

9.4A Marketing

The principal strategic goal of orienteering in Australia is to increase participation.

Increasing participation involves:

- increasing retention of current members and participants
- introducing new participants to the sport and turning as many as possible into regular participants.

Both of these require marketing.

We have greatly improved marketing to our current members in the last 5 years:

- quality weekly enews
- Eventor calendar and GPS links to find locations
- National, state, club and major event Facebook pages
- Improved websites
- Quality national magazine

So we have had strong retention into the older Masters age groups and increased participation in NOL events.

A criticism, though is that our marketing is too current member focused and that provides a barrier to many potential new participants. So there has been a push to recruit a marketing expert to the OA Board and to recruit a marketing advisor, as OQ did recently for the Australian Championships Carnival.

Attached are 2 articles on marketing by Ian Jessup already published in the Australian Orienteer. These include a number of very good tips on engagement with the media.

As well this, there is a great deal we do know about marketing.

1. **Establishing a mass participation event.** Partner with a charity and pursue sponsors who would like to support the charity.
2. **Create a positive experience for first timers.** Kay Haarsma and Lachlan Hallett attracted many first timers (75% of the field) to the first event of the Alice Springs Masters Games by having a score event on a bush map. Everyone was a winner as everyone could find at least a few controls. There are other elements of creating a positive experience for new comers: a helper explaining what to do on arrival and to give feedback on finishing; social interaction; good value for money.
3. **Price matters.** Parkrun and other competitors in the running/walking fitness market are free or low cost. A family who pays non-member rates of \$30 for first time participation is very unlikely to return.
4. **Name of the event matters.** Mikko Salonen pointed out at an OA Conference a few years ago that there were 16 different names for orienteering events in Queensland, the great majority unfriendly and confusing to beginners. Metro series, State League, Sprint Series are all names which are perhaps good marketing to existing members but are elitist and a turn off to potential first timers. Think Sprint and you think Usain Bolt, not a safe enjoyable orienteering activity on the grounds of an educational campus or park.
5. **Social engagement is extremely important.** ASC consultancy research has found that the prime motivator to participate in an organised sport activity for 92% of children, young to middle aged adults, and older adults is social engagement and enjoyment. Including meeting potential new friends, participating in pairs, mass starts, socialising at the finish.

6. **Encourage parental participation.** Kids need transport to orienteering events. Much more likely to get it if parents participate as well.
7. **Tailor marketing to the population segment.** Marketing to scouts is different to marketing to mountain bikers, bush walkers, rogainers, adventure racers, school children, Defence Force cadets etc. The ASC strongly recommends developing different business models to different audiences. Above all, don't apply the same business model to everyone.
8. **Establish cross promotional partnerships.** Peta Whitford found that the most effective way of enticing mountain bikers to MTBO events was cross promotional website and enews partnerships.
9. **A bird in the hand is worth 10 in the bush.** Follow up of new comers is essential. Give them a beginners package. Add them straight away to the weekly enews subscriber list so they know what is on next week.
10. **Facebook marketing.** Ian Jessup uses the following approach for paid Facebook marketing:
 When you send out a paid post you can specify how many miles radius you wish to spread your message, for how many days, and you then type in keywords to make your post appealing to people with similar interests.
 Eg I use 'nature, bushwalking, hiking, outdoors, navigation, exercise'
 The cost depends on the length of campaign and 'reach'.
 I can imagine OA, for example, running paid Facebook ads for 10 days prior to the next WOD encouraging people to look up their nearest club or state for details of events on that day.
11. **Photography and tagging on Facebook.** Parkrun has a volunteer photographer at every event who photographs every participant. The photographs are loaded later that day on that parkrun's FB page and participants encouraged to tag themselves. This spreads the word to thousands of others.
 Hundreds of photos were loaded on the OA Facebook page during the Oceania and World Cup carnival in Tasmania. The FB statistics for that week were that there was a population outreach of 32,000 people who saw the photos. For an Australian Championships or Easter Carnival the outreach is usually 15,000 to 25,000.

There is a great deal we don't know about marketing:

1. **Engagement with Pokemon Go population.** Other sports regularly ask why we aren't picking up big numbers of new participants from the massive Pokemon Go population.
2. **Engagement with the general population** to participate in local Summer Series events.
3. **Engagement with most other target groups.**

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ATTACHMENT 1. THE MEDIA (article in Australian Orienteer)

By Ian Jessup, ONSW Marketing Officer
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Before I add to Maggie's article in the previous OA ("Clues to Membership Surge in NSW"), I'd like you all to ponder something: what exactly constitutes 'marketing' when it comes to orienteering?

