

George Wittorff is a member of the Board of the NRAA, given the task of addressing membership issues facing the movement at a national level, and developing and investigating strategies that State Associations and local clubs could gainfully use in a concerted effort to attract and retain members.

This is number 6 of a series of articles aimed at achieving that goal

ASAPS

Advancing Shooting as A Positive Sport

The recent survey conducted by Shooting Australia showed that 97% of shooters in Australia have an email address and that Email is the preferred method of communication for both Clubs and Shooters.

67% of Clubs have their own website while 35% of Clubs have a Facebook page. It stands to reason that assuming the publicity officer/club official is active, Associations and Clubs should have little difficulty in communicating with existing members, and have the means available to reach potential members via the web.

What Clubs in general could do better is to effectively market the sport and their club. It goes without saying that all club members should be involved in informal marketing whenever they can. Clubs should encourage members to tell their friends and family about what happens on the range and what a rifle club can offer.

MARKETING SHOOTING TO THE PUBLIC

The following information, suggested strategies and ideas have been gathered from successful practices, experience over the years and research into marketing literature. There is a myriad of ways clubs can advertise and promote their clubs in an effort to attract new members. None of them is guaranteed to work all the time while some of them will prove highly effective in certain circumstances.

What is guaranteed, is that if none of them are taken on board, then it's a dead certainty that nothing will happen and membership will at best stay static, but more than likely, continue to slowly decline.

Activities and Actions at the Club Level

At the formal club level, it should prove useful to appoint a publicity/promotions officer, or small team of members to plan and oversee some simple local marketing strategies.

One powerful argument shooting clubs can offer as an attraction is to focus on the fact that activities that involve spending time with friends and families are appealing to people. Our sport lends itself to successfully promoting the social side of shooting and how competing, as part of a team or club, including alongside members of your family can be both satisfying and fun. Age and gender equity is a feature of shooting

and should be capitalized on when promoting shooting as a positive sport no matter what the approach being used.

How can clubs reach out to potential members? Successful clubs will use the full range of tools that are available to them by using their webpages and social media to raise the profile of their club.

Tips and Hints to Promote your club.

- Make sure people can find you.
- Ensure your club is listed in any local directory of sporting clubs and any online club databases.
- Check with your local Town or City Council to make sure your club's details are included on their online directories.
- Make the most of signs and banners. Signs can be used for a lot more than just giving directions to your club. They can be an effective way for clubs to communicate important information, such as upcoming events, Come and Try days, and generally communicating to the public

Flyers:

These are useful to letter box drop or leave bundles in local sports stores, hairdressers etc. If preparing a flyer, think carefully about what you want it to say.

Some starting ideas for flyers include:

- Focus – keep to a single, central idea
- Visibility – make it stand out on the page
- Branding – do all you can to make your flyer different, while retaining the theme of shooting
- Layout – make the layout clean, logical and easy to read.
- Information – give the time, location and contact number plus any other vital information.
- Avoid too much text; less is best

Use the Media to increase your club's profile:

Country clubs generally have easy access to the local district's press. Sadly this resource is typically underused whereas if carefully cultivated, a club's local profile becomes imbedded as part of the community, thus making membership drives much easier and more accessible.

Regular press releases offer clubs a cost effective method of promoting a club or event. Any story that is newsworthy and relevant to the local community, such as a team shoot or Prize Meeting will allow you to promote this at no cost to a large audience.

Tips on Press Releases:

Each press release should have an arresting title. Focus on 'firsts' e.g., one of your club members is the first to qualify for a state or national team. Avoid jargon.

First paragraph:

Don't try to set the scene or waffle. Get straight into your story:

- Summarise who's involved
- Tell what happened or is about to happen

- Where and when the news took place or will take place
- How events have unfolded so far, and why this is important.

The details:

Follow up the first paragraph with the details. Make sure you give the journalists all they need and make it as interesting as possible. Keep sentence structure simple; explain complicated terms (possible, central bull, etc). Avoid exaggeration and self-congratulations. Remember the article is for a local audience, so think how the story affects local people.

Include photographs where possible, but ensure they are of good quality and conform to the publication's own style.

When dealing with journalists:

Do:

- Email press releases to journalist within the body of your email and not as an attachment
- Put the press release headline (or summary) in the subject box of the email
- Follow up press releases with a phone call to the individual emailed
- Observe journalists' busy times of the day and deadlines

Don't:

- Phone the journalist before you have fully thought through the idea or story you want to discuss
- Don't assume journalists will read your email. Always follow up with a phone call.
- Don't talk to journalists on the day before publication – give them several days notice prior to publication if it is a weekly newspaper.

The above examples and suggestions are guidelines for clubs to try. The sting in the tail however, is that unless someone at the club level takes the initiative and decides to try at least one strategy, then nothing happens. It's not rocket science!

Hopefully, some part of this article will cause at least one or two of your club members to take some responsibility to do something to support the club and so in some small but important way, promote shooting as a positive sport.

Why not you?

*Ref: Shooting Australia Shooter Survey
Skills Alliance: Creating an Active Nation Through Sport*
