



Sports and Entertainment Marketing Operations Research Event

Mound Westonka DECA

Mound Westonka High School

5905 Sunnyfield Road East

Minnetrista, MN 55364

Brenna Mack & Callie Mack

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I. Executive Summary

For the 2012 DECA Sports and Entertainment Marketing Operations Research Event, Brenna and Callie Mack, members of the Mound Westonka DECA chapter, propose a new customer loyalty marketing plan for the University of Akron Volleyball program. By undergoing this project, they created a valuable marketing strategy to increase average game-day attendance by 20 percent for the 2012 season.

Description of Organization

Akron athletics offers eight men's and ten women's Division I sports programs in the Mid-American Conference. Over the years, the Zips Athletic Department's growth and development has mirrored the growth of its student body, which has increased by 23 percent since 2005. The volleyball program is housed in the James A. Rhodes venue and has capacity for 5,500 fans.

Research Methods Used

To gather accurate customer profiles and devise compatible customer loyalty programs for Akron Volleyball, we conducted five research methods.

Research Method	Outcomes
◆ Akron Student Body Survey	◆ Understand Target Customer #1
◆ Youth Research Group	◆ Understand Target Customer #2
◆ Focus Group	◆ Compare Loyalty Programs
◆ Interview	◆ Intro to Akron Marketing
◆ Online Research	◆ Target Market Statistics & Trends

Proposed Strategic Plan

To achieve the goal of increasing average home game attendance by **20 percent**, we recommend implementing the following:

Raise Campus Loyalty:

- 1. Track customers and offer rewards on foursquare-** A free online application that will allow Akron Volleyball to track its fans and offer them rewards for checking in via the app on game night.
- 2. Add theme nights-** Spark student interest in Akron Volleyball by creating theme nights and an environment in which they can exhibit their school pride.

Expand Community Outreach:

- 3. Establish 'Player for a Day' sweepstakes-** Satisfy the youth's desire to form relationships with the Akron team through interactions on game day.
- 4. Host youth spotlight games-** Invite club teams from the surrounding area to compete in exhibition matches during intermission, so they can experience the thrill of playing in a collegiate atmosphere.
- 5. Partner with local businesses and non-profit organizations-** Develop corporate sponsorships to enhance team visibility in the community and offset costs.

We are confident that our proposed strategic plan is a winning approach to enhancing the fan experience at future Akron Volleyball games while increasing attendance and generating a **287 percent return on investment (ROI)**. We look forward to meeting you April 29th to hear your perspective and answer any questions you may have.



II. Introduction

A. Description of the Organization

"The success of the Akron Volleyball program is very important to our entire athletic department. Volleyball is a core sport in the Mid-America Conference and it is vitally important that we build towards a championship. Building community and campus support is a key part of creating the support needed to build that championship program."

-Tom Wistrill, Akron Athletic Director

In the fall of 2011, nearly 20 million students across the nation were college bound. Of this faction, 29,000 individuals identified the University of Akron as their home. During the span of their college career, these students will not only have the opportunity to receive an academic degree, but also have the chance to experience the thrill of collegiate athletics.

Akron athletics offers eight men's and ten women's Division I sports programs in the Mid-American Conference. Over the years, the athletic department's development has mirrored the growth of its student body, which has increased by 23 percent since 2005.

Noteworthy successes in the 2010-11 school years include five MAC Championships and eight All-American nominations. Additionally, last season Akron was named the national champion of the

'Excellence in Management' Cup. The Cup quantitatively evaluates NCAA Division I athletic departments' return on investment by utilizing a formula that weighs

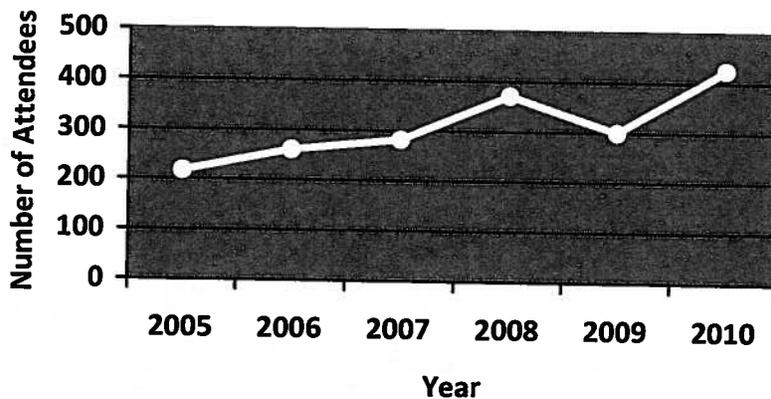


conference and national championships in comparison to the department's annual overall budget.