I see marketing our sport as comprising 3 stages, each as important as the other. And within each stage there are many smaller components:

(1) Before the event

- Media
- Gyms / sports stores
- Outdoor / clothing / camping stores
- Council websites / libraries / community centres
- Schools / vacation care centres
- Up-to-date information on club and state association websites

(2) At the event

- Directional signs in surrounding streets
- Clearly visible helpers (in fluoro bibs or club colours)
- A simple, streamlined registration process
- On the course: Is the map correct? Are the controls in the exact locations? Are the control descriptions accurate and easily understood?
- Debriefing new people / first-timers

(3) After the event

- Update the website quickly (ideally within 24 hours) with results, photos, splits, a report, the map and Routegadget
- Send results (and possibly a brief report) to local media, and to AAP for State League and MetrOLeague events
- Send new member data to head office ASAP. Club / State body to send follow-up email / welcome pack to new member ASAP
- Add new member to weekly state email

Does your club / state body do each of the above?

While many of the above tasks may sound like something the event organiser should handle, in a tiny sport like ours each one of them contributes to how we market orienteering to the public.

In this article I would like to talk about that all-powerful beast: the media.

Contact List

Having been a journo for 20 years with AAP, the first thing I did was to start compiling a spreadsheet of media contacts across the state, divided according to club (email me if you would like a copy to amend for your state). This list now has more than 140 entries, including northern NSW where we are looking to expand. It includes the name of the media outlet, the phone number for the sports section, the best email address, the publication day(s), deadlines for submitting copy, and the suburbs/areas covered. This contact list is kept with a whole host of our media/comms files on Dropbox, accessible to the relevant officers and board members so that they are not just stored on one person's computer.

Realistically, your best chance of getting media coverage is through suburban community newspapers. Many of these only come out once or twice a week so you need to send information to them at least 10 days in advance for pre-publicity. And local papers love covering schoolkids, so alert them to your local schools champs. If they don't run an article they may post a photo gallery on their website. And don't dismiss community radio – their demographic reflects that of the orienteering community. Our sport appeals to brain as much as to brawn!

Send news, not fluff

When I was a sub-editor on the sports desk at AAP, we used to groan when a PR person from a minor sporting organisation sent in 800 words on something that we would have to totally rewrite and cut to 100 words. Safe to say that those pieces were left until last and often never saw the light of day.

The less the subs have to change your copy the better, so try to write it like a newspaper article – state the who, what, where and how up front and do NOT write it like a chapter book (in the first minute of the game Joe Blow passed the ball to etc..) The content should resemble a pyramid – all the most important info at the top, padded out with less crucial info and quotes below, so that the sub-editor can cut anywhere and know that what is in the top section (to be run in the paper) makes sense and does not omit important information. An analogy from cards would be to lead your trumps first!

Instant success!

Our first press release was about the looming 2011 QB III June Long weekend and State League carnival near Lithgow. This generated a newspaper article and 3 radio interviews.

Many of the regional NSW clubs have excellent regular contact with their local press (paper, radio and TV). This is ideal as the press love to have a local contact. However when a State League or major event is in the area I supplement the local club's work by sending a press release to all concerned. All the ONSW clubs are aware that Maggie and I work for them and if they require our assistance then they only have to ask. We hope that our work also empowers the clubs to feel more confident in taking on such promotional duties.

In the Sydney metropolitan region, I also aim to list all club events on the relevant local community newspaper website in their events section (these often make it into print as well). I cannot stress enough how important it is that we emphasise just how inclusive our sport is (age ranges, ability levels etc) in every such press release or event listing, and that newcomers are always welcome and will receive basic coaching prior to setting out on a course.

Word gets around

This year one small article / listing in a Penrith paper promoting one of WHO's Cunning Running series (and mentioning the age range of competitors as 8-80) was noticed by a young female producer of 2UE's drivetime sports show. She told her presenter John Stanley and within 48 hours I was being interviewed for 5 minutes about orienteering: who takes part, what it involves etc. This may or may not lead to a huge influx of newcomers but it is publicity that our sport simply could never afford to buy. How much is it worth? Go to the website of any major radio station and find out the cost of a 15-second ad? Then multiply it by 20.

