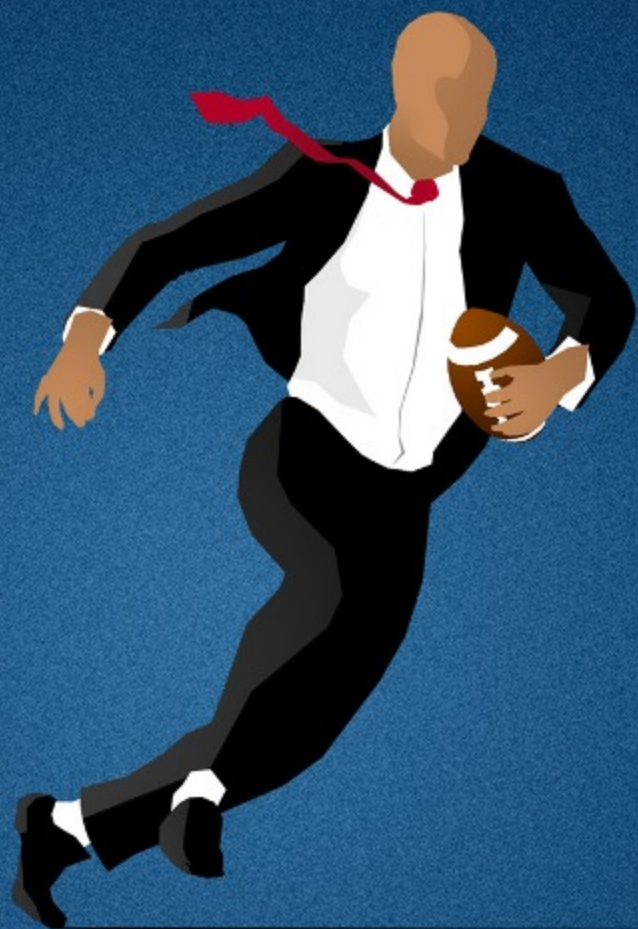


LEWIS HOWES



THE GAME STARTS HERE

How to take your career to the
next level in the sports industry

The Game Starts Here

**How to Take Your Career to the Next
Level in the Sports Industry**



Lewis Howes

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Introduction

Passion. That's the number one thing I hear from people when they explain why they work in sports.

We love sports for many reasons. From a young age it's fun to play games as a child. Maybe we never lose that child-like attitude and that's why we continue to stay passionate about sports long after our little league days. Sports give people hope, something to brag about, a place to escape, something to be proud of, along with many other things, it's simply good clean fun.

I grew up loving sports, and it shaped me into the person I am today. Without sports, my life would be completely different. I wouldn't have traveled the world by age 21, I probably wouldn't have broken as many bones or been as large as I am. My confidence level would be lower, I wouldn't be as competitive or hungry to succeed in the business world. Sports gave me so many both exiting and heart breaking experiences from the countless games I have played.

After my professional athletic career ended, I knew I wanted to stay in the world of sports. It's the one thing I'm most passionate about and I didn't want to loose my competitive spirit. This is one of the reasons I created SportsNetworker.com and Sports Executives Association. I wanted to help others stay connected in the world of sports so they didn't lose touch of what they are most passionate about.

Although I don't play as many games as when I was growing up, I still love to talk about sports and business (another love of mine). This book is a place to share with you some of my best ideas on merging the two. I hope to connect you with the best ideas in the business of sports from some of the leading experts.

Lewis Howes

Sports and Social Media

“Social media as it relates to customer service, social media as it relates to marketing, social media as it relates to HR; this isn’t a technology change, it is a complete mindset change.”

--Shama Kabani, *President of The Marketing Zen Group*

Does Sports Need Social Media?

Lewis Howes

Does Sports Need Social Media? Yes or no? Does it depend on what sector of the sports industry? Should we even care?

Whether it's a sports teams using a Facebook fan page, professional athletes on Twitter, sports agencies trying to promote their brand through blogging, sports management programs looking to recruit new students, or other sports organizations looking to find ways to increase sales and drive profits.... do they fully understand social media and are they ready to include it in their game?

I have been pretty frustrated with the somewhat ignorant attitude I continue to see with sports teams and leagues banning social media, and sports agencies thinking social media is a waste of time, or even that sports PR and marketing companies believing social media in sports should not be used, period. WAKE UP PEOPLE! The fans that watch your team on weekends, those students that want to learn about your sports management program, and the companies that need your marketing expertise or that are looking to buy advertising are all online using some form of social media! Even top sports business experts like CNBC's Sports Biz reporter Darren Rovell talks about the power of social media on his blog and he tweets daily to get his message out there.

And yes, with little or no cost, there are ways to get your message out there to help you achieve your goals within the sports industry. If you need a more in depth marketing strategy just ask top social media sports professionals Amy Martin, AJ Vaynerchuk, Jason Peck or Ryan Stephens as they can easily help any sports organization figure out how to achieve their goals and what action to take to reach them.

I am just tired of hearing that the sports industry still doesn't have a forward thinking mindset when it comes to using social media and it is really frustrating me (and you don't want to see my football playing aggression come out in my blog, or it may get ugly!). My goal is to start providing more articles that help give the information the sports industry needs to use to start taking action with using social media so they can start to see the same successes other industries are gaining from it.

Does the future of sports media belong to ESPN?

Sam Taggart

For the last few decades, ESPN has been the unquestioned as the “Worldwide Leader in Sports.” What started as a Connecticut-based, Connecticut-focused, 24-hour sports network has now become more than ten popular channels across the world (including ESPN, ESPN2, ESPN News, ESPN Classic, and ESPN Deportes) and a highly-trafficked website (ESPN.com) devoted to delivering the latest sports news all day, every day. ESPN also boasts a very popular, bi-weekly magazine. In the short term (10-15 years), ESPN will continue to dominate for three simple reasons:

1. Distribution. ESPN’s reach is massive, on and offline. As mentioned, they have more than ten sports networks across the world, as well as ESPN.com (nearly 5 million unique visitors in the month of January), and a big-time magazine. ESPN has also delved into the world of social media, with more than a half million combined Facebook fans and Twitter followers. It’s hard to beat that kind of power.

2. Access. ESPN reporters and employees often obtain breaking sports news first, because people (athletes, agents, PR agencies, etc) know ESPN has the most reach and the most credibility. ESPN has built a strong reputation over the years of being the first to break news. At this point, even if they aren’t first, they often times get credit because they are so mainstream.

3. Culture. Most sports fans watch at least one airing of SportsCenter or check ESPN.com at least once per day. In our culture, even people who could care less about sports know about ESPN. Ask those same people

what YardBarker or FanHouse is, and they won't have the slightest idea. ESPN has dominated for too long to die so quickly.

In the long term, I think ESPN is in some trouble. They have made significant strides to be more social. Most on-air talent and many shows have social media accounts and interact nicely. For example, Pardon the Interruption asks Twitter followers to suggest topics on a daily basis. It's not their fault that they're in trouble, they just are. In a nutshell, it comes down to the argument that mainstream media itself is dying. In ten or fifteen years, traditional journalists and reporters will be replaced by bloggers. Cable television will collapse. Et cetera.

There are too many talented and knowledgeable sports professionals and content creators (e.g. SportsNetworker) outside of ESPN for them to not be in trouble. Pretty soon, there will be a web version of SportsCenter that is a hell of a lot more interactive than ESPN's version will be. ESPN is a slow-moving corporation. I just feel like they won't be able to keep up with the times.

What about the argument that in ten or fifteen years, athletes, teams, and leagues will have no reason to feed ESPN any information? If OchoCinco (hypothetically, obviously he won't be playing in ten years) wants to do a news conference, he'll turn to Ustream or the OCNN to send out his message. Not ESPN. Sure, ESPN aggregates sports information, and does it well. But that might not be the case down the line.

Should Teams Look Beyond Facebook and Twitter?

Ash Read

We're now starting to see more and more teams getting involved with social media. This is great, but I think it's time they start to look beyond only utilizing the major platforms (Twitter, YouTube, Facebook) and really start to embrace more emerging and niche platforms (Ustream, Tumblr, Flickr).

Every platform offers something different and thus appeals to different types of people. Facebook and Twitter are (currently) more popular than others and should demand more time and resources, but surely the fans that use these emerging platforms deserve some love too? And surely there is value in these platforms for teams?

One team that has had great success through getting involved in a niche network is Manchester City FC, with their use of Flickr. They are the first team I have seen using this platform, if you have seen any others please let me know. They use Flickr as a way to embrace their fans creative side allowing them to use photography and design to express their feelings about the club.

Flickr gives Manchester City fans the chance to see all the latest images from the clubs official stream as well as inviting them to share their own images and get involved in discussion. Some of the images that have been posted in the Flickr group have even been taken on board by the club and helped inspire new PR and retail campaigns.

Another team that has started to get involved with an emerging platform is the New York Knicks on Tumblr. Personally I'm a big fan of Tumblr.

I feel it has huge potential because it offers a great way to find and share information.

It allows users to easily post a range of content with just a few clicks – everything from photos and video to links and even short voice recordings make it the perfect way to keep fans up-to-date. Currently the Knicks mainly use Tumblr as a way to share videos, short blogs, and promotions. I'd like to see them mix up posts a bit more and maybe include a few behind the scenes images, quotes and audio clips from the coaches and players.

It may be a while before Tumblr becomes mainstreamed, but once it does I'm sure it will be a powerful tool for both teams and brands.

In conclusion, the major platforms shouldn't be overlooked. Every team that isn't involved with them is missing out on a big opportunity because they offer great value for both the teams and fans.

However, I feel that niche and emerging platforms allow teams to build up closer relationships with fans and also open up many new engagement and participation opportunities. Teams can choose to share images on Flickr, post short blogs on Tumblr or run live chats or showing live training sessions on Ustream – there's plenty of potential and opportunity out there.

Is there value for fans and teams on niche and emerging platforms? Have you seen any examples of teams or athletes getting involved? What platforms offer potential?

Athlete Twitterers are Inconsiderate Social Media Amateurs

Brad Williamson

Fans want to feel closer to the athletes they admire. If it were up to them, they'd be hanging out over at their house every night, drinking alcohol, eating cold snacks, and playing Madden 'till the break of day. Unfortunate for that harmless little stalker that exists within all of us, that's just not ever going to happen.

So what's the next best approach to digging into the daily drama of our favorite athlete's day-to-day activities? *It Sure Ain't Twitter.*

Twitter can be useful in a lot of ways, but when it comes to an athlete trying to manifest an intimate relationship with a group of fans who so desperately want to love on them a little, they end up turning the platform into a big jock tease.

Now I know I called these teasing Twitterer's "inconsiderate" in this Webisode's title (and maybe that in itself was a bit inconsiderate – sorry), but the truth of the matter is that while they may not realize they're being insensitive, they're definitely being just that.

As it stands right now, I'm sure about 99.99999% of athlete Twitterers are using the platform because A. having a googilion Followers feels pretty damn cool; B. they feel out-of-touch for not riding on the micro-blogging bandwagon; or C. someone within their personal management team told them they needed to use it and probably never gave them a good reason as to why.

That said, it appears that most athlete Twitterer's and really most public figures within any realm of entertainment are using the platform without any productive reason.

Naivety Kills Careers. Again, I apologize for calling these people "inconsiderate," because the reality of the situation is that they're probably unaware of the social responsibilities their celebrity demands them to embrace – after all, they're athletes, not psychologists. So should we blame them for being a bit naive about the tremendous influence they own over their fans?

