

Chapter 3.2

Promotional activities

Benefits of this chapter

In the previous chapter, your federation considered the definition and techniques for creating a “brand.” If a “brand” is the image that consumers have of your federation, then “branding” is the process of promoting and building the brand.

This chapter will help your federation make the “brand” actionable. That means promoting your brand in ways that communicate the values and mission of your federation to target audiences – athletes, fans, sponsors, etc. There are a number of ways to communicate your brand and this chapter outlines some of the most common and effective ones.

Introduction

Promoting your brand may seem like an overwhelming task. As a federation, you may be thinking: Where should we start? What should we say? Who should say it? These are all important questions, and by creating a plan, the promotional process can start to feel a lot more manageable.

For a brand to be effective, it must be communicated at and within all levels of the federation. In the case of national sports federations, that means communicating how the brand relates to the following three components:

- Organisation
- Sport
- Products

Organisation

Refers to audiences within the sports federation, including management and staff. It is imperative that this group is on-board from the beginning and there are promotional activities that federation leadership can initiate to make sure internal audiences understand and support the brand.

Sport

Refers to presenting the positive aspects of the sport. For aquatics sports, this includes the moral qualities of the sport (teamwork, discipline, sportsmanship, etc.), the social value of the sport (e.g. promoting participation in traditionally minority groups) and how the sport can benefit health and wellness.

Products

Refers to how the brand can be applied to events and other high-profile activities. The way these events are organised says a lot about the brand image of the federation, so these events are a key promotional component of overall branding initiatives.

Obviously, one of the key ways to promote your brand is through the use of traditional media outlets and newer digital and online strategies. These methods will be described in greater detail in the following two chapters. The following techniques focus less on media strategies and more on what your federation can do to link its values with its activities as an organisation.

Promoting your brand through the organisation

Communicating the federation's brand to all internal audiences – management and staff – is key to ensuring that day-to-day operations reflect the values of the federation consistently and convincingly. Too often in sports, organisations claim to value things such as leadership, performance and sustainability while their daily operations and internal culture do not match up with those values.

The following are some key strategies that you can use to promote your federation's brand internally:

- 1/ Formally announce the federation's brand
- All federation employees (management and staff) should be

brought together for the announcement and explanation of the new brand. The values reflected in the brand should be explained and the importance of demonstrating the brand and its values should be communicated clearly. It should also be made clear that deviating from the brand will not be tolerated – part of effective branding is maintaining discipline in its implementation, both internally and externally.

2/ Make the brand visible

This means displaying the brand logo throughout the office and in key meeting areas. This also means displaying the values on which the brand is based. All staff and federation leaders should be able to access the stated values.

3/ Incorporate the brand into internal communications

Wherever possible, methods of communication (email signatures, federation stationery, etc.) should prominently feature the federation's brand logo. This provides a consistent reminder to internal and external audiences about what the federation stands for.

4/ Reinforce the brand with regular internal communication

Weekly emails, monthly newsletters and a federation intranet are all ways to reinforce your brand internally. These methods of communication provide a forum to remind internal audiences about what the values and brand of the federation are, and provide tangible examples of how the brand is working internally.

Promoting your brand through aquatics

By promoting your brand through aquatics, your federation can communicate the positive qualities of its brand – its health benefits, social value and contributions to personal and physical development. In countries where aquatics sports are less popular compared to other sports, this is a key element to generating interest and loyalty in your sport, particularly at the grassroots level.

There are several promotional platforms that your federation can use to promote your brand through the sport itself.

The following is a list that includes some of the most effective:

1/ Interacting with existing clubs

By strengthening your relationship with existing clubs in your country, you can demonstrate your commitment to the growth of the sport. Some practical ways promoting your brand with existing clubs include stroke technique classes, coaching development seminars, event planning seminars for club leaders, etc. These types of grassroots interactions help you communicate your brand and show some of your key consumers that you are invested in the growth of the sport.

2/ Supporting new clubs

When new clubs are forming, your federation can play a key role in making sure the new venture is successful. By making a connection at the “ground level” with new clubs, you can make positive

and lasting impressions that promote loyalty and support from clubs over the long-term. You can promote your brand with new clubs by offering training in how to form a new club, how to increase membership and offering clinics for athletes interested in or just beginning to develop skills in a particular aquatic sport. By being a part of these development efforts, you help grow the sport while increasing awareness of the federation's brand at the same time.

3/ School-based promotions

By working with local schools, your federations can communicate the positive benefits of participation in aquatic sports to a wide group of potential athletes. Any opportunity to enter schools and interact with young people is a great opportunity to generate interest and enthusiasm for aquatic sports in the next generation. Local schools are often sponsoring activities that promote healthier living, physical activity and the social benefits of participation in sports and leisure. So, by making connections with local school officials, your federation can find ways to inspire participation in aquatic sports and awareness of your federation's brand.

Promoting your brand through the products

Your federation's products – the events put on during the year – are a great way to communicate your brand to relevant audiences – athletes, fans, sponsors, coaches, etc. You have primary control over the format of the events; your federation can make sure that the events are an accurate, influential expression of the best aquatic sports can offer.

Here are some ways you can promote your brand at your events:

1/ Demonstrate a professional image.

At major aquatic events, make sure that the competition venue is professionally laid out and clean. Attendees (athletes, media, fans) will make a quick judgment about the facilities and this will impact their perception of your federation, whether they know it or not. The more professional the venue looks, the more professional they will perceive your federation to be.

2/ Exhibit your brand logo wherever possible.

By displaying your federation's brand logo at the event (poolside signage, interview area backdrop, athlete holding room, souvenir stands, etc.), you can link the event to your federation at every turn. By doing so, you increase the perception that the event is not just a one-off event, but the event is part of your federation's product offerings.

3/ Ensure that event operations reflect your brand.

If your brand values professionalism, performance or efficiency, it is critical that event operations reflect those same values. By ensuring that operations run in a timely, organised manner, you can ensure consistency and compatibility between what you say you are as a federation and what you actually do to prove that you stand for those values.

Promoting your brand is key to achieving long-term development goals for your federation. By becoming directly associated with the values your federation represents, you can make your federation a leader in your national sporting community and the international aquatics community. Integrate your brand at every level of your federation and your values and brand can become instinctive elements of how you do business and how you are perceived by your most important audiences.