Our Sydney Summer Series each Wednesday evening from October to March attracts around 200 people to each event. This year we are expanding into areas of southern and western Sydney, fortnightly on Mondays from October to December. Within a week of issuing a press release and flyer about these new series I had fielded five phone calls from various local papers seeking phone interviews or to set up a photo shoot prior to or at an event.

Do not hesitate to offer a complementary entry to your local journo(s) or photographer(s) – not as an incentive to cover the sport, obviously (we don't want to be on *Media Watch!*); but to showcase what we have to offer.

But it's not all good news

One of the drawbacks of trying to promote the sport is the attitude of some in the media to orienteering.

Prior to this year's National League weekend in Newcastle I emailed a press release to media in the Hunter area. Closer to the event I rang one of the Newcastle Herald senior sports journos, an old mate from my rugby league-covering days.

His reply took me aback: "Mate, it's not really a sport, more an outdoor hobby... I'll put you through to our lifestyle features guy." Hmmm.

Fortunately, Craig Hamilton from ABC Radio, another former rugby league and cricket contact, was more accommodating and interviewed Russell Blatchford live on the Saturday morning before the sprint at the Uni.

And we have to accept that we cannot micromanage how the media ends up portraying us.

We attracted a photographer from the Bathurst newspaper to a State League event in early September. One of the journos rang me on the Tuesday afterwards for some background info for a story to go with the pics.

A week later I still had not seen the article on their website so I rang him: they hadn't considered the story important enough to go on the web, but he did email me a pdf of the article. In it he described orienteering as 'this slightly obscure but intriguing sport'. To be fair, he is right on both counts. It's up to us to highlight the intriguing bit.

What's our USP?

In any marketing course you will quickly learn that a product has to have a unique sales point / pitch / proposition (USP). If your product does not stand out from the others it will not sell.

What is orienteering's USP? (This could comprise a whole new article!)

I think it's the fact that you take part on a course that suits your skill and fitness level, and at a pace that suits you; all in lovely environments; by yourself or in a group. Not many sports or leisure activities can match that.

Other sales pitches you could use are; "Much more fun than a run", "Think on your feet (or seat for MTBO)", "Can you think AND run (or ride)?"

For the non-sporty, highlight the thinking skills needed.

For the environmentally aware, put the emphasis on the natural aspects of our sport.

Our NSW media page www.onsw.asn.au/index.php/media-coverage lists many of the hits we have had in the past 18 months.

We're not the NRL or AFL – we have to generate our own press coverage and we have to work hard to attract new members and participants. Above all, be open, be welcoming, and emphasise our inclusiveness.

ATTACHMENT 2. THE HARD SELL

By Ian Jessup, ONSW Marketing Officer
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If you were interested in rock climbing, would you comb the big, heavy white or yellow pages looking for rock climbing clubs, and then for a street or PO Box address, then write a letter to the local club or head office? Of course not.

This is the 21st century. We live in the internet era, and the first place people go to look up something – especially something new or interesting – is the web.

In the old days (pre-internet) you would make a phone call or just rock up, and your experience on the day would determine whether you tried that activity again.

Nowadays, how we present ourselves to the public EVEN BEFORE they make contact is crucial.

There are 3 main ways to do so:

- * media
- * promotional material
- * websites

The previous article dealt with the mainstream media, which is large and potentially very promising but – as outlined – not always fruitful. The aim is to publicise your events as widely as possible for minimum cost.

A flying start

Flyers (A5, A4 or tri-fold leaflet) for individual events or series and booklets (for a season or year, see section below) should be distributed at sports stores, running shops, gyms, outdoor stores, council libraries, schools, vacation care centres etc, as well as to your sponsors/suppliers.

Black-and-white ones are very cheap to produce, but colour ones look better.

Include photos that show orienteering in the best possible light (pardon the pun) – running, walking, people of all ages, great scenery etc. Again, emphasise our USPs (unique selling points).

Always include your club and state website addresses, along with email and mobile phone contacts, and display the crucial details (where, when, how much, what it is) prominently on the brochure.

Your website should also have a link to the flyer so people can download their own copy. Orienteering NSW's Wednesday Sydney Summer Series (SSS) is pretty much at capacity and does not need to be 'sold' as such, but for the expansion into newer areas of western and southern Sydney on Mondays separate flyers were produced for organisers to distribute.

