



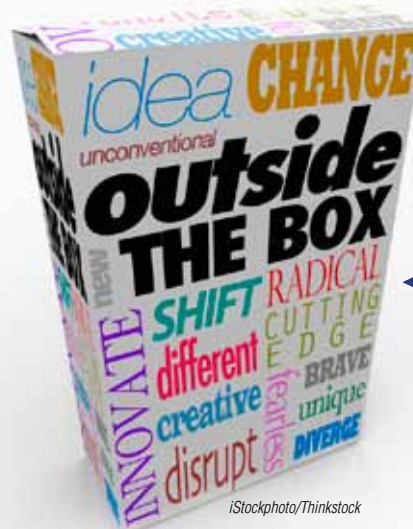
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Have you ever attended a baseball game because you knew there would be an amazing fireworks display afterwards? Or, have you ever gone to a concert because you won free tickets in a sweepstakes or contest? If so, you were the target of a sales promotion designed by a sport/event marketer. In the sport/event industry, there's a lot of competition for customers. To gain new customers and keep current customers coming back again and again, sport/event marketers must generate some "out-of-the-box," or fresh, creative ideas for sales promotions. "Out-of-the-box" sales promotions catch people's attention, create excitement for the game or event, and stand out from the crowd of competitors. Read on to learn how you can identify great ideas for these one-of-a-kind opportunities.

Thinking Outside the Box

Sales promotions

No doubt you've heard the phrase, "Think outside the box," before. But, what does it mean? Think of it this way—everything "inside the box" has been done before. "Inside the box" is conventional thinking, tried-and-true methods of doing things. Even though "inside-the-box" methods may have proven to work well in the past, they can get boring over time and can begin to



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◀ Without creative, ingenious individuals who think "outside the box," life would be very boring.

lose their effectiveness. For example, a \$1-million sweepstakes contest might cause you to choose one brand of potato chips over another, but after a while, won't that promotion become less and less exciting? Good marketers know that it will, and that's why they start to "think outside the box." They know that only fresh, new sales promotions will give them the competitive edge they need.

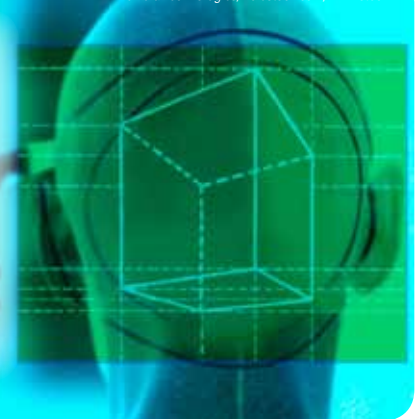
Objectives

- A** Explain reasons for using "out-of-the box" sales promotion ideas for sports/events.
- B** Identify "out-of-the-box" sales promotion ideas for sports/events.

An "Out-of-the-Box" Idea

The Chicago White Sox once hosted a sleepover after a Saturday night game against the Cleveland Indians. For \$300, fans received a ticket to the game, a parking pass, access to the outfield grass for the sleepover, and a midnight movie and snack.

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Before you jump headfirst into the task of generating “out-of-the-box” sales promotion ideas for your game or event, make sure to review your knowledge of what sales promotion is. **Sales promotion** is any promotional activity (other than advertising, personal selling, and publicity) that stimulates customer purchases. So, then, it’s important to keep in mind what sales promotion *isn’t*. You might come up with an amazing, out-of-the-ordinary idea for a billboard advertising your team, but advertising is different from sales promotion.

A sales promotion is a short-term (limited time only) incentive that you offer to encourage customers to purchase your product. An **incentive** is something that will fulfill a customer’s specific desire or need—such as the desire to pay less than full price for a product or to receive a free gift. Common forms of sales promotion include coupons, rebates, contests, and product samples. Research shows that more than half the households in the United States take advantage of sales promotions every year.

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An “Out-of-the-Box” Idea

The San Diego Padres host an annual “Dog Days of Summer” event. After a pre-game doggie parade through the infield, dogs and their owners enjoy the game together from a special seating section in the outfield.




Picture of Paul Wight (The Big Show) thanks to and Ookaboo!

▲ Suppose that your favorite professional wrestler is scheduled to appear at a local hockey game. Would that be enough to make you buy a ticket?

Kind of a big deal

Sales promotion is a major part of sport/event marketing because the industry is so highly competitive. Think of all your entertainment options for this coming weekend. Sure, you could head to that minor-league hockey game. Or you could check out the Art Festival downtown. Maybe you could catch a movie or even just stay home and play video games. How will you decide what to do?