This recognition confirms the program's progression towards winning records as well as their increased efficiency in generating fan loyalty. However, in college athletics, programs like men's soccer and football usually take precedence, are offered extra funding and resources, and consequently acquire a more devoted fan base. Akron is no exception to this biased trend. Although women's volleyball attendance has increased by 29 percent from 2009 to 2010, the customer loyalty of volleyball fans is lacking compared to other fall sports. Men's soccer boasts an average game-day attendance of 4407 fans, while volleyball draws on average 425. Also, it is important to note that

20% = 86 people/game

Average Akron Volleyball Attendance



Last year was over 100.

currently, admission to Akron Volleyball games is free. However, in the upcoming year, general admission will cost seven dollars on average. By changing the price structure, we need to give fans something in return, hence our proposed loyalty programs.

Our vision is to enhance the customer loyalty of the women's volleyball program in 2012 to match or surpass that of the soccer and football programs. The main



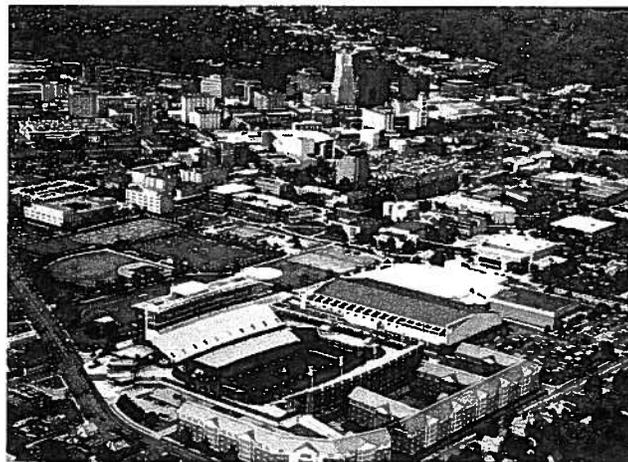
objective is to increase game day attendance on campus within the student body and in the community within local youth teams and their families. Below is a SWOT analysis of the Akron Volleyball program that details its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

SWOT ANALYSIS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ RooWards Program ◆ Increasing attendance trend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Limited funding ◆ Insufficient promotional activities ◆ Low game attendance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ JAR facility can hold 5,500 ◆ 20 youth volleyball clubs within 20 mile radius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Other fall sports ◆ 13 state universities

B. Description of the Community

Geographic:

The University of Akron is located in northeastern Ohio. The city of Akron is the 5th largest city in the state. Its metropolitan setting is in the heart of a dynamic, regional economy, and in sync with the pulse of business, government and the community. Its regional location and easy access to major highways makes it within reach of many residents in the surrounding area.



The campus itself contains 80 buildings across 218 acres and is constantly expanding to satisfy its rapidly growing student body. The 125,538 sq. ft. volleyball venue is named after James A. Rhodes and is commonly referred to as the JAR. In 2003, this facility underwent a \$1.1 million renovation which included an upgraded playing surface and fan-based capital improvements. The JAR can hold 5,500 fans. The only disadvantage of Akron's location is its proximity to 13 state universities in the Great Lakes Region. This dilutes its potential fan base.

Demographic:

The target markets we are focusing on in this study are the Akron students and local youth volleyball players and their families within a 20 mile radius of the university. Akron has a population of 200,000. Of this statistic, 29,000 are students currently enrolled in the University of Akron. Of the student body, 49 percent are males and 51 percent are females. Since 2005, UA enrollment has increased 23 percent. Ethnically, Akron is dominated by Caucasian and African American majorities.

Fall 2011 Enrollment by Ethnicity	Count	Percent
Native American	68	0.2%
Asian	544	1.8%
African American	4,073	13.7%
Hispanic	514	1.7%
Native Hawaiian	37	0.1%
White	21,962	74.0%
Non Resident Alien	1,096	3.7%
Unknown	1,405	4.8%



Economic:

Collegiate volleyball followers are out there, they just need to be engaged. According to NCAA Division I volleyball attendance rankings, the Big Ten led with 1,990 average fans per game and the Big 12 was second with 1,976. Economically, this proves that there is a market ready and willing to spend money to experience college sports live in the United States. Akron Volleyball has the potential to tap into this fan base.

The poor state of our American economy has had a limited negative impact on the university. Donations and private funds are pouring in everyday, prompting additions, acquisitions, and renovations to the campus. For instance, research and grant funding alone increased 60 percent in the past decade. Additionally, the University of Akron recently completed the \$300 million first phase of its new Landscape for Learning campus enhancement program. During the five-year project, nine new buildings were constructed, 14 major renovations were completed and 30 acres of green space were added to the 218-acre campus. The new facilities include two classroom buildings, an Honors Complex, Student Union, Student Recreation and Wellness Center, and Athletics Field House. This increased quality of living and education attracts more students and simultaneously potential volleyball fans.