For now, no, because we got to give them a little room to maneuver through the learning curve the social strengths of the Net causes them to wrestle with. However, we're quickly approaching the completion of the social Web's training camp and our favorite players need to start realizing that their virtual performances are about to start counting for something significant: the life or death of their public persona. Why? Because, pretty soon, you're going to be perceived as being publicly irrelevant if you're not contributing something socially significant within the world's collective online community.

Here's what celebrity Twitterers don't understand:

- Twitter shouldn't be the centerpiece their virtual identity. They're lives are extraordinary and 140 character Tweets can't contain all the details of their days their fans demand that they reveal. They should still use Twitter, because where there's an audience there's opportunity, but it needs to be a small piece of a much more comprehensive Virtual Biography.
- Content kills those who don't understand the power of content. Yes, Twittering your preference of iced Pop Tarts over toast-able Pop Tarts is cool when broadcast in moderation, because this type of insight humanizes individuals who typically seem super-

human; but if your Twitter stream contains nothing but content devoted towards stuff about your breakfast biases, then you'll not only lose your audience to boredom, but you'll also lose the celebrity luster you once had. And once that's gone, you'll have a tough time regaining fans' interest in you as a person when you decide that you want to lead a more meaningful virtual life where you embrace a wider array of online broadcast channels that exist beyond Twitter-dot-friggin'-com.

- Athletes' Followers really — and I mean REALLY — give a damn about them. Throughout most of their lives, athletes see themselves as someone who's merely admired for their physical talents and nothing much more meaningful beyond that. Well guess what, you modest muscle men and women... the media murdered that simple life. Fans now have nightly meetings with you as they watch you perform every day. And because of this constant interaction with you, they begin to feel as if they have an illusion of an intimate relationship with you, otherwise known as a “par asocial relationship.” So when your fans jump online in an effort to interact with content that came straight from you, it's really an insult to them that all you bother providing them is 140 characters of substance-less blurbs of “blah, blah, blah, Bob Law Blog.”

You're So Money & You Don't Even Know It. Imagine the opportunities that would open up for a celebrity who reached out to their fans and really tried to satisfy their hunger for more insight into their life... not only would their fans start to feel like they're friends of their favorite athlete thanks to the sneak peak they're providing into their lives, but the monetary rewards for increasing the value of their personal brand would also be tremendous.

But you know what? None of those opportunities will ever arise as long as Twitter is a public figure's primary fan engagement platform.

Fans desperately desire for athletes to lead a virtual life that's every bit as healthy and vibrant as their physical life is, and the only way this energy can be created is if public figures start treating their personal brand as if it's a full-on media empire that contains literary, video, audio, photographic, interactive and promotional content about their life that's broadcast throughout the entire Web on a daily basis.

Can Twitter be a part of that virtual media empire? Sure it can. But it better be only one small part of a much larger media effort. And before athletes begin constructing this media empire that's centered upon their personal brand, they also have got to drop their amateur attitude towards the process and realize that their fans demand more out their relationship with each other than they thought they did.

You thought your girlfriend or boyfriend was needy!? SHOOOOOOOOT.... they don't have nuthin' on the separation anxiety a fan of a public figure experiences! So, athletes stop teasing us with your cute little Tweets and give us something a little meatier; because, if you don't, you're going to lose our interest in you. And without that, you're nothing buddy ;-)

Top 10 Sports/Social Media Trends of 2010

Ryan Stephens

Jason Peck recently asked 16 sports industry thought leaders (a few of us who write here among them) to share their thoughts and predictions for sports and social media in 2010. The result was an awesome e-book full of some solid insights.

I'd like to build off the foundation Jason (and the others) created and identify the top 10 trends to anticipate in 2010. My methodology was relatively simple. I read through the e-book a couple of times and took diligent notes on the reoccurring themes that emerged among the contributors' predictions. *Here are the results:*

1. Transition to Social from Traditional – This is trend is happening everywhere, not just in sports. We'll continue to see companies pull dollars out of traditional media and invest in growing their communities, engaging their fans, and providing unique experiences. This was never more evident than when Pepsi announced they were launching the Pepsi Refresh Project instead of buying Super Bowl spots this year.

2. The Rise of Online Video – As Brian Gainor, the Blogs with Balls guys and others mentioned, Flip Cams are beginning to pop up everywhere. The cost of entry to getting video on the web with fancy cell phones and new technology is easier than ever and bloggers, fans, and even athletes will be taking advantage of this fact. We will be able to connect more intimately than ever before, but will the space become over saturated by novices blasting their messages? By athlete meltdowns, a la Marbury?

3. Hyper Localization – With Google, Craigslist and Yelp leading the way, and iPhone apps like Four Square emerging as power players, teams will begin experimenting with disruption models intended to inform local markets, ‘direct traffic,’ and provide on location calls-to-action. Can game day tweet-ups, and last minute discounted ticket sales entice people eating in Uptown Charlotte, or maybe working late, to walk a few blocks for the Bobcats game? (Okay, so maybe the Bobcats are a bad example...)

4. Personal Athlete Branding – Superstars like LeBron don’t need Twitter, but aging veterans looking to increase their relevancy and offer up an additional platform or add value for sponsors might. And what about role players? Retired athletes? Charlie Villanueva is the perfect example of a guy I might not have cared about unless he was on my fantasy team, until now. Unfortunately, like the Blogs with Balls guys mentioned in the e-book, I fear this means we’ll see an influx of smarmy “online gurus.”

5. Increased Restrictions/Less Free-Flow of Information – And because half of these guys (see: Larry Johnson, among others) can’t figure out what they can and can’t say, or when (not during games guys) they should say it I think we’ll continue to see increased restrictions and more rules and procedures coming from the executive brass. I’m okay with that, particularly with the athletes just as long as universities don’t restrict their fans.

6. Real-Time Interactions (Increased Fan Interactivity) – Mobile is a HUGE part of this. Steve Cobb discussed this in the e-book, but what it boils down to is convenience. Fans want to connect with athletes, they want to connect with each other, and they want to do it all the second they think of it. With the increased capability of smart phones we might see relevant fan-tweets popping up on jumbotrons during games within the next year. What about an app for fans of opposing teams to “square off” and shit-talk each other during games?

7. More Best Practices – Perhaps this goes without saying, but with increased adoption across the board and more teams and brands trying different things, some of them are bound to be successful.

8. Specific Goals & Refined Methods – Whether it is seeing others succeed or tasting it themselves, brands will realize the capabilities of the social web. With more best-practices and proof of concept, teams, athletes, and smarmy “online gurus” will all start trying to “swim with a purpose,” as Russell Scibetti said in the e-book. With other teams/athletes figuring it out, others will not be able to justify playing casually in the sandbox anymore.

9. Increased Attempts to Monetize – Part of justifying social media entails actually making money off of it. While it’s true that it’s usually inexpensive to get started, more advanced strategies involve resources like time and people that aren’t always so cheap. Showing positive cash flow as a result of your social media efforts gets the big boys to buy in and open their wallets to try new ways to continue engaging fans. And where there are fans, there’s usually sponsor-able content.

10. Fine-Tuned Measurement – No longer is throwing stuff against the wall and seeing what will stick an appropriate strategy. With clearly defined goals, it’s critical to have measurable objectives. All of these won’t necessarily equate to dollars (i.e. sentiment, traffic, subscribers, etc.) and it’s important to measure these things too (depending on what matters to your brand, obviously), but brands will become increasingly responsible for measuring ROI (yeah, as in dollars) also.

Sports Careers

“Breaking into Sports is NOT an easy task. However, once you get in the sky is the limit.”

-Matt Difebo, *Difebo Company*

Find a Job in Sports: Be Your Own PR Agent

Gail Sideman

I recently read a query from a college-age man who is set to graduate this spring. He asked for advice from the panel about how to get a job in sports the sports industry. I asked myself, “What took you so long to ask?”

This is my effort to help people who are preparing for this stage of education not have to ask that question. You read it right – as a second-semester senior in college, you will hopefully not have to ask how to break into your field of choice because you’ll have already done your research, laid a foundation for your own brand and even completed an internship or two. In essence, you must create your own public relations campaign and pitch yourself.

At most universities, students are required to select a major after their sophomore years if not sooner. Of course, there are always going to be those who have realized that they have made the wrong selection and opt for different courses of study and that’s fine. But for those who know what they want to be when they grow up, identifying practical work opportunities should be just as important as the classes they choose. When it comes to finding a job in an ever-competitive job market, let alone one that is as narrow as sports, the key ingredient employers look for is experience.

As a student, you might say, “I’m in class and I have to study...when would I have time to work?” I promise you that if you can snag a spot as a student-assistant or intern in a sports information or marketing office, write for your school newspaper or find another opportunity that offers

even the most menial job in your field of choice, the experience you gain will far outweigh the extra night out with your friends. There are also semester breaks and summer breaks that allow for time to work in real-world situations that will help you look that much more attractive to potential employers after you have your diploma in-hand. It's all a part of building your own brand.

Last year a local student contacted me with the same question as the person mentioned above. She was a couple of months shy of college graduation and wanted to find a job in sports. I asked her what internships she'd completed to date, and she said she hadn't done any. She said she'd worked as a bartender, but hadn't pursued any professional experience during that time. What I heard was, "I wasn't ambitious but now I'm graduating and guess I have to find a job."

Keep in mind that as you gather professional experience, you might have to work for peanuts...even nothing for some projects. It's worth it. While your friends start below the first rung of a ladder in their first year or two out of college because they didn't see future passion in their professions, you can emerge from your classes with the a resume that could land you a respected spot in an organization and not only earn a living, but make a difference and great impression.

Tips to land that perfect internship are much like those that seasoned veterans use to find a new job: network (in person and online), volunteer, and try to pick as many professional brains as you can. Share your story; show potential employers that you're trustworthy, eager to learn and willing to pitch in. These are all elements of your own PR campaign.

In an effort to stand out from the crowd, always write thank you notes after someone has given you their time whether it's five minutes or two hours. You'd be amazed at how many people don't even consider this step.

For more information about internships and opportunities for you to grow the buds of your career, consult professional organization directories and newsletters. You can follow a targeted group on Twitter, create a professional profile and answer question on LinkedIn and make sure lots of people know how to contact you. That perfect first job could be yours.

Top 9 Ways to Break into Sports

Mark Washo

I host a weekly online Sports Management chat as an Adjunct Professor for Sports Management Worldwide. I'm able to invite guest speakers from within the sports industry to participate. Over the past few months the students have learned from executives at many top teams, companies and agencies.

I also have been on the sports conference circuit in the past year, participating in numerous sports business panels. Whether I am sitting on a panel or facilitating chats, I hear the same reoccurring advice about how to break into the sports industry. Here are some tips from recent calls to help give sports job seekers a head start:

1. Network, network, network. Build your pro sports Rolodex. One of the most important things you can do when trying to break into sports is to build your Rolodex of professional sports contacts. Learfield's Mary Lee Gilliland comments "Job seekers should seek out events and opportunities to meet as many sports executives and people working in the industry as they can. The first place sports executives look when they have open positions, is within their own network. I receive dozens of e-mails a year from my friends in the business asking me if I know of candidates that would be qualified for their open positions."

2. Ask for informational interviews. Another great way to build your Rolodex of contacts is to ask for informational interviews. Chris Canetti

COO of the Houston Dynamo states, I am surprised to learn many people are intimidated to approach sports executives.” Meanwhile, I can tell you that I rarely get approached for informational interviews and would be more than happy to grant them.” Do not be afraid to ask for an informational interview.