Book me in

For many years ONSW's quarterly mailout of The OA magazine also included:

- The 'yellow sheet' - a 3- or 4-page, double-sided list containing (hopefully all) details of each event for the next 3 months
- The 'blue card' - a wallet-sized foldable card summarising the entire calendar year of major events and minor series
- Separate A4 entry forms for each coming major club or state event

ONSW wanted to modernise this long-standing but rather quaint method of distributing hard copies of event data and found the Melbourne Street/Park O brochure to be an excellent template. It was A5-sized (great for handbag, sports bag, glove box etc) and had everything for that 6-monthly period (winter=bush, summer=street/park), crucially including a phone number (mobile preferred) for each event organiser. Now, if you are out and about and don't have internet access, you simply have to look in the booklet for the event info. Most importantly, it covers the whole state. It was very time-consuming

but equally rewarding to ultimately produce a document that has been very well received and continues to evolve. We mail this out with the September OA mag, so we need details of all summer events by late August. There is little time to rest as the winter booklet usually goes out with the December OA mag. This means clubs must be organised 12 months in advance when it comes to their winter calendar. The booklet is also on the ONSW website events page as a downloadable pdf.

Incentives

There are many ways to offer people an incentive to come along and try orienteering:

- BOGOF (buy one get one free, 2-for-1 on the day etc)
- First run in a series is free
- A subsequent run in the series is free (ONSW does this with West and South SSS, and WHO does it with their winter Cuning Running series)
- Give children free entry
- Offer a discount for large groups (ONSW does this with vacation care groups of 30-40 kids at Space Racing in the school holidays)
- For our fledgling DuO series, a new sponsor offered a mountain bike as a lucky door prize across the four-event series

Sign of the times

Another left-field avenue for promotion is your local service station noticeboard (these can be hired very cheaply): they are high-visibility and seen by thousands of motorists each day.

I was going to suggest one of those always-witty church noticeboards (Lacking direction in life? Try orienteering!). It's certainly in the right spirit (ha ha).

Chalk it up to experience

Just prior to their Callan Park event in July 2012, young Uringa couple Chris Brown and Alison Pearce came up with a novel way of telling people about it. Along the parkways and pavements of the park in inner-western Sydney messages to the general dog-walking, bay-running, child-minding public began to appear in chalk. 'Can you think and run? Come on Sunday 22 July at 10am for some orienteering?'

The ploy drew a few newbies.



Celebrities

This summer we invited some well-known people to events in their area (GWS Giants to a western Sydney Summer Series, the Swans to a southern SSS, some NRL teams, federal opposition leader and fitness fanatic Tony Abbott to an event near his home on Sydney's northern beaches etc). We offered them a complimentary entry and asked in return that we may use their attendance as a marketing tool for our sport.

We were understandably delighted when the GWS Giants contacted us and we were able to host them at very short notice (see sidebar).

And it looks like we may have NSW Sports Minister Graham Annesley attend our SSS finale in late March, possibly as a competitor as well as handing out prizes.

Having your local member at an event is a good way to alert them to our great sport, general land access issues and just how low-impact it is on the environment.

Summer Series events in particular are simple, great off-season or pre-season activities for winter sport clubs (think footy, hockey, netball etc).

First contact

Okay – so potential newcomers have picked up a flyer or booklet and gone to your website. But, oh dear me, it looks like it hasn't been updated for weeks. All that hard work ruined – your club / state association now looks more like that of a stamp collecting group than the portal for an adventure sport.

Your website must be fresh – full details of your next event (preferably with a map showing the assembly location) should be posted at least 2-3 weeks in advance.

Likewise, results, photos, maps, reports etc should be posted ASAP after the event. And please, do not post photos of people sitting around the organising table. We are not playing cards! Send a member out to the nearest control or two to get some action shots on their mobile phone.

You are no doubt familiar with the orienteering club websites in your state. Once you have finished reading this magazine, take the time to look around club websites in another state. What is your first impression of each club, based on its website? Does it come across as energetic, welcoming, exciting, fresh? Or as maudlin, with the bare minimum done and looking mostly like it's for internal consumption only?

(NOTE: I counted 59 clubs under the OA umbrella, but only 28 have their own website.)

There is so much competition for the consumer recreation dollar. Orienteering clubs must think much more about marketing themselves to the world beyond their small membership. How else will they survive, let alone grow?

From a state perspective, unless your office is staffed Mon-Fri 9-5, I am not convinced of the need to display a landline number on material. In fact, it can be counterproductive, as an unanswered phone call could be one convert we miss out on. At least 95% of NSW enquiries are via email – these should be answered (if initially only to acknowledge) within 24 hours. If your state office is only staffed part-time, it's better to include a mobile number. Immediate friendly verbal contact with someone who can 'sell' our sport makes a great impact on outsiders. And word of mouth is valuable.