Socioeconomic:

The United States social structure is comprised of three main classes: the wealthy, middle class, and underprivileged. A person's socioeconomic status in this system is determined by their income, education, and occupation. The socioeconomic factors affecting potential Akron Volleyball fans include income and education.



Regarding the Akron student body, their education influences their customer loyalty to sports. School spirit and pride for their educational institution motivate these individuals to support their home teams. Education plays a similar role on parents of youth volleyball players. Akron alumni are more likely to expose their children to Akron sporting events than parents who didn't attend the university because they possess loyalty to their alma mater.

As for income's effect on our target markets, students are usually in-debt. Therefore, discounts and free giveaways are major incentives to compensate for the small fee charged to attend games. A family's income influences what they are able to purchase in their daily lives. Families of youth volleyball players in Junior Olympic club programs tend to be in the wealthy and middle class. Therefore, our promotion is focused toward families with a higher socioeconomic status.

C. Description of Organization's Target Market

The Akron Volleyball program has several target markets in the Ohio region ranging from their own student body, alumni, and faculty, to members of the community such as local youth teams. According to Genevieve Evans, the Athletic Marketing Director for the Akron Volleyball program, the customer loyalty of the student body and local youth players and their families has the most significant room for improvement.



Target Markets	Demographic	Geographic	Psychographic	Benefits
Primary Market: Akron Student Body	29,000 students Age 18-23	Downtown Akron, Ohio	Express school spirit Socialize Watch friends compete	Easily accessible on campus
Secondary Market: Youth Volleyball Players	20 women's junior club programs High school teams Age 12-18	Community: 20 mi radius of University of Akron	Play volleyball Watch volleyball Build relationships with college team	Youth + family = two markets in one Increased community visibility

The primary target market is composed of 29,000 Akron students ages 18-23. This sector includes athletes and non-athletes as well as the AK-Rowdies, a group of sports super-fans. Increasing customer loyalty among students is the most rewarding option because they are concentrated on campus and can be directly influenced by promotional efforts without the need for long-distance marketing communication.

The secondary target market consists of female youth players ages 12-18 within a 20 mile radius of the university. This encompasses 20 local club programs plus the numerous high school teams in the area. The benefit of community outreach geared towards youth players is that they are typically accompanied by an adult when watching a game, at least doubling the number of spectators present.



III. Research Methods Used in the Study

A. Rationale and Description of Research Methodologies

The focus of our research was to identify what motivates fans to attend collegiate sporting events in order to strengthen their loyalty. We started by obtaining primary data from our first

target market, the Akron student body. We created a seven-question survey to distribute to students of the University of Akron.

The primary goal of this survey was to enhance our understanding of the core



Youth Soccer players attending the 2010 National NCAA DI Men's Soccer game on campus

factors that make or break a fan's game day experience. More specifically, we wanted to recognize the value of the current customer loyalty system, RooWards.

Next, we contacted two colleges with successful volleyball programs to learn how they establish loyal fans. For this focus group we approached Thanh Pham, the head women's volleyball coach at the University of St. Thomas. The success of St. Thomas's 2011 season paralleled the support of their spectators. Pham proclaims, "*We have a packed house almost every time.*" This atmosphere is what we are looking to emulate at Akron. We also consulted Brady Starkey, a coach and recruiter at Concordia University, to gain feedback about additional customer loyalty programs. They just won



their fifth consecutive NCAA Division II national volleyball championship title with the support of their fan section. This focus group gave us a clear picture of the advantages and disadvantages of loyalty programs in the Midwest.

We tackled the youth target market by collaborating with club volleyball players ages 12-18 of the club, Minnesota One, a program equivalent to high level Junior Olympic youth teams in the Ohio Valley Region. This research group allowed us to narrow down what incentives are most effective in gaining youth customer loyalty.

For our last form of primary research we went directly to the source of marketing at Akron. In our interview with Genevieve Evans, the Athletic Marketing Director for the Akron Volleyball program, we developed the basis of our proposed customer loyalty program. Evans gave us crucial information about which target audiences are lacking loyalty, the current programs they have in place, and what Akron's marketing goals are for the future.

To acquire secondary data, we used online government sources, such as the U.S. Bureau of Census, as well as Akron archives, the official sports websites of the MN Swarm and St. Paul Saints, and a 2007 article from *Innovative Marketing* by Robin L. Snipes and Rhea Ingram. These sources gave us statistics concerning a large audience that would be challenging to obtain on a personal level.



B. Process of Conducting the Selected Research Methods

We conducted our primary research in a process consisting of three stages: formatting, administering, and aggregating. We formatted the student body survey to include clear and concise opened ended, yes/no and multiple choice questions and additionally utilized a likert scale measurement from 1-10. The foundation of the questions pertained to the factors affecting motivation to attend sports games and the opinions of the RooWards program. As for administration, by uploading the survey on Google Form, it became more accessible. First, we distributed the survey link directly to the Akron Volleyball team. The purpose of this was to have them participate and share the link with their network of friends and fellow athletes so it could gradually spread across campus. The process of aggregating was made easy with Google Form because it summarized the responses, allowing us to easily analyze the student body target market.