3. Attend sports marketing conferences, seminars and job fairs.

More and more companies, resources and websites such as SportsNetworker.com now exist to aid you in your job seeking efforts. Chris Keeney of Lone Start Sports encourages students to attend as many industry events as possible, “a proven way to build your sports contact Rolodex is to attend sports marketing conferences, seminars and job fairs.

4. Intern or volunteer. Every sports executive I talk to mentions the fact that they have volunteer opportunities at their team. Beth Cunningham of Northwestern University and Brian Flenner of Ohio State both indicate they need help both days of game as well as in the office during the week. “If you volunteer and do a great job, you will further your efforts towards breaking into the industry”, encourages Beth Cunningham.

5. Resumes and cover letters need to be as professional as possible.

Drew Young from the Philadelphia Eagles has reviewed hundreds of sports job seeker resumes. He warns, “If your resume is not professionally done, highlighting your strengths and background you will get passed over.” Also if there are typos, miss-spelling or poor grammar, this also can dismiss you as a viable candidate.” Therefore, make sure you have at least two or three other people review your resume.

6. Prepare for interviews (job interviews and informational interviews). Interview preparation includes researching the executives

you will be interviewing with, familiarizing yourself with the teams ticketing and marketing programs, and the overall team itself. Ralph Rosello reminds job seekers “you should prepare educated questions, since every interviewer will give you an opportunity to ask questions.”

7. Utilize Social Media tools to build industry knowledge and relationships. “There is a wealth of knowledge out there on social media networks and communities just waiting to be tapped,” says John Guppy from Gilt Edge Soccer Marketing, a sports social media expert. “Social media has also broken down many of the barriers to starting, developing, and maintaining relationships. While I don’t recommend harassing sports executives on Twitter, if used correctly, tools such as this do represent a way for a job seeker to raise their profile in the eyes of an individual and begin to establish a connection.”

8. Stay persistent; a “no for now” is not a "no forever". Matt Difebo from the newly formed Difebo Company tells job seekers, “Breaking into Sports is NOT an easy task. However, once you get in the sky is the limit. I have seen too many potential sports job seekers get discouraged and give up; only to miss opportunities that would have come their way.” If you follow all the tips presented in this article, and stay persistent, over time you will land a position with a professional sports team.

9. If at first you cannot get it, consider gaining sales experience. The final piece of advice for you to consider is that if for some reason you cannot land a position in sports, the next best experience you can gain outside the industry is sales or revenue generating experience. In all sports businesses revenue generation is king. Therefore if you can learn how to generate revenue, no matter what profession or industry, you will become valuable to the sports industry.

Work Your Passion in Sports

Mark Tudi

Over thirty years ago, I was studying at Bowling Green University and dreaming of the day I would be working for a professional baseball team. Little did I know that the many years of focusing on my passion of sports would be the driving force of my livelihood today.

Without proper preparation, all of that dreaming was worthless to me in my attempt to break into baseball. I had absolutely no personal or professional contacts in the entire sports industry and did not have a clue where to find any resources or direction.

After college, I took a very good job with a large company. In one year, I knew the only place for me was in the sports industry, but I had no idea how to build a career path. I experienced many frustrations while building a career in sports over the next ten years. These learning experiences serve as the basic foundation and driving force behind SPORTS CAREERS, an employment resource program I developed in 1988.

Building a career in sports is a difficult task to accomplish. Many times the conditions have to be just perfect for you to get an opportunity. No matter how many calls you make, resumes you send, or resources you develop, your job search can come up empty. My Sports Career has been dedicated to helping interested and qualified professionals build and enhance a career path in the sports industry. I believe you need 4 essential tools to make this happen:

1. The ability to access information necessary to prepare and

position yourself for a career path in sports.

2. The ability to access personal and professional contacts within the sports industry.

3. The ability to access decision makers and employment opportunities within the sports industry.

4. The ability to develop job search techniques and specific skills necessary for your major area of interest.

Desire and preparation will help you find the satisfaction you're searching for in sports. You just need a fortunate break ... Remember, people get very lucky when an opportunity appears and they are properly prepared. As my grandfather always said, "The luckiest and happiest people are those who find out that **WHAT THEY ARE DOING** and **WHAT THEY SHOULD BE DOING** is the same thing."

When you give up your dream ... you die. Keep chasing your dream and I'll see you around the ballpark.

Creating a Personal Advisory Team

Mark Tudi

Career decision-making is tough business. One way a lot of people cope with these difficult considerations is by turning to others for advice. These supporters act as a sort of “kitchen cabinet”, listening to your concerns and giving you their wisdom in return. In a sense, they constitute your personal board of directors.

Everybody’s advisory group is different. Yours may include friends, relatives, and the lady next door. These opinion givers usually have two things in common: they care about your well-being and you value their thoughts. Though your board will change over time, there are categories from which you are almost certain to draw helpful advisors at some point in your life.

FAMILY: Throughout college, parents typically act as both sounding boards and inquisitors in terms of your career direction. During senior year, however, the frequency and quality of your conversations with Mom and Dad can become monumental. Mimi, a recent Sports management graduate spoke frequently with her parents about her senior-year job search. “Your family knows your strengths and weaknesses,” she says. “They know how your personality would fit into a position.” But parental advice does have its limits. “Your parents are just not involved enough to know the intricate details,” contends Jay, a recent graduate of Washington University.

Josh from Santa Clara understands others’ reservations but feels that parents are still able to give good advice regardless of whether they’re involved in one’s particular field. “They might not know exactly what you’re getting into,” says Josh, “but they can ask the right questions.” In

fact, his parents went to some lengths to ensure that they could give their son solid counsel. “[My parents] came to campus and tapped one of the business school deans for advice,” Josh says. As a result of their interest, Josh readily involves his parents in his career decisions.

Older brothers and sisters also are in a great position to provide knowledgeable career advice, particularly if they experienced not too long ago what you are going through. Linda, a pre-law major from Ohio State University, had her lifelong career goals decimated when steep tuition put law school out of reach. Her sister’s suggestion to work in a law-allied field led to her current position as a paralegal for an Agent.

FACULTY: Faculty members receive mixed reviews as career counselors, but they’re an important source of information for students heading into the work world. If you’re going to use professors, make sure you know them well. Go in, in advance, and get acquainted with them. When they know you personally, they’ll give you more attention than they give to students they only see once in a great while.

Charlie sought career advice from faculty members in his area of specialization when he was taking a Sports Marketing course at New York University. “[Most of them] gave me okay advice, but one or two were so far removed from the business world that they just gave me pat answers about what was there.” Charlie recommends faculty who consult regularly as good sources of accurate, up-to-date information. He has linked up with one such professor whom he calls the “technical consultant” because he is a heavyweight in the sponsorship field. He also has added an outside voice to his advisory group...a consultant who guest lectures in one of Charlie’s classes. “She’s a good advisor,” says Charlie. “She’s in the training/education field and we frequently discuss my career directions. Her people skills are a good balance to those of my technical consultant.”

Some faculty members offer more than just insight. When Jay was chatting with his advisor about his career plans, the professor offered to “make a call.” The call was to the President of McCann-Erickson, where Jay is still employed.

CAREER PLANNING AND PLACEMENT OFFICERS: Another readily available resource is the Career Planning and Placement Sector. While some people tap this office for research-oriented information and listings only, many successfully add the office’s career counselors to their pool of helpful career coaches.

Talk with the counselors in the office. Even though you think you may know what you want, you still may not be sure. The counselors there will tell you what to do and what resources are there.

Working in Career Services as a volunteer will develop a network of influence for you. They will usually be more interested in you making the right decision, rather than just getting you a job.

CO-WORKERS AND BOSSES: As you gain more and more work experience, you’ll find additional career advisors on the job. When you look at career possibilities, call your previous boss, department, or director [for advice]. These “working” coaches can be especially helpful, thanks to their up-to-date knowledge and current contacts. “Not only were they sounding boards, they give out contact names as resources. They’re excellent for networking.”

A young marketer was in the process of resigning from Anheuser-Busch when he got some unexpected but very helpful counsel from one of the managers at that firm. “When the manager said, ‘What I think you want to do is gain a management position. Why start over elsewhere?’ it really made me think. And he directed me to the right people at Anheuser-Busch. After being shown that the company was willing to let

him go “anywhere in the special events business”, the marketer decided to stay.

FRIENDS: Friends will be your most constant, and sometimes most unsupportive, source of career advisors. Friends will help strike a balance in the early stages of your job search but rarely be a key element of help. In a complicated program developed for a Sports Career, friends usually have an extremely limited perspective.

ADVISORY TEAM GAME PLAN: There are a number of things you can do to ensure that you get the most from your advisors.

1. Clearly identify the issues on which you want advice. Be concise but also give sufficient background information to allow the advisor to understand the situation.

2. Be objective. An impartial recitation of the facts will allow your advisor to assess the situation effectively.

3. Consider the background of your advisor. Ask for counsel in his or her area of expertise.

4. Let your advisor talk! Try not to interrupt or inject “buts” or “extra” information. You asked for advice...now listen carefully.

5. Take all counsel under advisement, but remember: all advice is not equal. Weigh the counsel you receive and give the most consideration to that which you believe to be the most beneficial.

As you assemble your personal Team of Advisors, you’ll find that they come and go and that you won’t need to consult every one of them on each decision. Rather, you’ll find that your team is made of some

“generalists” and some “specialists”, whose expertise is tapped only when the issue is appropriate to their orientation. One position that does not change, however, is the role of Team Captain. That’s your job for life, and it’s a critical function. After all is said and done, you’ve got to weigh all the advice you’ve collected, evaluate the merits of each opinion, and reach a final conclusion yourself. It’s your career that’s at stake.

Using LinkedIn for Sports

Tyler Johnson

When I first signed up for a LinkedIn account, I'll be honest, I was not really sure why or what I'd be doing with it. Initially, I saw the value in connecting with others in my industry and experimented with the tools that were there.

I began to meet a lot of interesting people via discussions in groups relating to my industry. I eventually stumbled upon Lewis Howes and a group called The Sports Industry Network. Curious about how I could use this tool to help myself professionally and further my current position, I thought Lewis might have some useful tips. Then I saw the guy wrote a whole book on the topic...

Lewis and I met up for a Cubs game (full disclosure, the White Sox were out of town) and enjoyed a day of baseball and conversation about what some of this LinkedIn stuff was all about. I think around that first weekend in May, I had around 140 connections. Most of them people in my inner circle or current and former colleagues. After a few innings with Lewis and reading his book, I started to see it working.

Fast-forward to the first week in September and I now have over 525 connections. Now, most people may think that these are just contacts I'm linked with and don't interact with. Not true. The key to getting the most out of any connection on LinkedIn is relating it to real life networking situations. Most of the people I've made connections with commented on my work, interacted with me via discussions, met me in person or found things that may be mutually beneficial to the both of us. Some even found me from Twitter, another great networking resource if

you know how to use it correctly!

In setting up a local group or two of my own, I was able to empower those features on LinkedIn. As my Network grew and expanded from participating in groups, I then got to a point where I could see the massive value in LinkedIn.

Using LinkedIn & Facebook events, I was able to generate over \$10,000 in incremental revenue, while creating new personal relationships with those customers. My contacts have provided over \$5,000 in additional group ticket revenue as well. Personal benefits also found me, including sports tickets, free concert tickets, Broadway plays and relative job opportunities (for the record, very happy with my position for the Sox, working for some of the best guys in the sports business world, see last article).