Let’s say you’re a huge wrestling fan. You hear on the radio that your favorite WWE star will be making an appearance at the hockey game. How might that news affect your plans? Or, maybe you’re interested in learning how to paint. The flyer you receive about the Art Festival mentions that a local artist will be giving a free painting demonstration for the first 25 people to show up at his booth. Would that change your mind?

Smart sport/event marketers know that their potential customers have an endless list of possibilities for how to spend their time and money. A good sales promotion can help customers decide to spend that money with *you* rather than with the competition. But even good sales promotions can become all-too-common in the world of sports and events. To stay on top of their game, sport/event marketers *must* be able to generate some “out-of-the-box” ideas.

Big benefits

Let’s say you get a job working on the concert tour of a well-established country music star. Traditionally, the tour’s marketers use sales promotions such as ticket coupons available at local grocery stores and two-for-one ticket giveaway contests on local radio stations. The promotions have worked pretty well throughout the years, and the concerts are usually between 90 and 95 percent sold out. But, what about that last 5 percent? Your job is to generate some creative new sales promotion ideas that will fill every seat in every city. Perhaps you could give away free cowboy hats to the first 100 fans at the gate, or book a hot new band as the opening act. “Out-of-the-box” thinking can get people excited about attending your event.

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An “Out-of-the-Box” Idea

The Indiana Pacers ran a sales promotion in partnership with Finish Line stores to allow one lucky kid to become an honorary Pacers Ball Kid for a game. Kids could enter the contest at any Finish Line, and if their name was chosen, they received a \$25 gift certificate to Finish Line, a Pacers hat and T-shirt, tickets to a game, and dinner with a Pacers player.



“Out-of-the-box” thinking can also create more positive publicity for your game or event. Although sales promotion is different from advertising or public relations, they’re all tied together in the overall marketing plan. For instance, say you’ve designed a new sales promotion for a golf tournament. At each of the 18 holes, you’ll be giving away free samples of different food and beverage products—at hole six, you’ll have lemonade, at hole 12, you’ll have ice cream, and so on. You highlight the promotion in all of your advertisements for the event—on television, on the radio, online, and in the newspaper. The “buzz” your promotion creates through the media excites people, and you sell more tickets for the tournament.

Another benefit of “out-of-the-box” thinking is that your fresh, new sales promotions will keep you ahead of the competition. And remember, your competition isn’t just the other games

or events that your customers could attend, but it’s *anything* they could do other than spend their time and money with you—even take a nap! Perhaps you run a business at the city park, renting out sports equipment such as Frisbees, footballs, and inline skates. Lately, it’s been pretty hot outside, and you’ve been losing a lot of business to the movie theater across the street. So, you decide to run a sales promotion called “Chilling in the Park.” With each equipment rental of five dollars or more, customers receive a free ice-cold bottle of water or Gatorade. You feature the promotion in your new round of advertisements, and customers begin to understand that they can have fun *and* cool off in the park, for far less than the cost of movie-theater concessions.

City Park Rentals
presents

Chilling in the Park

Kane Skernar/Digital Vision/Thinkstock

Rent \$5 in equipment and get a free Dasani or Gatorade

- ▲ Out-of-the-box sales promotions can keep you ahead of the competition—which includes anything that customers can do other than spend their money with you!

Summary

“Thinking outside the box” means thinking unconventionally, going beyond the way things have always been done. In sport/event marketing, it’s important to be able to generate “out-of-the-box” sales promotion ideas to gain customers, create positive publicity, and stay ahead of the competition. Sales promotion is any promotional activity (other than advertising, personal selling, and publicity) that stimulates customer purchases.



1. What does it mean to “think inside the box”?
2. What is sales promotion?
3. What is an incentive?
4. Why is sales promotion important in sport/event marketing?
5. List three benefits of “out-of-the-box” sales promotions in sport/event marketing.

Identifying “Out-of-the-Box” Opportunities

Where to look

When setting out to develop creative sales promotion ideas for your game or event, the first thing you should understand is that there is no particular source or technique for doing so. After all, if there were a proven method, you’d be back inside the box! Inspiration can strike anywhere, anytime. So, look around you every day, keeping your eyes and your mind open to be inspired.

Although you can’t force inspiration, you can certainly be prepared for it. One way to be prepared is to know your target market inside and out. Let’s say you are organizing a charity auction to benefit muscular dystrophy research, and you want to attract as many of the wealthiest members of the community as you can. You would, then, automatically be able to eliminate the idea of using coupons as a sales promotion for this event. The people who have enough money to donate large sums to charity will not be worried about paying the price of admission to the auction. You might want to consider getting a celebrity or popular entertainer to attend instead.