In forming the questions geared towards our focus group of Thanh Pham and Brady Starkey, we inquired about the advantages and disadvantages of the St. Thomas and Concordia marketing strategies with the goal of comparing their loyalty programs to that of Akron's. We administered our communication with these coaches through email correspondence. To aggregate the responses in the best way possible, we gravitated towards both the successes and flaws of their loyalty programs so we would know what to incorporate or discard in our proposed plan.

Regarding the collaboration with our club volleyball peer group, we asked what customer loyalty programs lend well to the youth demographic. We met with this group



at the M1 facility in Bloomington, MN. Collecting their responses was imperative to understanding what draws youth players to collegiate sporting events.

In order to consult with the marketing director at Akron, we visited the campus in October and conducted a face-to-face interview. The basis of our interview was to become acquainted with the current marketing efforts put into the volleyball program and to visualize a common goal for Akron's future.

To conduct secondary research, we explored the U.S. Bureau of Census, Akron archives and online marketing journals to find statistics relative to our research project and better pinpoint the profile, tendencies, and desires of Akron Volleyball's target markets.

IV. Findings and Conclusions of the Study

A. Findings of the Research Study

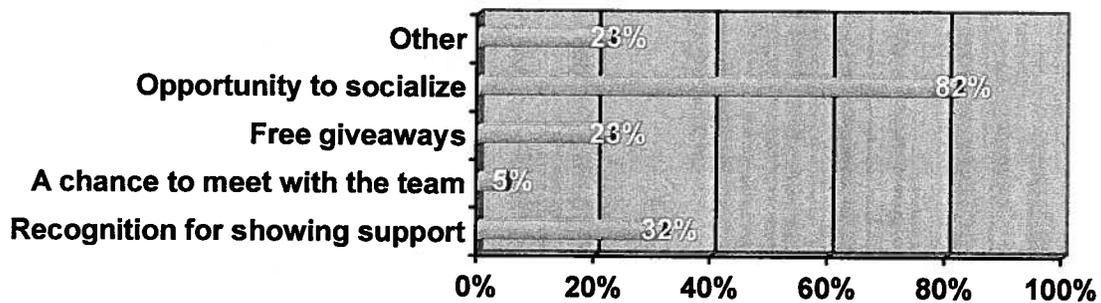
Our primary and secondary research findings gave us detailed profiles of our two target markets. First and foremost, from Steve McKee, the president of McKee Wallwork Cleveland Advertising, we gathered that the total U.S. consumer membership in loyalty-marketing programs today is more than 1 billion strong. This confirms that nearly 90 percent of Americans are willing to offer companies their loyalty in return for rewards or preferential treatment.

However, from our research, Akron students proved to be disappointed with current Akron Volleyball loyalty programs. From the student body survey, we exposed their social and entertainment tendencies. It was found that football and soccer are the most attended collegiate sports and that student's actions are motivated mainly by



success, interest level, socialization, and pride. Also, it was found that 82 percent of students rated an opportunity to socialize as their top expectation of a game-day experience, 32 percent rated recognition for showing support as a priority, and 23 percent found free giveaways appealing (people were able to select more than one priority, so percentages add up to more than 100%). Additionally, 86 percent of the respondents were unfamiliar with the current rewards program. On top of this, from our discussion with college coach Brady Starkey, we learned that point reward programs, like Concordia's Bear Backer Student Rewards Program, are ineffective in regards to bringing in a constant student fan base. From the MN Swarm lacrosse team, we discovered that promotional nights ignite interest in fans.

College Fan Game-Day Expectations



From our research, it was found that the youth players and their families within 20 miles of Akron are an ideal market to pursue as we attempt to increase customer loyalty in the community. From our interview, one of the main objectives Evans expressed was to raise the team's visibility in the community by engaging youth groups. The goal of community outreach seemed to be mutual between Akron, St. Thomas, and



Concordia. Starkey reiterated this fact explaining, "We don't do nearly as much as we should, especially to increase outside interest." While Pham suggested tackling the youth market to compensate for this, "If I were Akron, I would contact local grade schools and promote a night where they can come for free. I would do the same for the local high schools and make sure that they felt special. Show them the locker room, have player signings, etc." Our research group favored incentives relating to forming relationships with the collegiate team. Also, they showed interest in having the opportunity to experience the thrill of playing in a collegiate venue. According to the article "Motivators of Collegiate Sport Attendance: A Comparison across Demographic



Groups," in the *Innovative Marketing Journal*, it was portrayed that compared to older game attendees, younger attendees seem to be more affected by the promotional and entertainment items such as special prizes and giveaways, participation games, and



halftime entertainment. From the marketing methods of the St. Paul Saints we found that spotlight games also draw in the youth demographic.