While continuing to develop my network, I also realized the importance and value that LinkedIn can provide anyone looking to sell group tickets for any sporting event. LinkedIn groups provide ample opportunities to get your group sales pitch out there. There are loads and loads of groups out there to help with your Law Night, Teachers Night, Alumni Nights, Heritage Nights and more. Being a part of these groups is the first step, establishing a relationship with those groups' leader(s) will help get your message across or whatever it is you are hoping to accomplish.

In the end, the message is simple. As Lewis states, "It's not who you know, but who knows you." Being active on LinkedIn has helped people find me, and that in turn became business or will become business for my company. All sales people need a stable of tools in their arsenal. LinkedIn is one of the best ones out there, it's free. Everyone in the sports business world should take advantage.

Sports Management

“Success is never final, but failure can be.”

-Bill Parcells,

Exec. VP of Football Operations for the Miami Dolphins

Baseball's Diamond in the Rough: The Florida Marlins

Stephen Lombardo

For the Florida Marlins, trying to keep guys like Hanley Ramirez and Josh Johnson is priority number one for this so-called small market team. However, the players union and the Florida Marlins reached an agreement for this cellar dweller franchise to up their payroll. I guess the one big question can now be asked: did baseball just wake a sleeping giant?

For as far back as we can remember, the Marlins are a draft and trade team built on their pitching and a few scattered all stars in the lineup. Just look at their championship teams. The 1997 team had up and coming stars like Gary Sheffield, Edgar Renteria, Moises Alou and a few others, but they truly won because of their pitching. With the likes of Kevin Brown, Al Leiter, and Livan Hernandez anchoring their rotation, the team was obviously good enough to go all the way. The same argument can be made for their 2003 campaign. This team won by 'accident'. Or did they? Once again they did it with budding stars on the field like Juan Pierre, Derek Lee, Mike Lowell, and Luis Castillo who was there for both titles. Yes they had the leadership of Ivan Rodriguez, but that wasn't why they won. They won again with a rotation that when healthy went five deep. Josh Beckett, A.J. Burnett, Brad Penny, mid-season call up and phenom Dontrelle Willis, and yes Carl Pavano, were the biggest reasons why the 2003 Marlins won the World Series.

What's consistent with this franchise has been their ultimate decision to break up their championship roster a year after they won the title. The riches to rags story of the 1998 Florida Marlins is well chronicled, and the 2004 Marlins just were not the same team that won a title over the

vaunted New York Yankees the year previous.

The obvious reason why this always happened is whomever the owner was up to this point never wanted to spend the money to keep the team competitive year after year. Instead they would invest in other parts of the franchise that better interested them. However, if you have watched this team in the recent years, you can see that a new crop of starting pitching and young stars are on the rise in Miami again.

With the recent news that the Marlins are being forced to upscale payroll, what will that mean for the rest of the league? The Marlins have a strong foundation of starting pitching (Josh Johnson, Ricky Nolasco, Anibal Sanchez) to go along with one of the top five players in baseball (Hanley Ramirez), and the reigning Rookie of the Year (Chris Coghlan). Not to mention one of the better power teams this side of the Phillies in the National League. With this forced upgrade in payroll, we would all be wise in assuming that they will nail down some if not all of these players to keep a strong foundation. Furthermore, the players union is now making them a player in free agency. Imagine next year's Matt Holliday in the lineup with Hanley Ramirez. Sounds scary for the National League because it is scary for the National League. Isn't this perfect timing with the opening of their new stadium in 2012? I guess we could say that there's a chance there will be something hotter in Miami than just the weather come Julys in the future.

Networking at the Ballpark

Chris Ruffle

Putting on a networking event at your venue can be beneficial for you in a few different ways. It can give you the opportunity to sell a weak night, draw in new quality leads, and help other business executives further their businesses all at the same time. As long as you follow a few steps to make sure you plan your event properly, it can be a success.

First, pick a night. Since people are primarily coming for the networking event instead of the game, you have the opportunity to pick the date you prefer. This gives you the ability to take one of your weaker nights and sell it while hosting a successful group outing with great potential for future leads.

Who do you sell? Having quality attendees will not only benefit the other networkers, but help you as well. Try and invite people that could also be future ticket leads for you. Use this opportunity to invite contacts that may not have ever been to the ballpark before. These are the people you have been calling all week trying to help them realize the value coming out to the ballpark can have for their business. This is a perfect opportunity to show them you are right.

Having quality networkers is also better for the fellow attendees. Nothing is worse than showing up to a networking event filled with people that are just soliciting their product or handing out their resume to everyone. A tip given to me early on in my career was “If you want to be successful in networking, you need to offer more than you ask for.” Inviting quality participants will help the overall success and result with people wanting to come back to future networking events.

Of course there is no exact set of rules when organizing your event, but here are some helpful guidelines to follow:

1. Team up with a local networking group – they are established and they put on these events all the time. They will already have a large list of contacts and can easily send out information about your event. Also, if you pick the right group, the association with their name can help legitimize your event.

2. Set your price - There are a few things that you have to take into account here. Do some research and see how much other events in the area are charging. Try and keep it at that level if you can. If you are able to host the event in a picnic or party deck area where you can have food included, that's always a plus.

3. Set an agenda - This will give the night structure and keep things organized. It doesn't have to be too elaborate. Keep it simple (5pm – Registration and Open Networking; 5:30pm can be a spot for a special guest to speak; 6:45pm Drawings and 50/50 Raffle winners; 7:15pm Game time).

4. Utilize social media – Take advantage of outlets such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to promote your event. They are free and allow you opportunities for your guests to meet and interact before even arriving. List your event on these social networking sites and count on some help from your local network to share the information.

5. Keep detailed records – It is likely you will be running around talking to lots of people, which makes it difficult to keep track of everyone's name. If you have a registration table you can keep track of who came. It can also be a reference point when following up with everyone about future networking events and future tickets sales, that is, depending on how your conversations went that night.

Pay Attention to the Little Things (and People)

Sam Taggart

For brands, An amazing aspect of social media is the ability to listen to your fans and customers. The fans will tell you when you do something great, but more importantly; they will tell you when you fail. The real-time web has given brands an opportunity like never before, the chance to listen and respond to actual people making legitimate claims about your product or service. The information is there, it's the brand's job to pay attention.

If you don't already know, I work for VaynerMedia, doing online and social media consulting for brands, with a focus in the sports industry. Two of my clients include the New Jersey Nets of the National Basketball Association, and the New York Jets, of the National Football League. I find it important to check out the competition. Sometimes, it's from a competitor's weaknesses or mistakes, that you find the keys to success. While I was running through the social media outlets of teams in both the NBA and the NFL trying to find things they were doing right and wrong, I found this: facebook.com/memhisgrizzlies

Notice something strange in that URL? There is no "p" in Memphis. That is a pretty large mistake. I don't necessarily want to highlight the fact that the Grizzlies made a typo when claiming their Facebook URL. However, I do want to explain I gave them fair warning before writing this post.

I later tweeted out, "Check out the Memphis Grizzlies on Facebook! <http://www.facebook.com/memhisgrizzlies> #iThinkTheyForgotTheH" Then, a bit later, I tweeted to the Memphis Grizzlies' official Twitter

account, “@memgrizz i think you forgot the ‘h.’
<http://www.facebook.com/memhisgrizzlies>”

Now, I don’t mean to call out the Grizzlies, because I do respect that they are on Facebook in the first place, and attempted to get the custom URL. Plus, I’m a USC grad, and a big O.J. Mayo fan (even with the whole taking-money-while-in-college-and-refusing-to-cooperate-with-an investigation thing). It happens (at USC). I just want this to be a warning to players, teams, and brands in general, how important it is to be careful about the little things. Even more importantly, how crucial it is to listen to your fans.

The fact that the typo existed in the first place is pretty bad, I admit. However, it’s worse that I bothered to let them know and they were unable to react. While it may be impossible for athletes and teams to respond to every tweet, it is important that someone is at least watching and monitoring, because more often than not, fans are worth responding to.

Note: There is a possibility they did see my tweet and have submitted a request to Facebook to change their URL.

Social Media as Sponsorship Street Cred

Kris Mathis

Fact: Blue chip brands receive thousands of sponsorship proposals every year. **Estimate:** there are some *300,000 properties* seeking sponsorship (depending on the way you define it).

How do you break through the relentless clutter to get the ear and sincere consideration of a sponsorship decision maker? A well-researched and tailored proposal may increase your chances, but these days there are a lot of other properties spending a lot of time doing the exact same thing on the sponsor you're targeting.

Fact is, when you're submitting a proposal to a blue chip brand that gets flooded by proposals (especially when you're submitting through a proposal management system), it's a stretch to think that all proposals get an in-depth review on the merit of their own ideas. Actually, some systems rate your proposal against a scorecard for the sponsor so that they don't even have to read the proposal or see your "vision"; only the nuts and bolts. This may be deflating considering many properties spend 1-2 hours or more on each tailored proposal. Keep reading to find out how you may be able to make it out of the pile.

As sponsors receive more and more proposals and buy-side managers, the reality is that they have a smaller safety net for sponsorship decisions. Sponsors have put a premium on the trust factor. If you're pitching a company cold for the first time this certainly puts you at a disadvantage, right? How can a seller (or in the case of sponsorship, a property) assure a buyer (sponsor) that they'll deliver on the promise being made? There are two well-chronicled ways to develop trust in

other industries.

- a) Create strong relationship with or direct referral to the buyer
- b) Receive third party validation

Like venture capitalists, sponsors see hundreds of bright business ideas, but generally only invest in those they trust. Just like sponsorship, VC's can create legal contracts to ensure obligations are met and clawbacks are available if things don't go according to plan, but no amount of make-goods will compensate for buyer's remorse and a painful working relationship.

Job candidates undergo similar levels of screening. There are many killer cover letters coming through Monster.com, but personal referrals and third party validation (awards/press/proficiency levels) are what really get a recruiter's attention.

Sure, it may not be the fairest way to delineate, but you've got to filter thousands of anything, somehow right? As sponsorship sellers, the first trust barometer is rather easy to accomplish. You can always sign up for more conferences, join more LinkedIn groups, and set up more lunches to build new connections. Validation isn't so readily accessible. We should always be seeking new means for rewarding the best in our business, and not just because it seems fair. Validation leads to deal velocity. Look at the case of Yelp. Transparency shifts customers to the best businesses for their needs in hundreds of varying industries, thereby creating more deals and more satisfied customers.

Is access an illusion? Not always, but we can most certainly find better ways to provide more meaningful, targeted access. With that said, in today's environment what may really separate properties is buyer trust and peer validation. As distinction becomes more difficult in an increasingly convoluted world of opportunities, look for sponsors to work with the properties they trust.

Added Value vs. Perceived Value

Tyler Johnson

In the challenging economic times of 2010, everyone is trying to define and produce value. Like most marketing buzzwords, value can be a very ambiguous concept.

When fans look to spend their discretionary income by going to a ballgame, they base their purchasing decision on the positive emotional response that the sports produces. The emotional aspect in purchasing the experience can make fans even more discretionary.

Fans are seeking the best deals to see their favorite teams while teams are constantly trying to add value to the fan experience. Fans want deals but buy for value. However, while teams often sell by adding value, fans buy based on their perceived value. ESPN's recent Ultimate Standings survey encompasses eight categories that relate to the fan's perception of value. The objective of the survey was to measure nationally how well teams turn fan dollars into wins.