▲ Watch out! Inspiration could hit you at any minute. You never know when or where you’ll think of the next great out-of-the-box sales promotion!

THE GRAY ZONE

“Out-of-the-box” sales promotions can be really fun. Sometimes, the crazier they are, the better! But, it can be possible for these types of promotions to go too far—at least in some people’s eyes. Here are a few examples of some sport/event promotions that raised eyebrows:

- “Scientology Night” at a minor-league baseball game, poking fun at Tom Cruise and other celebrity followers of the religion
- A funeral-package giveaway (also at a minor-league baseball game)
- “Rod Blagojevich Prison Jersey Night” at a minor-league hockey game (Blagojevich was a former governor of Illinois who was sentenced to time in prison.)
- “Backstabbers Night” at a minor-league baseball game, allowing anyone with an Ohio driver’s license to get in free after LeBron James left the Cleveland Cavaliers
- “Manti Te’o’s Girlfriend Bobblehead Giveaway Night” (at again!) a minor-league baseball game (Te’o was a college football star who was duped into believing his online girlfriend was real—she wasn’t. The bobblehead boxes at the game were empty.)

Minor-league teams are notorious for creating hilarious and unique promotions to get fans in the seats. However, as you can see, some of these promotions might be offensive or hurtful to certain people. What do you think? Are these sport/event marketers behaving ethically?

Another way to be prepared for inspiration is to know your competition inside and out. Their sales promotion ideas might help you think of some of your own. For example, if the team across town is having great success with a bobblehead doll giveaway, you'll realize that **premiums** (low-cost items given to customers for free, also called traffic builders) work well with your target audience. Then, you can try to improve on your competitor's idea. You might be able to think of an interesting premium giveaway that no one has ever done before.

And, you can always take old, "inside-the-box" ideas and put a new twist on them. For instance, many teams have special "theme"



Irish Heritage Night II

Monday, August 21 - Kicking off Heritage Week, Irish Night includes a seat in the exclusive Irish Night sections, a newly designed Irish Night themed Giants baseball cap. Hats are only available when you purchase a ticket for Irish Night from this site and must be redeemed at the game. The famous Irish band Culann's Hounds will be performing live Irish music throughout the game, Irish dancers will be performing and Guinness will be on tap.



Italian Heritage Night

Tuesday, August 22 - Your purchase includes a Giants Italian Night themed t-shirt. These shirts are only available when you purchase a ticket for Italian Heritage Night from this site and must be redeemed at the game. Musical performances by Bella Ciao.



Jewish Heritage Night

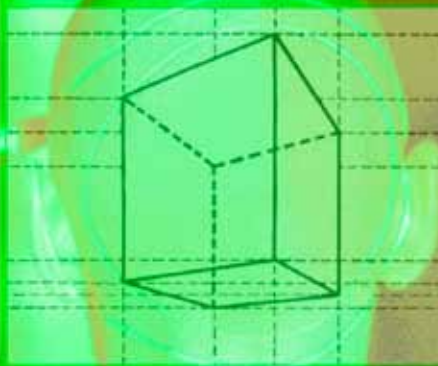
Thursday, August 24 - The Jewish Heritage Night package includes a seat in the exclusive Jewish Heritage Night sections and a Jewish/Giants themed baseball cap in Hebrew, only available when you purchase a ticket for Jewish Heritage Night from the link below. Hat vouchers must be redeemed at the game.

- ▲ Some of the San Francisco Giants' most popular special events are their "Heritage Nights." Which Heritage Night would you be most likely to attend?

An "Out-of-the-Box" Idea

The Lakewood BlueClaws, a minor-league baseball team, teamed up with a local stable for a drawing in which one fan won partial ownership of a racehorse. After a game, fans received racetrack admission tickets that also served as entries in the drawing.

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nights at certain games, such as "College Night" or "Boy Scouts Night." People who are members of a certain group might receive discounted ticket prices or special recognition during the game. The San Francisco Giants' marketers decided to take this idea "out-of-the-box" and developed several "Heritage Nights" to celebrate the cultural diversity of the San Francisco community. Over the course of one week, the Giants held Irish Heritage Night, Italian Heritage Night, Jewish Heritage Night, and Asian-American Heritage Night. At each game, special seating sections were reserved for fans purchasing Heritage Night tickets, and

live music and entertainment highlighted each of the unique ethnicities. Heritage Night ticket holders also received hats or T-shirts combining the Giants' logo with colors or symbols associated with their particular culture.

Techniques for creative thinking

If inspiration hasn't hit you yet, and you need to come up with some "out-of-the-box" sales promotion ideas as soon as possible (say you have a meeting with your manager tomorrow!), some creative-thinking techniques may help you speed up the process a bit.