Description of the Current Promotional Activities

In the 2011 season, the Akron Athletic Department launched the RooWards program as a form of student promotion. The RooWards program is designed to reward the most loyal student fans and provide additional incentives for students to attend Zips Athletic events. For volleyball, students must check in at the game-day marketing table to receive the points offered at regular season home games. The disadvantages of this system include its popularity, restrictions and lack of personalization. Only 7,200 students participated in the program in 2010-2011 out of the 29,000 attending the university. If students forget to bring the Zipcard to an event, it cannot be scanned and therefore no points can be rewarded. Finally, the system does not track who is attending each game. Even though the concept of the RooWards program is well-intentioned, other promotions need to be adopted in order to increase student attendance at volleyball games.

Akron's promotional methods to gain youth loyalty are limited. They currently send a letter and schedule card to coaches prior to the season, inviting them to bring their team to home games. In addition, they gladly accommodate the requests of youth teams to entice continual participation in Akron Volleyball games such as providing posters and autographs.



B. Conclusions Based on the Findings

Our primary and secondary research findings revealed the steps we need to take to increase customer loyalty on campus and in the community. From the student survey responses it was concluded that we need to create a social game-day environment at the JAR while showing appreciation for fan support through free giveaways. The background information Evans gave us about Akron's current volleyball promotions exposed the need for an enhanced attendance tracking system and development of more promotional techniques.

From Pham and Starkey's advice, it was concluded that community outreach needs to expand substantially, through increased communication with local businesses and youth volleyball clubs. From our M1 peer group, it was concluded that youth players desire a more personalized experience at collegiate sporting events not just as fans, but as players.

V. Proposed Strategic Plan

A. Goals/Objectives and Rationale

The Akron Volleyball program's current promotional activities are not sufficient to ensure customer loyalty or increase ticket sales. Subsequently, we have designed a strategic plan to expand loyalty on campus and in the community to in turn, achieve our goal of not only retaining the current customer base but increasing average home game attendance by 20 percent in the 2012 season. All of these programs will be advertised through the university media outlets like WZIP, ZipsLive, and the Buchtelite or in the local Akron Beacon Journal to limit costs.



Our objectives to achieve the goal of boosting attendance are to increase campus loyalty and community outreach by introducing five individual programs.

Campus Loyalty:

1. Track customers and offer rewards on foursquare
2. Theme nights

Community Outreach:

3. 'Player for a Day' sweepstakes
4. Youth spotlight games
5. Partner with local businesses and non-profit organizations

The first component in our proposed strategy to increase campus loyalty is to utilize foursquare, a free application that tracks customers and offers rewards like a digital punch card. Foursquare makes the real world easier to use by providing tools that help its users keep up with friends, discover what's nearby, save money and unlock deals. Foursquare engages a community of 15 million people worldwide, is home to 500,000 businesses on its merchant platform, and records millions of check-ins daily. Once the Akron Volleyball program claims the JAR as its venue on the merchant platform, fans simply need to download the app and check-in when they attend games in order to access foursquare and reap its rewards. Some rewards that Akron could offer its students for checking into foursquare include:

- ◆ Rewards for best customers- After 4 check-ins, 5th game is free
- ◆ Special Treatment- Invitation to an after party with the team with check-in
- ◆ Free Giveaways- Free t-shirt with check-in against local rival Kent State



In the technology-based society today, according to a recent PEW poll, 42 percent of cell-phone holders own smart-phones capable of downloading apps. The short term benefits of using foursquare are that it is free, it brings socialization into the game-day experience by broadcasting a fan's location to their friends, and it requires minimum effort by the user and the administrator. The long term benefit of foursquare is its ability to provide real-time data about its users, which will help Akron continue to trend and improve program effectiveness in the future. To spark student interest in Akron Volleyball games and provide them with an environment to exhibit their school



pride, we plan to organize theme nights for every home volleyball game, similar to the concept used by the MN Swarm. For example, when the Zips take on the University of Buffalo Bulls, fans will be encouraged

to dress like matadors and bring a red cloak in light of their mascot. The short term benefit of theme nights is increased fan camaraderie and entertainment. The long term benefit is the memorable reputation volleyball games will create for future attendance and participation.