NSW also posts event details on various external websites (Sydney Summer Series on Cool Running), MTB and DuO on adventure racing websites.

We have a Facebook page and a Twitter feed, and are looking at experimenting with Facebook and Google advertising.

At the event

What do you mean marketing at the event?

(1) Arriving

- Are there directional O signs in neighbouring streets to direct everyone to the location? (Newcomers may not be good at reading maps – any help they get in reaching the event will be gratefully received!)
- Is there a clearly visible club banner denoting the assembly area?
- Are organisers / helpers clearly visible (in fluoro vests or club uniform) to newcomers? Do you offer introductory coaching to help them?
- Is the registration process easy? Do you collect their email address?
- Are there toilets / shelter / taps on hand?

(2) On the course

- Is the start in a clear and safe location?
- Is the map correct? (There have been major blunders lately with map scales)
- Are the controls in the exact locations? Are they easy to 'read' on beginner courses (ie they avoid map sections in which too much detail obscures the features near the control)? Are the control descriptions accurate and easily understood?
- Does the course 'show off' the best bits of the area (parks, reserves, bush tracks, waterfalls etc) or is it mainly boring road running? Has it been vetted? Is it fair in length and difficulty?

(3) Finishing

- Is the finish in a clear and safe location? Or 5m from the edge of a car park, at the bottom of a 1m drop, up against a tennis court fence and with host club members standing directly in front of it? All the above happened at a Sydney Summer Series event in November. It was not a good look.
- Is it close to the download desk? Even 30m away from the desk, at a street event, may be enough for some people to forget to then download (I was guilty of this on Boxing Day as I wanted to ensure the finish area was not crowded).
- Do you debrief newcomers? For someone who found their first orienteering event a bit 'tricky', as is often the case, this process is crucial in tempting them to give it another go. Go over mistakes they made, or difficulties they had, and outline simple steps to improve next time.

You can no doubt think of more little things that will create a good impression AT an event. Feel free to let me know, and include them in your club's checklist.

One point that I must make is that your marketing effort goes on well after the actual participation phase is over.

What next?

While regulars are not necessarily in a rush to see the results, a newcomer can be just as impressed or put off with the aftermath of an event, especially if they have done well. So let them bask in the warm afterglow of their efforts straight away. How?

- Update your website within 24 hours with results, splits, a report, photos and the map as a pdf or on Routegadget. It's always nice to mention newcomers by name in the report. The fact that you have noticed them will earn big brownie points.
- Send results and a brief report to local media. For State League events (and MetrOLeague if you have something similar), send the results to AAP (email me for the correct format for these results).
- If a new person has joined, send their details to your club secretary and state head office ASAP so they can receive a welcome pack. Even casual members should be added to the weekly email bulletin. In NSW, Maggie Jones compiles the email (using MailChimp) that goes to members and casuals, who can easily unsubscribe if they wish). It keeps them in the loop.

Now here's something that has me constantly stumped - why do so few clubs post their courses online (either on their website or on Routegadget if it's a major event)? What are they trying to hide? If I miss an event I'd like to see what course(s) was offered. On this topic, I was astonished that the website of the recent Australian championships did not show one single course on Routegadget during the event. There are many more orienteers who did NOT travel to Tasmania; they would love to see (ideally later that day/night) the courses set at our premier national event.

The total package

All the above sounds like a lot, and it is if you are not organised.

When someone rocks up new to a soccer club, they know what to expect - they will do rego, have some chit-chat, then on the field they will pass the ball among team-mates and try to put it into the net at the other end.

But when someone is trying orienteering, they often have no idea what will confront them. They suspect they'll be doing some treasure hunting, like at sport & rec camps (take a bearing of X degrees, and walk Y paces... what do you find?). They are often a little hesitant ("I'm no good at navigating/reading maps"). And occasionally they might be a bit cocky ("I usually do 5k in about X minutes").

Regardless of who they are and their ability level, we have to make sure their event experience is an enjoyable and inquisitive one - from the moment they see your flyer or website, through the event itself, and to the wash-up.

Remember how the Bathurst newspaper described orienteering: "this obscure but intriguing sport".

We ARE obscure, by any dictionary definition, compared to most Australian sports - but if we can convincingly "market" - and just as importantly "sell" - the intrigue, then we will continue to attract newcomers... and keep them.