asking about the Judge(s), ask for names for future trials. Most importantly, ask....Would you recommend our Trial to a friend? Why or why not?

While this document has focused on surveying participants, you might also want to survey your workers and Judges, as well.

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Issue: Enhancing Public Access to Companion Event Information and Activities

The AKC continues to be “The Dog’s Champion”. It is critical that Quality Training Information be readily accessible to a broad-based Audience.

Response: Compile an array of informative Training Videos, available at any time, via YouTube

Submitted By Robert A Amen, Port Chester Obedience Training Club, Inc.

Currently, there are 10 Training Videos available at :

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPfEv_pKgm7f92gqYpHkS3NnAVTgGzkSY

The Videos, averaging from 3 to 5 minutes in length, are as follows:

- * Teach Your Dog To Sit
- *Teach Your Dog To Lie Down
- *Teach Your Dog To Run A Circle Around You
- *Teach Your Dog To Come When Called
- *Teach Your Dog To Bow
- *Teach Your Dog To Come When Called
- *Teach Your Dog To Roll Over
- *Teach Your Dog To High-Five
- *AKC Beginner Novice Obedience Demonstration
- *AKC Canine Good Citizen Advanced Test, With Dr. Mary Burch

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Issues: A) Attract new Exhibitors to the
Sport of Obedience, and
B) Increase Obedience Trial Entries

Clubs have been mindful of the “Aging Exhibitor” phenomena, as well as the decline of entries at their Trials.

Response: Novice Only Trials

Submitted by Gail LaBerge, Atlanta
Obedience Club, Inc., and
Larry Wilson, Philadelphia Dog Training
Club, Inc.

Several years ago, a few AKC Clubs offered a Novice only Trial , to see if it would attract more Novice A Exhibitors, and increase the Novice entries over-all.

Three of those Clubs were asked to comment on their experience:

1. Port Chester Obedience Club offered their first Novice only Trial three years ago. They held two trials and limited their entry to 30. They filled

quickly, and had to turn many Exhibitors away. Since that time, they have increased their limit, and have had entries of 63 in 2013, and 40 in 2014. They offer Novice A and B, Beginner Novice A and B, and Pre-Novice.

2. Atlanta Obedience Club offered their first Novice Only Trial almost two years ago. The Trial is held on Friday night, before their regular Trials on Saturday and Sunday. They now offer three Novice Only Trials a year. Novice Classes are also offered at the Saturday and Sunday Trials, thus giving Exhibitors the opportunity to earn a Title in one week-end.
3. The Doberman Pinscher Club of the Tappan Zee has offered Novice Only Trials for the past two years. Larry Wilson recently Judged one of their Trials, and noted that while the scores were in the 184-194 range, the percentage of those qualifying was 63%. It was also noted that the Club mentored two 4-H Club Members, who were Stewards.

All three Clubs reported receiving positive feed-back from Exhibitors. Many felt more comfortable, as they felt less pressure than at a regular Trial. Curiously, the enhanced comfort level comments were made by both new and seasoned Exhibitors. Some said that the atmosphere felt more laid back.

Some Considerations:

- A. Decide if the Novice Only Trial is to be in conjunction with another Trial, perhaps the night before, or if it is to be a stand alone Trial over a two day week-end.
- B. Identify the Novice Classes to be offered.
- C. Determine whether or not Entries are to be limited.
- D. Use a Provisional Judge, if possible.
- E. Try mentoring 4-H and/or new members as Stewards.
- F. Offer a small gift to each of the Novice A Exhibitors, such as a copy of the AKC Obedience Regulations Book.

G. Have experienced Club Members/Exhibitors available to answer any questions that the Novice Exhibitors might have.

Novice Only trials are a great way to encourage both those new to the sport, as well as those who may be returning , to develop confidence and experience in a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere. Clubs will also benefit by the increased Novice entries, and increased pool of new participants.

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Issue: Enhancing Public Awareness of the Activities and Community Contribution of our Dog Clubs

With various restrictive dog ownership legislation, and various media campaigns that are critical of the Dog Fancy, Clubs would like to promote our activities in a positive light.

Response : Create a Club Brochure

Submitted by Gail A LaBerge, Atlanta Obedience Club

A Brochure can be a very positive vehicle by which to inform the general public about your Club's Mission Statement, Classes offered, and attendant Community Activities. A Trifold format offers a Professional appearance, and is easily displayed.

- *Use an attractive, eye-catching Font
- *Prominently display your Club's Name, and Logo
- *Use a picture of a happily working dog
- *Use a general statement about the types of Classes offered
- *Statement if Club is a Member or Licensed AKC Club
- *State the number of years the Club has been serving its Community

The inside of the Brochure should introduce:

- *The Club's Mission Statement
- *What training accomplishments could be made
- *A listing of Classes offered
- *Other Training activities such as CGC, Seminars, Show-N-Go's, and Responsible Dog Owner Days
- *Pictures! Pictures! Pictures!
- *Club Name, Address, Phone Number, and Web Site

On the Interior folded page:

- *Information on Competition, Types sponsored by your Club
- *A statement about promoting good sportsmanship
- *A statement related to good stewardship regarding the care of our dogs
- *A statement of what activities, as a Not-For-Profit the Club contributes to

The back page of your Brochure:

- *Feature the Name, Logo, and Contact information
- *An invitation to visit the Web Site for more information
- *information regarding General Meetings
- * An Invitation to visit any Training Classes

When the Brochure is finished, suggested placements include:

*Veterinarian Clinics

*Grooming Shops

*Independent Dog Supply Stores

*Library Community Resource Areas

*Store Bulletin Boards

*Public Parks, Dog Parks that have resource areas

*Any Public Area that would permit the posting of a few Brochures.