The second portion of our plan is focused on enhancing the team's visibility within the community. First, we want to implement a 'Player for a Day' sweepstakes to satisfy the youth's desire to form relationships with the Akron team. Before the 2012 season, a letter will be sent out to coaches in the community promoting the



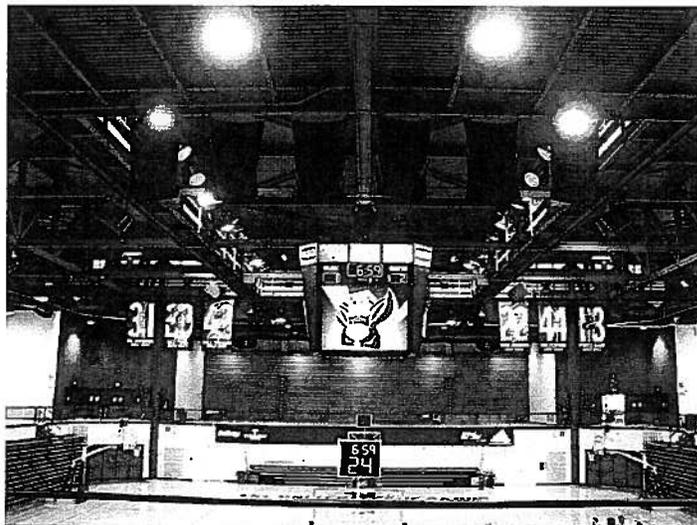
sweepstakes to their teams. After a youth player attends four home games, their name will be put in a drawing and one winner will be chosen the second to last home game.

On the last home game of the season, the winner will get to take part in a pregame meal with the team, be introduced with the starting line-up on the big screen, and get to watch the game from the bench alongside the DI athletes. The short term benefit of this sweepstakes is that it guarantees increased youth attendance to at least four games.

The long term benefit is that the special treatment offered to youth will encourage their return and possibly warrant them to refer Akron Volleyball to friends and family.

In another attempt to capture the attention of the community's youth, we plan to host multiple youth spotlight games, a successful form of promotion demonstrated by the St. Paul Saints, a professional minor league baseball team. We will invite club teams from the

surrounding area to compete in exhibition matches at the JAR during select game intermissions, so they can experience the thrill of playing in a collegiate atmosphere.



The referees from the match will officiate and footage will be live on the big screen. The short term benefit of a spotlight game is that the youth players will get the opportunity to play on the official



game court in front of game fans in attendance. The long term benefit is that spotlight games will give community members another reason to attend games, to watch the youth compete.

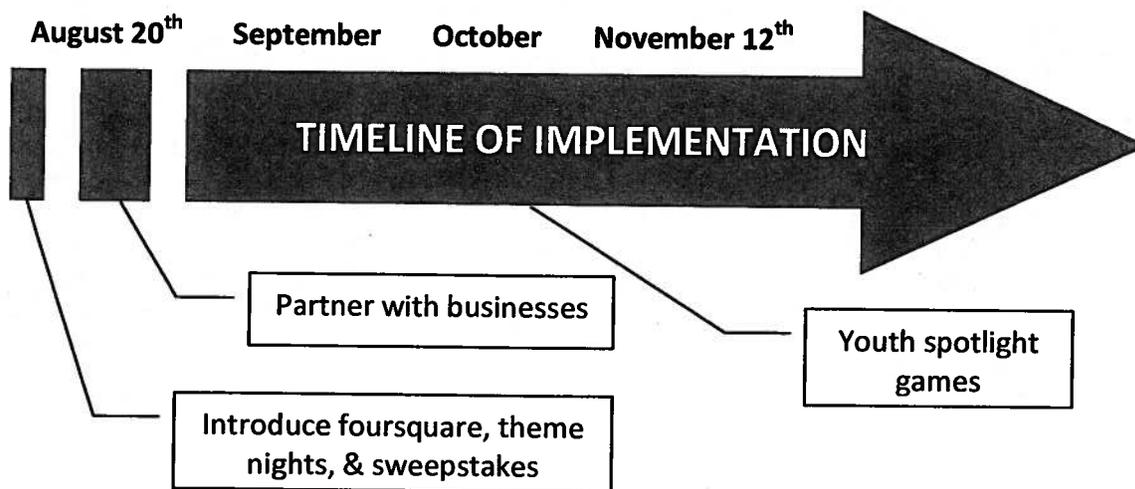
The final element of community outreach is to partner with local businesses and non-profit organizations. The businesses we plan to target are Barnes and Noble and Goodyear Tire, a namesake brand from Akron's Rubber Capital of the World era. Akron will print their brands on volleyball tickets, programs, and around the JAR. In return, they will sponsor prizes (such as discounts on their products) to be given away at home games. The short term benefit of securing corporate sponsorships is that they will help offset the cost of prizes offered to fans. The long term benefit of partnering with Barnes and Noble is that it will promote education, while the long term benefit of partnering with Goodyear is that it supports the large tire industry dominating the Ohio economy. Additionally, we are planning to partner with the Akron Children's Hospital. By staging a blood drive at one of the home volleyball games, students will have the opportunity to donate blood and as a result receive free admission to the game. The short term benefit of this is that it will attract students to attend the game because they can get in for free by being involved in a good cause. The long term benefit of this is that the volleyball program's support for the community provides Akron residents with a reason to support the university's own academic and athletic endeavors.