There is a paradox in this measurement. First, the poll was created based on what fans want, not what they consume. Second, it was only 50,000 plus responses, while by July 6th over 16.1 million fans had already consumed an American League baseball game in 2009. For comparing 122 teams business operations across 4 leagues, dozens of markets, and two countries it's very functional. It does much less for helping the 122 teams in their markets with their fans. As I mentioned, their survey was created based on what fans want, not what they buy. For most products, tangible or intangible, the margin of what consumers want and what they actually buy is too great to successfully market on that information alone.

(For a great book on what consumers want vs. what they buy, pick up *Buy-ology* by Martin Lindstrom.)

With the diverse market segments from which these teams reside, the margin in their fans perception can be just as diverse. To help close this perceived margin, teams rely on their sales staffs to boost attendance.

In seeking long-term success in these markets it is best to concentrate on the local perceived value than what the teams are doing nationally. Doing so can only help narrow the margin in both the value being added and the value being perceived, translating into sales and hopefully championships.

I've always worked under the philosophy that there are no problems, only opportunities. I couldn't think of a better mantra for the current economic situation. Teams this year are being provided with more opportunities which typically and initially disguise themselves as problems. It is in these opportunities that teams can learn to better understand our fans' perceptions. If we can continue to reduce the marginal difference between the perceived value and the value being added, teams will be the reality and the fans will be closer to the game!

Sports PR and Marketing

“The more time and emotion and energy we get our fans to spend with us, it's a natural and pretty short leap to think that we'll gain share of wallet also.”

-Michael Dilorenzo,
NHL director of social media marketing and strategy

Sports Public Relations Critical to Athlete Playbook

Gail Sideman

We've heard the words "public relations" tossed around quite a bit these days, particularly when an athlete or coach scrambles to save face after behaving badly. My concern, as someone who's worked in sports PR in some shape or form for most of my professional life, is that I increasingly hear consumers talk about press conferences (during which the accused attempts to set the record straight) as public relations spin zones.

You know the ones I'm talking about: University of Louisville basketball coach, Rick Pitino who is being extorted for millions of dollars after an affair earlier this decade; Plaxico Burress, a New York Giants wide receiver who recently plead guilty to weapons charges after he accidentally shot himself earlier this year and of course, Michael Vick, a previously heralded quarterback who spent 18 months in prison after bankrolling a dog fighting ring.

While it's important to look at how sports interests handle themselves in the face of adversity, it's also important to dispel the myth that public relations is only for diverting attention away from a crisis.

Public relations, in its ideal existence, should help to provide audiences with information and knowledge to enjoy. It's about communicating messages about an organization or individual that helps to shape that group's image. It's how people perceive you because of the relationships you've developed with them personally or professionally.

Sports public relations has had its challenges in the last two or three

decades. Before technological advances in everything from desktop publishing to the way we produce audio and video, sports PR people were in the business of telling stories. People such as Lee Rimmel, the Green Bay Packers longtime PR pro, Nick Vista a former sports information director at Michigan State and member of the CoSIDA (there are dozens more) are known for their ability to capture a room and most importantly, the ear of a reporter who would then tell those stories to audiences.

Today, there's great responsibility among these professionals to have statistics updated, their media guides produced in the most sophisticated formats (today, most of it in html online so that information is up-to-the-minute) and managing producers of electronic productions, that there isn't time to cull the best stories from off the field to show athletes and organizations in a positive light.

"The loss of the story telling is part of what's missing in people's lives now with all of our multi-tasking, social media updates and other responsibilities," said Nick Gandy, the director of communications at the Florida Sport Foundation and former member of Florida State University's sports information staff. "People don't take the time to find out these stories and tell them, and it's sad.

Gandy, who calls himself an old-timer who embraces new media, said that short attention spans are not good for sports PR, but thinks that new pros can learn old tricks if given the time and opportunity.

"Good stories don't generate click-throughs, sells newspapers and draw viewers so we don't get to talk as much about the good stories and the great things that athletes do as compared to the scandalous ones," Gandy said. "I think if given the personnel and opportunity, more of the good things would come out and people would appreciate knowing about them."

Sufficient to say, the role of a PR professional in sports is a balancing act that can only benefit from having more people power to embrace the value of having an entire organization embrace old-fashioned public relations. That includes meeting on the same pages and hopefully, act accordingly, in addition to doing more than crisis communication.

Until that time comes, audiences will have to depend on us – those who learn of the great contributions that coaches and athletes make to our communities – to tell the stories.

Using the PR Power of March Madness

Tyler Johnson

I grew accustomed to watching the Iowa Hawkeyes. Guys like Ricky Davis, Acie Earl, Reggie Evans, Russ Millard and BJ Armstrong (who I met again as he represented Derrick Rose and accompanied him to throw out the first pitch at a White Sox game the next day after being selected #1). Later I began playing football for the Panthers of Northern Iowa; it was guys like Matt Schniederman, Ben Jacobsen (the player) and returning alum coach Greg McDermott that brought the rise of Panther basketball. Ben Jacobsen brought the team once more to new heights.

It had been 20 years since the Northern Iowa basketball team had won an NCAA tourney game, on a similar shot to that of Maurice Newby's until Ali Farokhmanesh beat UNLV on March 15, 2010.

With the force that is now Northern Iowa basketball and it being the 8th time since 1994 that a Missouri Valley Team has joined the sweet 16, the PR our school in Cedar Falls, Iowa is getting is unparalleled. Here are just a few tweets and a handful from Darren Rovell of CNBC's sports business.

@ESPN UNI knocks out Kansas, advances to Sweet 16 – <http://tinyurl.com/yhbfe3e>

@Peter_R_Casey That's the sound of my bracket going through the shredder. UNI made it enjoyable.

@darrenrovell1 Kansas' Bill Self (\$3M) makes MORE THAN 10 TIMES the salary of UNI's Ben Jacobson (\$289,900).

@darrenrovell1 Best part of UNI Ben Jacobson's contract? UNI had salary freeze so boosters agreed to pony up \$130K/year.

@darrenrovell1 "Ali Farokhmanesh" has 75,800 google hits. Should surpass "Bryce Drew" at 103,000 by tomorrow night

@darrenrovell1 Adidas pays Kansas \$3.33M/year. Wonder how much Nike pays Northern Iowa?

@darrenrovell1 In '09, Northern Iowa spent \$19,099 per player. Kansas? \$97,449 per player.

Then there's the real muscle of doing well in the NCAA tourney. The university logo will be on TV more during that week than it could ever imagine affording in its wildest basketball dreams. The basketball budget alone for Kansas most likely exceeds Northern Iowa's total athletic budget. The exposure that comes with upsetting a #1 ranked team is dandy, doing it in the NCAA tourney makes it a diaper of a dandy. The exposure that UNI gained over a week's time was enjoyed by fans and soaked in by the athletic department.

One reason I believe fans enjoy the basketball tournament over the BCS laden football championship is the stories like these that it unveils and thrives on. Despite losing to Michigan State, sweet 16 exposure still boosts a program on the rise and draws attention to a great University in the heart of Iowa. Thank you NCAA tourney.

5 Proactive PR Tips for Sports Figures

Gail Sideman

It's official. Tiger Woods announced on his website that he will begin his comeback from the personal mega-bogey that derailed his professional career for several months.

Ben Roethlisberger is still fighting a sexual assault charge, his second such fumble in three years.

Four University of Oregon football players have been in trouble with the law in the month.

These are just some of the dozens of professional sports figures whose off-the-field actions have affected their and their organizations' reputations.

Despite the proliferation of portable recording devices and media's unprecedented coverage, athletes and coaches who enter the public limelight because of their talents continue to endure public humiliation because of their own poor personal decisions. It's for that reason I want to reach out via SportsNetworker with a PR primer. It could even be looked upon as an image savior.

I offer the following advice to anyone in the public eye (which some would argue includes all of us in the multi-media age) and anyone with whom I've worked, for when they feel weak and defenseless against alluring men/women, the temptation of crime or any kind of action may be construed as controversy. The following tips should be read and re-read, reviewed before each competitive season and before they clean out their lockers at the end.

As we've learned, sports news doesn't have an off-season.

1. Consider where you go and with whom you travel, whether it's to the grocery store, restaurant or a nightclub, and leave controversy and miscues behind.

Why does it matter whether you hang out with your boys or with Dr. Phil? You're a new member of the Smith City Supersonics and have just signed some lucrative endorsement contracts. Your buddies from home, who have traveled to Smith City to make you "feel comfortable" in your new home have criminal records, and have no problem spending your income on illegal drugs...and using them in your home. Here's why it matters: Whether you engage in criminal activity or not, one leaked photo, one accusation suggested to a member of the media or inadvertent public outburst about your involvement with this group and you can say goodbye to the credibility you began to build with community outreach and high-scoring performances. More than one athlete has permanently been benched because of poor personal choices he made at any time during his career.

2. Nothing can be gained by going to a bar after midnight. Charles Davis, a former college football player at the University of Tennessee, now an NFL analyst for FOX Sports and NFL Network, recalls something one of his position coaches advised in the 1980s that remains more than true today.

"Coach had a saying, 'only two things in life are undefeated: p**sy and alcohol. And, neither one will ever be beat!' Guys that I played with quote it every time something rolls across the wire like it did with Ben Roethlisberger. The temptations are as old as civilization and especially when you live in the public eye, you won't win," Davis said.

I would add one thing to the coach's list of things that will defeat you: firearms (especially if they're not registered).

If you want to enjoy a couple of cocktails, do it in private, and give no one reason to produce visuals or stories of you acting unlawfully. If you need to feel the pull of a trigger, visit a certified, secured shooting range or go hunting.

3. Be honest. This goes not only for when you get in trouble, but also in good times. Take time to foster relationships with fans, general consumers (who may use the products you endorse) and the media. If you build a reputation as a person who is trusted, reliable and generous, then chances are if anything negative arises, a reputation's blow will be muted and you will be given a benefit of the doubt.

If photos are leaked on the Internet or stories are posted about an alleged wrongdoing, immediately own up to it. Consult with a publicist who is versed in crisis management and follow his or her advice.

The best way to find the right person is to seek referrals from people who have been there. If you know of someone who hired a crisis PR specialist who provided sensible guidance with positive results, hire her!

We live in a forgiving society, especially when it comes to sports heroes. The sooner you admit to a mistake, the sooner everyone heals and you're hopefully forgiven. This not only benefits your conscience, but your marketability and organizations' image. Any kind of half-story or cover-up only extends controversy and keeps your negative story in the news.

4. Don't drink 'n dial, text, email, or leave provocative voice mails. If you've ever watched an episode of CSI or even contacted your local service provider about harassing calls, you know that everything is traceable. You can erase texts, but they're always out there. The minute you hit "send," those words are potentially accessible to media and authorities. If you're sober, married and still want to hit "send" to the girl you flirted with at a private party you attended the night before, think about possible repercussions to your reputation and relationships with your family, organization and sponsors, not to mention how they might affect your future earnings opportunities.

5. Take control of YOUR message. If you don't take part in conversation about you, others will create an image for you based on what they read and hear...and it might not be pretty.

Woods's image eroded not only because of leaks regarding his private indiscretions that went public, but the way he closed himself off to what was being said. The fact that neither he nor anyone from his camp spoke or appeared immediately after the November car accident allowed the public and media to speculate, which quickly exploded into social media discussions. Rumors and discussion based on conjecture continued because he didn't take control of the message. Whether you believe Woods owed the public an explanation or not, this story could have been muted if he was advised to take control of the message immediately.

David Letterman is the best example of a celebrity getting ahead and taking control of a controversy before people could misspeak. From a public relations standpoint, he handled the news of his personal affairs and subsequent extortion threats immediately and with candor.