Brainstorming is a creative-thinking technique involving the identification of as many different ideas as possible during a certain time frame. You can brainstorm by yourself, but the technique works best in a group setting. Gather your colleagues (or even your friends and family, if you're trying to generate ideas at home), and set a time limit of 30 minutes or so for brainstorming. Have the brainstormers throw out every sales promotion idea that comes to their minds, and assign one person to write down all the ideas on a piece

of paper that's large enough for everyone to see. No one should make judgments about any of the ideas until the brainstorming session is over. When the session is over, go back through the ideas and analyze each one. Some ideas will be discarded as impractical, too expensive, or not creative enough, but even the ones that won't work may eventually lead you to the one that will.

If all else fails, some good, old-fashioned research might just do the trick. Looking through sales promotion ideas on team/organization websites and in trade magazines, such as *SportsBusiness Journal* or *eventsolutions.com*, can help to get your creative thoughts flowing.

Consider this

When you come up with an “out-of-the-box” sales promotion idea, you'll be so excited that you'll want to get started on it right away. But, before you do, test your idea with these two questions:

- **Does this sales promotion reach my target audience?**

Even a great, “out-of-the-box” idea is ineffective if it doesn't reach your game's or event's target audience. Just as coupons are inappropriate for the wealthy patrons of your charity auction, so are toy-car or stuffed-animal giveaways inappropriate if you are trying to draw in the teenage crowd. Talk to others in your organization, and get their thoughts on whether or not your idea is right for your target market.

- **Does this sales promotion fit with the overall marketing plan?**

What are your organization's specific marketing objectives right now? Are you trying to sell more tickets? Or is a better public image your goal? Make sure your “out-of-the-box” idea fits in with the plan. If selling more tickets is your objective, a unique coupon plan might be just the thing. But if you're trying to pump up public relations, you might opt for a creative contest that generates excitement through radio and television advertisements.



▲ For your out-of-the-box sales promotion to be a success, it must reach your target audience.

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An “Out-of-the-Box” Idea

The Seattle Storm, WNBA champions, held a sweepstakes contest in which one lucky fan won an authentic championship ring. The fan received the ring in the same pre-game ceremony in which the players received theirs.

Details, details

Once you know that your “out-of-the-box” idea will reach your target audience and fits well with your organization's overall marketing plan, you'll be ready to identify the specific components of the sales promotion. The following three steps will make the process of identifying “out-of-the-box” sales promotions complete.

1. Determine the incentive.

What does your sales promotion offer to potential customers? A chance to save money? A free sample or gift? An opportunity to experience something they can't unless they attend your game or event? Your sales promotion *must* satisfy a need or desire of your target customer.

2. Determine delivery.

How will your customers receive their incentive? Will it be in the form of a coupon? A contest? A special event? Think of your incentive as a present and the delivery method as the way you decide to wrap it. This is your chance to be creative. What crazy way can you think of for fans to earn a discounted ticket to your game or event? What kind of halftime contests or entertainment can you cook up that will make people excited about coming to the game? Wow them with something “out-of-the-box.”

3. Determine how to get the news out.

So, you’ve identified an incentive and a great form of delivery for your sales promotion. The last element you’ll need to identify is the method for getting the word out about the promotion. It can’t work unless your potential customers know about it! Getting the word out might involve something as big as a full-fledged advertising campaign, or it might be as simple as printing a coupon to appear in the Sunday paper.



- ▲ Sales promotions can take many forms, including coupons, contests, free gifts, special events, etc.

Summary

There’s no one source for “out-of-the-box” sales promotion ideas. Inspiration can strike at any time, but you can be prepared for it by knowing your target audience and your competition inside and out. You can also take an old idea and put a new spin on it. Brainstorming and good, old-fashioned research can also help you come up with creative ideas. Always consider whether or not your sales promotion idea fits your target audience and works well with your organization’s overall marketing plan. Once you’ve identified the incentive, the delivery method, and a way to get the word out, you’ll be ready to get started with your “out-of-the-box” sales promotion idea.

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An “Out-of-the-Box” Idea

One year, the Charleston RiverDogs, a minor-league baseball team, set a record for the lowest attendance ever at a professional baseball game by holding “Nobody Night.” The fans were locked out (at a street party just outside the stadium) until the fifth inning when the record became official. It certainly drew an interested crowd!

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TOTAL RECALL

1. Describe three ways to prepare for inspiration when generating “out-of-the-box” sales promotion ideas.
2. What two questions should you ask to test your “out-of-the-box” idea?
3. What three steps complete the process of identifying an “out-of-the-box” sales promotion idea?