B. Proposed Activities and Timelines

Our proposed customer loyalty plan can be implemented in a staged process within the 2012 volleyball season, a three month period. The purpose of staggering the



launching of the customer loyalty programs is to ensure that neither the marketing staff nor the fans are spread in too many directions at one time. The foursquare reward application, theme nights, and 'player for a day' sweepstakes will be introduced immediately through university media outlets and the Akron Beacon Journal. The partnerships with businesses will be established within the first month of the season to ensure maximum benefits from their sponsorships. Finally, the spotlight games will take place throughout the season.



C. Proposed Budget

The total budget for our customer loyalty programs to be executed in the 2012 season is set at \$2,000. Funding for the Akron Volleyball program is currently minimal. The marketing budget for 2011 was \$1,500; however Evans inferred that future budgets could be larger. This budget will cover t-shirts, after-party food, misc. prizes, media outlets, and in-house advertising of partner corporations. It is important to note that the



corporate sponsorships with Barnes and Noble and Goodyear will offset at least \$500 of promotion expenses.

Akron Zips Volleyball - 2012 Customer Loyalty Program Budget

Items	Quantity	Cost per unit	Projected Total
Inhouse Marketing Materials <i>Miscellaneous</i>	n/a	\$324.00	\$324.00
Print Media <i>Akron Beacon Journal Advertisements</i>	4	\$119.00	\$476.00
Online Media Outlets <i>ZipsLive</i>	2	\$50.00	\$100.00
<i>WZIP</i>	2	\$50.00	\$100.00
<i>BuchteLite</i>	2	\$50.00	\$100.00
Single Game Promotions / Season Activities <i>Akron Volleyball T-Shirts</i>	200	\$3.00	\$600.00
<i>After Party</i>	n/a	\$150.00	\$150.00
<i>Food/Refreshments</i>	n/a	\$150.00	\$150.00
Contest Prizes / Giveaways <i>Prizes (Miscellaneous)</i>	n/a	\$150.00	\$150.00
		Budgeted	
		Costs:	\$2,000.00

D. Proposed Metrics to Measure Customer Loyalty and ROI

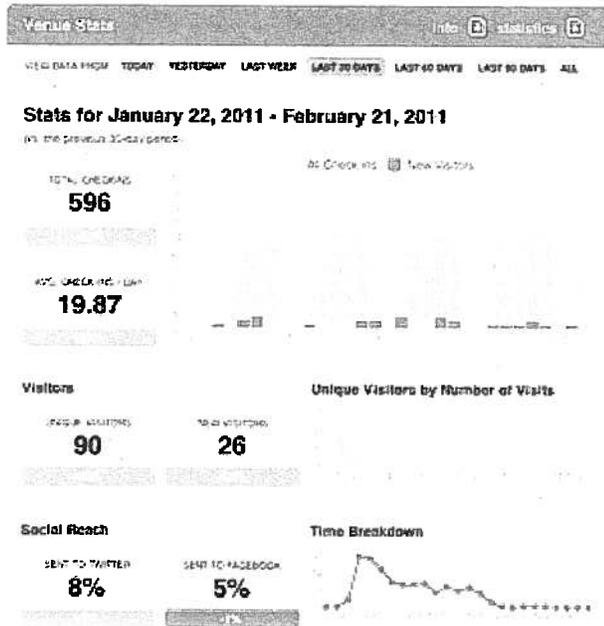
The metric that will measure whether or not our proposed marketing strategy has increased customer loyalty is the customer itself. We plan to evaluate this by observing customer satisfaction and tracking increased average attendance. To record changes in customer satisfaction, we plan to insert fan surveys in the programs.

Reaching out to the fans directly will give us a better idea of their opinions of their 'Akron Volleyball experience.' From here, we will analyze their responses to determine which customer loyalty programs are efficient and which ones need to be revised. To



record changes in average home game attendance and evaluate if we reached our goal of 20 percent increase for 2012, we will calculate ticket sales via a computer system. Additionally, to measure increased attendance exclusively as a result of introducing the foursquare program, we will monitor the Merchant Dashboard, a free tracking application offered through

foursquare. Once Akron Volleyball claims its venue on the site, it will get full access to real-time data about its new customers, including: total daily check-ins over time, most frequent visitors, gender breakdown of customers, etc. This system can be used to tailor specials in upcoming seasons. Our



sales will measure whether or not our proposed marketing strategy generates a positive return on investment (ROI). Hypothetically, if admission cost \$7 per ticket in the 2011 season, \$38,675 in total sales would have been made from the 13 homes games. In 2012, with a 20 percent increase in average attendance, we estimate that we will achieve \$46,410 in total sales for the same number of home games. With incremental sales of \$7735 and an investment of \$2000 to execute our marketing strategy, we calculate the ROI to be 287 percent.