The fact is, we're all now celebrities to a degree. Embarrassing video and salacious stories are only clicks away. If you're an athlete or coach, whether it is college or professional, you assume a greater responsibility. In addition to your own brand, you take on the image of your organization, its league, sponsors and trust of a fan base, and them in you.

It goes back to PR 101: If you don't want the story on the front page of the Wall Street Journal ... or today, on TMZ's front page, think twice, three, and four times about your actions. It will save you a lot of grief, money and work to rebuild what could have been a consistently lucrative career.

Or, as former college star and NBA player Jalen Rose posted on Twitter (@jalenrose): "To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart."

3 Reasons Athletes Should Use Social Media

Ryan Stephens

Antonio Ramirez wrote to me from Mexico to ask what the best arguments were for convincing players to participate in a social program.

It's a great question, and in Antonio's case, for a great cause. Childhood obesity is quickly becoming an epidemic in Mexico, particularly surrounding low-income areas and schools. And he's looking to get a few fútbol (soccer) players to be ambassadors for a program to inspire/lead these kids.

Certainly the kids would love if athletes would take time out of their day to visit a couple of times during the semester, but I'm certain there are people with more experience in philanthropic endeavors far more qualified to answer that question than me. So, I'll take a different approach and give Antonio (and all of you) my best advice on how to get athletes to participate in social media, which can still empower and inspire not only local kids, but also anyone who wants to follow them. Ah, the power of social media.

Why? It's All About the Story. First, tell a compelling story, like the one Antonio told Lewis. Athletes won't be compelled to participate, much less to help if you don't give them a damn good reason.

As a quick aside, here are two things I do know about philanthropic efforts:

1. **Don't make the problem seem insurmountable.** Define it such that someone knows his or her contribution will make a difference.

2. Pick out one person. Find one overweight kid and highlight him. He resonates; people identify more with one person than the entire group. See above.

Now that you've told a compelling story, it's important to remember that chances are these athletes are important people, at least they think they are. And you can bet your ass they're asking 'what's in it for me?'

3 Reasons Athletes Should Use Social Media

Here are three arguments you can make that will work every time:

1. At some point your professional career is going to be over. One of these days your body won't be physically capable of doing what it could when you were 24. If you've saved your earnings you might live a nice, comfortable, quiet life. But having lived in the spotlight all your life is that really what you want? To ride off into the sunset? (Note – If they haven't been in the spotlight, having a kick ass personality in social media is one way to get there.)

Being active in social media maintains your relevancy long after your sports career is over. Look at Shaquille O'Neal. His best days are behind him, but that didn't stop over 2 million people from following him on Twitter. You think that even after he's done playing he can't leverage that following for more sponsorship dollars? For a goofy television show? Think again.

2. You know how hard sending a tweet is? About as hard as writing a text message. Yeah, no excuses. Your fans want to connect with you. They love what you do on the court, but they want to know what you do off of it, what goes through your head during games, who you hang with, what team you play with in Madden '10.

Being involved in social media a great way to increase your humanize yourself and increase your brand affinity. Oh, you didn't think of yourself as a brand? Well there was your first mistake. Chad OchoCinco was an average wide receiver last year, but fans are still buying his jersey like crazy. Why? Because he's got a shtick, and because fans can witness it because he provides them that opportunity via social media platforms: Twitter, video, etc.

3. You can only sign one autograph at a time. You answer post-game questions on the spot when they're asked. The media can see you out with a friend and tomorrow's tabloid will say you're cheating on your wife. Did you know that social media gives you the power to influence, facilitate, and protect your brand on your terms?

Instead of one autograph at a time you can take 15 seconds to send a tweet out to all of your fans at once thanking them for their attendance, their support, whatever. You can say what you want to say post-game on YouTube, in a blog post. You can sit down and craft the message you want to convey, not what you were forced to come up with on the spot with a microphone shoved in your face. And finally, you can clear up all of the BS by setting your story straight on the platform of your choice.

If you take the time to tell a compelling story and then explain these three simple reasons, there's no way an athlete will refuse to participate in social media; not if they 'get it.'

And from there, the sky's the limit. Can you imagine soccer players in Mexico writing blog posts, posting videos or tweeting about their workouts, their elaborate diets, how hard they practice? It's not foolish to think that the youth in Mexico would follow these athletes, and start trying to prevent obesity.

It's tough to tackle such a complex topic in 900 words, but I hope I

answered your question Antonio, at least to some extent, and I hope I gave all of you some solid reasons to convince athletes to participate in social media. Unfortunately they're not having the impact they could or should have. At least not yet!

Sports Marketing + Charity + Brands = Community ROI

Cord Pereira

On behalf of the Atlanta Hawks, I'd like to thank our ownership group for recognizing that for every dollar we give away, we get three in return!"‘

These were the honest words of an Atlanta Hawks spokesperson during an acceptance speech when the organization received the “Pro Team Community Award” from the World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame, back in the mid 90’s. The Hawks, like all pro teams, work closely with their community charities in a multitude of ways. After all, professional sports franchises are really quasi-public utilities that are emotionally owned by their communities, and therefore an organic platform to all kinds of community programs.

I’m not focusing on specific programs or on the community impact a sports organization has on local charities. Rather, I’m pointing out how important considering online social community inclusion is when designing winning local sports charity programs.

The evolution of the Internet since the 1990’s has fundamentally changed the way sports organizations need to view charities. Today, local charities are equipped with state-of-the-art web and mobile technologies and have moved their memberships into private and public communities, like Facebook, Twitter, etc. At the same time, sports marketers have finally discovered the fruits of their own real-time online fan/community networks. So, connect the dots between the two communities, and you’ve got a platform for launching new programs, entertainment and

special offers. For a sports organization working with multiple local non-profits, this represents a micro-targeting strategy to reach everyone in their community with a valued message. But sports and charity partnerships aren't enough. Brands and media partners also want to hitch to programs.

Brands are increasingly insisting on measurable return on investment for their precious marketing dollars. Creative-minded sports and charity organizations can easily come up with fresh programs. They attract the emotional side of brands, by allowing brands to live through their programs in the real world and digitally. Let's not forget that in addition to marketing dollars, brands also have their own online communities as well that are ripe for various forms of program publishing.

The reward for a well-designed charity program is measurable "Community ROI" where all parties involved in a program win financially, just as the Atlanta Hawks eluded.

Tiger Tales...This is No Children's PR Story

Gail Sideman

Have you read and heard more than your share about Tiger Woods' unfortunate meeting with a fire hydrant and a tree last Thanksgiving?

I think I have. But one last thing...and only because it's the main, if not the biggest sports PR story this year, and is already leading Jay Leno's monologue.

The quickie recap: World-famous professional golfer, Tiger Woods, decides to take a joy ride in his Cadillac Escalade at 2:30 in the morning and upon leaving his driveway, tips a fire hydrant and makes contact with a neighbor's tree. Upon hearing the ruckus, Woods' wife Elin rushes out of the house and reportedly helps her husband. A neighbor calls 911 and tells the dispatcher that the victim is lying on the ground.

What occurs for the ensuing 72-plus hours is the making of a public relations case study that is still being written. Initial reports were that Woods was in serious condition after the accident. When his agent confirmed that Woods was treated and released, the public said "phew" ... and then "huhhh?"

Gossip tattler, National Enquirer, earlier in the week, reported an alleged affair between Tiger and a New York nightclub hostess. Inquiring minds said, "we want to know what happened and why." However, according to Florida law, Woods was in a traffic accident and he didn't have to provide anything more than a driver's license, registration and proof of insurance. His attorney did that and Woods, via his website, said the rest would remain private.

The bottom line is this: In the early hours of the Tiger hunt, I, like many publicity and media professionals, said Woods was damaging his reputation by not talking to the public. If he didn't want to speak with Florida Highway Patrol, that was his legal prerogative, but the public buys golf tournament tickets and Nike clothes emblazoned with his name....he owed the public and his sponsors an explanation to quell rumors of everything from domestic unrest to drugs and alcohol use.

All along I agreed that it was a double-edged sword. Woods, like all of us, deserves his privacy when he's not playing golf or pitching a brand. However, His Privacy could be no longer unless he took charge of the message, which after 24 hours in the social media sphere, not to mention mainstream media, was like a sand trap of rumors and innuendo.

I was in good company. Award-winning sportscaster, Len Berman said, "Finally, something the control freak couldn't control. He should have pulled a 'Letterman.' Confront the issue publicly head-on and move along. (Ok...I said early that Woods should do a T.O. and do a presser in his front yard, but the essence is that we thought he should have spoken quickly and honestly.)

My question is, today, what would Tiger say if he took to a podium now?

Fellow public relations professional, Amy Mengel, answered that question for me.

"At this point it's been too long," said Mengel who is @amymengel on Twitter. "[The] Public has made up its mind & judged him, regardless of what he says/does. Nothing to be gained."

"I think he may have been able to quash things if he had come right out on Friday and said something, but that's obviously not his style and

would have contradicted his intensely private off-the-course lifestyle,” Mengel continued. “Saying anything now would just rekindle the fire. Fire can’t burn without oxygen, and so I think if he just keeps quiet, eventually this one will smolder out. There will always be questions, but if he just gets back to winning Majors, then people should quickly brush it under the rug.”

I tend to agree with Mengel, but only if things remain quiet for the next several days, weeks and months.

Atlanta Journal Constitution columnist, Mark Bradley, put the personal aspect of Woods’ situation in perspective in his blog entry:

“I say again: We are not naive. We have cause to believe something is indeed amiss in the Woods marriage. But that is not our business. Nobody has been arrested. No court documents have been filed. As much as we might hunger for the latest dollop of dope from TMZ, we have no inalienable right to satiation.”

So it’s come to this...nearly 100 hours after the incident. My biggest question now: Why did it take 10 minutes for an ambulance to get to Woods’ house in Windermere, Fla., that has a population of about 2,000, at 2:30 a.m.?

Networking

“The currency of real networking is not greed but generosity.”

-Keith Ferrazzi, CEO of Ferrazzi Greenlight

10 Ways to Land Jobs at Sports Conferences

Jason Kobeda

The ability to network has become an essential skill for those seeking employment in the sports industry. When I began pursuing a career in the NFL, I quickly learned how much competition there was. I traveled to the Senior Bowl week of practices and NFL Combine, where NFL personnel congregate during the off-season to evaluate talent. This presented rare opportunities to meet key people and I returned the following three years while completing my degree.

These are a few methods I used to put myself in the same room with the NFL personnel who had the power to hire me. These tips relate to football events, but are transferable to other sports business conference, MLB Winter Meetings, NBA Combine, etc.

1. Write introductory letters: Anytime you know you're going to see someone that's important to your career search, always write them a letter beforehand telling them what you want to do and mention that you're hoping to meet them at the event. It is then much easier and more effective to approach that person and say, "Mr. /Mrs. —, my name is Jason Kobeda, it's nice to meet you. I'm not sure if you got my letter last week, but may I have a minute of your time to discuss potential internships in your department?"

2. Offer to volunteer: If you're attending an event that lasts several days, offer to volunteer for a team. Many of these teams don't bring a full staff in order to cut down on their travel and overhead expenses. Don't get frustrated if you don't receive responses to most of your letters. You always have to be willing to take a shot.

3. Try to get credentialed: If the teams are not receptive to your offers to volunteer for them, do what you can to get credentialed for the events. The Senior Bowl and NFL Combine will give you credentials if you can provide proof that you're a journalist or if a team will vouch for you. This is another area where you may need to get creative, but if you can get credentialed, it will give you more privileges and make the networking process much more effective.