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VII. Appendix

Customer Survey: *University of Akron Student Body*



1. Which Akron sporting events do you most often attend?

2. Why is this; what draws you to these sporting events?

3. What do you expect as a fan from your game-day experience?

- A. Recognition for showing support
- B. A chance to meet the team
- C. Free giveaways
- D. An opportunity to socialize with other students
- E. Other

4. Are you familiar with the RooWards customer loyalty program? (If so, continue to the next three questions)

Yes No

5. On a scale of (1-10) how effective is RooWards at encouraging you to be a fan at Akron sporting events?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. What incentives or rewards do you like about the program?

7. What is one thing you would change about the current RooWards customer loyalty program?



On Sun, Nov 27, 2011 at 5:07 PM, Callie Mack <calliemack22@yahoo.com> wrote:

Mr. Starkey and Mr. Pham, Congrats on your seasons!

Brenna and I are starting our second year in DECA and trying to decide how we can top the last. This year we are going to undertake another research paper, but this time we are focusing on how to increase customer/fan loyalty at Akron Volleyball games. Since your insight was so valuable last year, we thought we would drag you into this year's project as well. Instead of a formal survey we just wanted to ask you what types of programs/incentives/rewards you have in place at Concordia to ensure loyalty among: 1. your student body, and 2. youth volleyball players in the Twin Cities area. We would really appreciate any knowledge you have on this topic so we can build a plan to improve Akron's current attendance.

Thanks for your help,

Callie and Brenna Mack

Hey Callie,

That is a cool topic for your guys to do your next state championship DECA project. You guys need to let me know the ideas that you come up with, because it is not a strong suit for us. Our assistant athletic director does all of our promotions and fan loyalty for our games, so I have little involvement with this but I do know what they do.

For the youth volleyball players in the Twin Cities, our school contacts all of the youth programs and let's them know that they can get their teams into our matches for \$1 per person for a match. All they need to do is email a list of all the players, coaches and parents that are attending the game and we put them on a list and then they sign in and pay their dollar. If the teams request it, our coaches and players meet with the girls after our matches for a bit and sign autographs and take pictures.

To increase our fan loyalty from our students, we have what they call the Bear Backer Student Rewards Program during the academic year. Basically it is a system of earned points that is kept track of every event that a student attends. Each event is worth a certain amount of points and then the students get rewards based off the number of points that they accumulate throughout the year.

We don't do nearly as much as we should, especially to increase outside interest, so if you guys come up with some great ideas, I would love to hear them and pass them along to our administration. Good luck with this years project, I have no doubt that you guys will tear it up again. Congrats on your commitments to Akron, they are getting two great, hard working players and maybe even more important, two great young women who will represent Akron well. I am sure I will see you around the gym sometime down



the road here. Take it easy,

Brady Starkey

Concordia University St. Paul

275 N Syndicate St.

Hi Team Mack!!!

We do not have a rewards program for attendance. We just do not charge admission and we have a packed house almost every time. If I were Akron, I would contact local grade schools and promote a night where they can come for free. I would do the same for the local high schools and make sure that they felt special. Show them the locker room, have player signings etc. You could also do a punch card where if they show up to every home game, they will get a t-shirt signed by the volleyball team at the end of the season. Good luck and hopefully I will see you soon!

Thank



On Sun, Oct 9, 2011 at 11:17 PM, Callie Mack <calliemack22@yahoo.com> wrote:
Hi Genevieve,

My sister and I are being recruited by the Akron Volleyball program. We are juniors from Mound, MN and we are involved in DECA, a nationwide business and marketing club offered through our high school. Last year was our first year joining and we placed 5th at Internationals. This year, since we are thinking about committing to Akron, we want to write a sports marketing promotion plan for the volleyball team. This involves an 11-page paper detailing an original plan that we create involving four types of promotion: special events, advertising, display, and publicity. In addition, the creative aspect of the project requires us to film a commercial, record a radio commercial, etc.

Ron said he mentioned this to you and you would be willing to help us out. We are visiting Akron this weekend, Friday Aug.14-16th and would love to meet with you briefly sometime during our stay if you are not too busy. We need to understand what type of promotional operations are currently in place, what type of budget you have, what types of promotion have worked in the past and which types haven't.

We mentioned scheduling a potential meeting to Ron and Aline; and hopefully they can set up a good time when both of us are available. We really appreciate your support,

Callie and Brenna

Callie and Brenna,

This sounds like a wonderful program and I would be more than happy to assist you! I spoke with Ron and Aline to coordinate a time to meet with you during your time here on campus. They informed me that 5pm on Friday would work best in the itinerary they have planned for you. I will provide you with copies of the Akron Volleyball Marketing Plan I developed and would be happy to answer any questions you might have. I look forward to meeting you!

Best,
Genevieve K. Evans, J.D.
University of Akron
Athletic Marketing
Graduate Assistant
MBA Candidate 2011
FEAR THE ROO!