4. Stick to the beaten path: The official hotels for these events are often luxurious and pricey, but staying in the same hotel as your networking targets is important. The opportunity to meet an executive in the elevator or the lobby can mean all the difference. If there's a coffee shop in your hotel, get there very early, buy a newspaper and wait. I'm willing to bet the majority of people you want meet will pass through that coffee shop in the morning. The same goes for the hotel bar at night. I've met several front office personnel by bouncing around different hotel bars once the work day was over.

5. Provide a service: Being able to provide a prospective employer with services they need is a great way to show your worth and increase your chances of getting hired. At the Senior Bowl, I noticed that several coaches and scouts would arrive at the stadium after the kickers and punters had already practiced, so I got there early and started to record the lengths and hang-times of individual players' kicks and provided those stats to whoever wanted it. Many of them were very happy to have the information.

6. Do your homework: Know what your networking subjects look like and what personnel changes have recently occurred in their organization. Before I had the convenience of an iPhone, I would type notes with pictures of new coaches or GM's that I wasn't familiar with.

7. Bring personal business cards: The small cost you will pay for business cards is worth the message they send when you hand them out. A simple, professional looking business card with your

name and contact information is a quick way to show that you're on top of your game.

8. Be prepared to interview: I was interviewed on the spot in the bleachers of a football stadium. Be sure to bring any resumes, portfolios or sample work you would need in the event you're granted an interview. Also, always dress like you're looking for a job (keep a suit nearby). Never wear team colors or logos to these functions as you'll need to be prepared to interview with anyone, even your favorite team's rival.

9. Don't be shy: When you approach an executive, keep in mind that you may never see this person again. It's easy to get shy or intimidated when Bill Parcells sits down next to you in a coffee shop, but put yourself in his shoes. If you want to work for him you have to show that you're confident and professional enough to handle anything. Rejection is part of the networking game, so you shouldn't fear it.

10. Follow up: Each time you meet someone and have a conversation with them, make a note about the person and the conversation and reference it in your follow up letter to them. Be sure to write the follow-up as soon as possible so that the encounter is fresh in your mind and, more importantly, their mind.

Over the four years that I made these travels, I met only a handful of other young people in my position. Executives are much more engaging and helpful when you separate yourself from the crowd. These are certainly not the only ways to make an impression, but I hope they'll help you to think creatively when pursuing your career in sports.

11 Positive Outcomes from Hosting a Networking Event

Lewis Howes

One way to expand your reach in the sports industry, or any industry for that matter, would be to host your own networking event. It would be great to host a large industry trade show like the National Sports Forum, a Sports Business Journal Event, or the U.S. Sports Film Festival, but for most of us this would be a daunting task. However, it would not be that difficult to host an event for sports professionals in your own city.

Think about it; if you live in a decent sized sports town there is a good chance you have a professional sports team, a few universities and high school athletic departments, sports agencies, sports marketing/PR/advertising companies, and other freelancers who work in the sports industry. There is potential for a few hundred or even a few thousand sports professionals in your 50-mile radius.

There are many benefits for hosting a networking event, but first you want to complete the prep work upfront to ensure the event is a success. Here are my do's and don'ts for throwing an event:

Do: Make sure it is well attended: Send out e-mails and press releases, make phone calls, create events on social networking sites, and tell as many people as you can. Do whatever you need in order to maximize the crowd and build your trust in others.

Don't: Come unprepared: Make sure you have food, drinks, name tags and banner, a sign up page or place to drop your card, and proper space in a central location. If it is more of a trade show event, have tables ready for your sponsors. If it is a symposium, make sure all panelists have what they need and your sponsors are properly displayed.

Do: Have an assistant: I thought I would be able to run the registration booth alone in my last event, but soon found a cluster of 30 people jammed by the door waiting to get a name tag. Make sure you have a few registration tables and at least one assistant to help move the traffic along smoothly.

Don't: Become isolated: If you throw an event, make sure you go around and shake everyone's hand. Listen to what the careers, goals, passions, and interests of your attendees are. Don't spend too much time with one individual or group of people, but be gracious and listen to as many people that you can.

I recently hosted an event for LinkedIn professionals who live in the St. Louis area. Many of the attendees said it was a great event because it was well attended. There was free food (although I heard it was a bad selection; sorry guys!) and people made quality business contacts. Your attendees can't ask for much more than that. Throwing an event is an accomplishment in itself. However, there are additional reasons why hosting a successful event will pay dividends in the long run:

1. New Relationships: Nearly 300 people were in attendance at the St. Louis networking event and 290 of them were new faces to me. This gave me the opportunity to expand my connections and build quality relationships.

2. Filling a Niche: What are you passionate about, or what is your field of interest? I am passionate about building relationships and using LinkedIn. This led me to throw a party to fulfill those passions in St. Louis, a city I lived in for seven years. Figure out what you are most interested in, and throw the event around that niche.

3. Building Your List: If you have a newsletter, websites, or magazine then this is a great way to grow your audience. Make sure everyone drops their card in a fish bowl or have them write down their contact info. Don't miss out on the opportunity to add these individuals to your database.

4. Personal Brand Awareness: Dan Schawbel runs PersonalBrandingBlog.com, a resource that shows you how to build your personal brand to ensure your professional success. Read a few articles on his blog and you will see why hosting an event helps build your personal brand, and why building You, Inc. is important.

5. Credibility: I recently attended the U.S. Sports Film Festival in Philadelphia and was wildly impressed with the way the event was produced. Stephan Hartman was the founder and put together a great cast of directors as the chairman of the board. Before the event I had never heard of Stephan, but since the event he has gained a lot of credibility and is on my radar as a mover and shaker in the sports industry.

6. Extra Income: Unless your full time job is to host events, this is not a way you will get rich. However, depending on your event format (cover fee, sponsorships, or taking a cut from the bar) you may come away with a few extra dollars in your pocket.

7. Consulting and Jobs: Depending on what your objectives are, you may be looking to find new clients for your own business, or seeking out a new career. Putting together a well-attended event should help you in achieving these objectives.

8. Product Sales: Do you have a book, CD, or other products you are looking to sell? Why not put your products up on the front table and offer a discount to all of the attendees? If the product provides compelling value and is related to your niche market it is likely to sell.

9. Press Opportunities: Any event is worthy of at least a brief mention in a local newspaper or online publication. MySolutionSpot.com featured me after my event, and another newspaper said they would run a feature before my next one. Send out a press release to a few publications that might share some interest and be prepared to put on your game face for interviews.

10. Happy Venues: You can never become familiar with too many restaurants or venues. By giving them the business and brand awareness to an audience, they will always be grateful and willing to help with future events.

11. Connecting Others: It's a pleasure for me to help others connect and mutually benefit from creating a relationship. By bringing a large number of influential people together, it is only a matter of time that the right people will be introduced to one another, businesses will grow, and lives will change.

Create a Presence: The Influence of LinkedIn Groups

Tyler Johnson

Last May I was kicking back with Lewis Howes at a Chicago Cubs game, not knowing in two weeks time I would be doing the same thing with another colleague, Jude LaRose. Still digesting the LinkedIn knowledge Lewis dropped on me, Jude and I ended up not paying much attention to the play on the field and instead spent most of the time hatching a plan.

In working with LinkedIn, I have started to see the value in being a part of different groups and organizations that can benefit my career. With a desire to become more actively involved, we decided to start a group in Chicago for sports professionals working in the area.

The following day we launched the Chicago Sports Business Professionals group on LinkedIn, inviting all local connections we had within the industry. The group quickly began to grow, and we decided to supplement the online networking with live events. The next step involved asking one of our good friends and colleagues (and networking guru), Lindsey Nealis, to help us with our new venture.

Since Lindsey's arrival we have hosted three controlled events, each with around 40-60 guests. With each event, the group has grown and word has spread further. After six months and three events, the LinkedIn group has more than 300 members. The members all work in the Chicagoland sports industry – representing front office employees from every Chicagoland professional and minor league sports team, Northwestern University, various sports law firms, sponsorship agencies, and local media.

The connections and relationships formed have been great. As Mr. Howes mentioned in his book, “It isn’t who you know, but who knows you.” I would reason one could take it a step further and add, “How do they know you?” I have found many great resources within our group and believe the others involved share in the sentiment.

“We are excited to provide a group for sports industry professionals to share ideas and best practices, trade resources, and form lasting relationships,” said Lindsey.

A former Chicago colleague Mark Washo, who now resides in Washington D.C., has recently kick started a similar spin-off group in D.C. Follow Mark on Twitter (@Breakintosports). If you are in the area, reach out to him!

Lindsey, Jude and I look forward to an exciting 2010 as we continue to meet new people and build relationships with those in the town we call home – Chicago.

How to Network at a Sports Symposium

Darren Heitner

If you are fortunate enough to attend a major sports symposia, you should go fully prepared to network effectively. Below, I provide some Dos and Don'ts so that you are able to venture to these locations with a full arsenal.

Dos

- **Bring at least 100 business cards.** Don't have a company? No problem. Get creative. Symposia are great places to meet a bunch of new people. For the people you already know or have communicated with, don't waste their time exchanging the paper. Pretend that you care about the environment and keep the cards in your pocket. For the people you would like to know, start with a handshake and ease your way into a conversation before you exchange your contact details. Grab other peoples' cards and after the symposium, use that information to link up with them on sites like LinkedIn.
- **Put your nametag on the side of your body that you shake hands with.** Simple thing that many people miss. I am terrible with names; do everything you can to make me remember yours. If you shake with your right hand, put your nametag on your right lapel.
- **Talk to as many people as you can during breaks.** Breaks are not for coffee and cake. They are the primetime to network. Find someone who is not on a phone and not already with a group of people. Introduce yourself.
- **Get to the symposium early and stay late.** Use every moment available to try to meet new people. Be seen and stand out as much as possible. Leave the lime green button down at home (unless you can pull it off...and kudos to you if you can), but make people wonder why you seem to be so important.
- **Smile.** No one got great sleep the night before and everyone is going to be groggy by the end of the day. Cheer other people up with your brilliance.

- **Butter up the organizer.** No matter how much prep you put into this day, the organizer of the symposium has put 10,000 times as much effort into making sure that the event runs smoothly. The organizer is someone you want on your side, as he/she had to secure all the speakers to attend. You better believe that the organizer has quite a few connections.

Don'ts

- **Skip panels to network.** While the networking is great, the main purpose you are there is to learn from those who have a lot to share. Skipping the panels to network is frowned upon. Bathroom breaks are permissible, and small talk from the room to the bathroom is fine. There will be plenty of time to schmooze.
- **Talk about how you can't wait to get out of there.** Then why are you there in the first place? You have to have something better to talk about.
- **Lack enthusiasm.** This is your one chance to be in front of the "decision makers" in this industry. You don't have to call a central office and be redirected to a voicemail, only to never hear back from the person you are trying to contact. Drink 10 cups of coffee and be ready for showtime.
- **Forget your notepad.** Jot notes about the topics discussed on the panels, but also keep notes on the people you meet outside of the rooms. Don't do it in front of those you just talked with, but when you have a chance, make some notes so that you have something to follow up on with the subjects you met.

Personal and Athlete Branding

“You are the chief marketing officer for the brand called you, but what others say about your brand is more impactful than what you say about yourself.”

-Dan Schwabel, “*Me 2.0*”

Athlete Branding & Owning a Domain Name

Tim Evans

Why should an athlete should care about their domain name and personal brand?

As long as domain names have been around, professional athlete domain names have been valued property by domain speculators (domainers), cyber squatters, and sports fans. If you do a “who is” search for most professional athletes, no matter what the sport, chances are that the domain is registered. Even college athletes who have a shot at the professional level as well as high school recruits who haven’t committed to a school are having their domain names registered.

Before the internet, branding an athlete was only done via commercials, magazine ads, and radio spots. But with the age of the web and social media, from sports fans to teammates, family and friends, and advertisers and sponsors, anyone can type in a player’s name, do a search, and pull up everything they want to know about an athlete. So here’s my question to you: Would you rather send visitors to your Wikipedia profile or to your very own custom designed and personally branded website?

For the athletes who do have a website, depending on how recently the site was launched and how your site was designed/developed, the official site should rank #1 no matter what search engine is used (a newer site does take a little while to climb the ranks above player profile pages). But for those who do not have a site, fans have to go elsewhere to the likes of Wikipedia, league profile pages, team profile pages, Yahoo.com,

CBSsports.com, etc., ultimately diverting traffic to other virtual real estate.

In my experience helping athletes build their brand online, here are five reasons why an athlete should own their own domain:

- Creates a consistent place for visitors to learn more about you on and off the field.
- Allows potential visitors using type-in-traffic of a domain name find your official website immediately.
- Gives the ability to promote your favorite charity or your own charitable foundation year-round.
- Protects your brand from cyber squatters, irate fans or fans that have an agenda.
- Allows for marketing off the field for opportunities after a playing career is over.

One In a Trillion: How Mark Titus Wins with Social Media

Ash Read

Mark Titus is a former walk-on basketball player for The Ohio State University. On the court he was fairly unremarkable, playing 47 minutes and scoring 9 points in his collegiate career. It's off the court where Titus shines.

In November 2008 he started his blog, Club Trillion. The trillion part of the name comes from basketball box scores. When a bench player comes in and plays one minute without registering a single other statistic they will have a one followed by zeroes in 12 categories, which comes out as a trillion.

His blog now has over 2.8 million views and has led to Titus becoming one of the most popular players on the Ohio State team. Club Trillion is also a great example of how an athlete can build up a following through social media; the blog has nearly 10,000 fans on Facebook and over 15,000 followers on Twitter. Titus is also a hit on YouTube; his video "Mr. Rainmaker" has nearly 300,000 views.

Why does Titus win with social media? People can identify with him. In sports there are very few stars and few who make it into the pros, but every team has bench players. Almost everyone that plays sports has at some point has been a bench warmer, and people can relate to that.

He's different. Titus summed it up well when he said, "Everyone hears about the guy that scores 20 points each night, but no one talks about the guy at the end of the bench. I can tell people about the game from a perspective they haven't heard before."

As fans we want the insider info and not the PR talk we generally get from athletes in interviews and in the press. Titus does just that, he takes us inside the locker room and gives us a transparent view of the team.

He doesn't use his blog to tell us how hard the team are working and how focused they are on winning – we already know that and can read about that in other places. He focuses on the more quirky and fun side of the team which allows us to get to know the personalities of the players as well as him.

How can other athletes apply this? Superstar athletes like Kobe and LeBron, or Rooney and Beckham will get publicity, fans and sponsorship dollars because they are the best at what they do.

For athletes who aren't superstars getting visibility can be hard, but in a world where anyone can tell their story and an Ohio State bench player can build up a substantial fan base, there are endless possibilities for athletes of all levels.

While every athlete may not be as articulate or humorous as Titus, here are a few things athletes of all levels looking to utilize social media can learn from him:

Show humility. As a sports fan I want feel like I know my favorite athletes, and what are they like away from the court. Social media can be a great way to show fans you are just like us, show your strengths and flaws, and show fans that you have personality.

Be “remarkable.” Focus on what makes you different from other athletes and let that shine through. For Titus it's his humor that makes him different, he's willing to make a joke about himself. But every athlete is different and it's about showing fans that.

Be authentic. As I mentioned above, fans don't want to read watered down PR on your blog, Twitter or Facebook page. Use social media to show the real you and update your accounts yourself.

The Vilifying of Athlete Crimes

Michelle Hill

Are athletes judged more harshly for their indiscretions and blatant crimes than the Average Joe? Are they scrutinized and seen as villains under the media's microscope in a way that's justified by those who condemn them?

If we're honest about it, most people thrive on public scandal and it is evidenced by the way we were glued to our televisions during the O.J. trial. Of course, other sports heroes have caught our attention with scandals of varying degrees, like Kobe Bryant, Rae Carruth, Shoeless Joe Jackson, Nate Newton, Michael Vick, Tonya Harding, Mike Tyson, and most recently, Tiger Woods.

Scandals make for good sports bar banter and wildly heated debates. Among analysts and commentators it creates juicy, on-camera airtime. When one of our sports heroes goes astray, he or she is often cast as a villain. His or her fame is perverted, and their name dragged through the mud in every conceivable way.

Since the public eye is watching, it does appear larger than life. After all, we idolize our sports heroes and expect near perfection from them. When they fall short, we (and the media) scrutinize their actions, condemn, and self-righteously sit back and pronounce judgment.

Based on the severity of the crime, a few of our fallen sports heroes deserve to be behind bars and psychologically evaluated. Others, who have had marital indiscretions and possible addictions, are like anyone else in the "real" world. They need a strong dose of counseling and support to help them on the road to recovery. They need a hand up and a strong arm of love and support.

The *REAL* heroes are the ones who admit they've fallen and can't get up without outside help. Through ongoing therapy and accountability, they regain their sense of balance, restore damaged relationships, and get back on the course or court, or whatever the field of play may be; they re-establish themselves as the hero they once were. They'll forever drag their personal scandal behind them, but they use it as a springboard for a stronger and more courageous future.

Reputation Management: Athletes Facing Controversy

Wesley Mallette

Athletes get in trouble. We see it every day in the news and wonder aloud, “Wow. Did they *really* just say/do that?”

The vast majority of athletes will face a crisis of some proportion during their career or post-career. How they handle it is everything, and *who* manages them through it plays a major factor in the outcome. (Hence the need for true strategic communications professionals - seasoned PR people - on their team of advisors.)

Too many athletes rely on less than qualified “handlers” to counsel them through the eye of the storm of controversy. They are foolish enough to follow the non-expert advice of, “We can handle this. Here’s what we’ll say/won’t say and this is what we’ll do. This will blow over.” Their reactions and responses will range from avoidance, vehement denial, finger pointing, and the answer that is really not an option, “*No comment.*” Bad advice or no advice, we’ve seen it all too often and athletes are left wishing they could do it over again. Ask Tiger. Ask Roger Clemens. Ask Gilbert Arenas. Take your pick. There are hundreds of case studies in what NOT to do.

There are also those who’ve weathered the storm but in the process have lost endorsements, served suspensions, and dealt with significant damage to their reputations. Yet they came back –and arguably, stronger than ever; Kobe Bryant, Ray Lewis, Michael Phelps, Charles Barkley, Jason Giambi, and Andy Pettite, among many others have all recovered.

So how do you overcome the white-hot spotlight of the media when you are in crisis? How do you eventually win back endorsement deals, fan approval, the media, and the court of public opinion?

The road through what I call “Reputation Rehab” is not easy. It begins and ends with one thing – a sound and strategic communications plan. Do it right and you’re on the road to a faster recovery. Get it wrong and you can kiss sponsorship deals, contract renewals, and post-career opportunities goodbye.

As an athlete, you understand preparation is key. You prepare for every game by studying film, practicing hard, attending meetings, developing the game plan, etc. The same must be done when it comes to managing your reputation. You start by having a solid communications strategy in place BEFORE you embark upon anything and everything you do. Here’s the key: your lawyer, agent, publicist, etc., cannot do this on his or her own. They are not qualified. That strategy MUST be developed in conjunction with a true PR strategist, a person or team skilled in this arena.

Also, make sure you are properly (and consistently) media-trained in how to handle both social and traditional media. As a public figure in the spotlight, you have to understand how to work with media and that everyone involved has a job to do. With social media, you can avoid mistakes on a basic level by being responsible and thinking before you “tweet” or post a status update.

Build a significant bank of goodwill with the media, the public, and your fan base from the outset and do the right thing all the time. It will help tremendously when reputation or sponsorship damaging issues confront you.

When you are faced with controversy, huddle with your strategic communications and legal team immediately, lay out the clear message that everyone on your team will communicate, tweak your plan accordingly, and then go face the controversy head on. **Own your level of responsibility, be accountable for your actions and be sincere.** Your message must be consistent. You must be human, believable and real. If you can avoid it, do not have your agent or lawyer speaking on your behalf. It’s not authentic, it’s not believable, and you will start to quickly see the court of public opinion swing in the wrong direction.

Do not “spin.” Managing an athlete’s reputation in the court of public opinion is not about “spin.”

When you spin you don’t win.

Save that for the politicians and their scandals. We’re talking sports here and in this world it’s about accountability, ownership, telling your story and making sure the story is balanced. When you’re honest – no matter how painful – you have a much better chance of getting your key stakeholders to stand by you and forgive you. When you run, hide or lie, it’s over. The speed of the recovery depends on the strategic communications plan put in place and how well it is executed. An experienced team of PR pros and a sound communications strategy is your best bet.

Success in sports is achieved through solid game planning. The same holds true when it comes to managing your reputation and image. Prepare, plan and execute. Your long-term career depends on it.

Sponsorship

“Sports are a surrogate. The brands are investing because it’s the closest way a brand can come to providing consumer experiences that [the consumer] can’t experience in everyday life.”

-Fred Popp, *CEO and partner of SME Branding*

Are Super Bowl Ads Still Worth It?

Sam Taggart

Super Bowl advertisements have long been one of the best ways to get your brand exposure and eyeballs. Take Go Daddy for example. The company, known for its racy advertising, began airing 30-second commercial spots during the Super Bowl in 2005. Since then, Go Daddy has become the largest certified domain registrar in the world, with more than 36 million domains under its management.

The Super Bowl is one of the most-watched television events on a yearly basis, with somewhere between 40 – 43% of households watching (98 million viewers in 2009). Nielsen released survey results that stated just over half of the audience that tunes into the Super Bowl enjoys the commercials more than the actual game. “This survey reinforces the value of the Super Bowl as a marketing bonanza, featuring one of the most receptive TV audiences in the world,” said Randall Beard, executive vice president of Nielsen IAG. “With so many viewers waiting for the pitch, the pressure is on advertisers to create and place ads that will have a lasting impact.”

The big kicker is that Super Bowl ads are not cheap! Last year, a 30-second spot cost \$3 million. With a lot of advertising turning towards social media in the past year, a very low-cost initiative, companies are becoming a little more hesitant to spend the money on one Super Bowl ad Suddenly they can get far more “bang for their buck” online.

Some Companies Have Had Enough

In mid-December 2009, PepsiCo Inc. announced that they would not advertise in the 2010 Super Bowl, ending a 23-year run. Instead, the company has decided to put the money into a new,

online marketing effort. Last year, between advertisements for Pepsi, Gatorade, and Cheetos, PepsiCo Inc. spent \$33 million. They admit that the Super Bowl still brings incredible value to their brands. However, it is making less and less sense for them to put that kind of money into one event, when they can spread it out online. Pepsi spokeswoman, Nicole Bradley, said “In 2010, each of our beverage brands has a strategy and marketing platform that will be less about a singular event and more about a movement.”

Other companies have backed out of the Super Bowl as well. FedEx has decided not to advertise in 2010, for the second year in a row, citing cost issues. General Motors has also decided not to advertise in the Super Bowl. So, while the Super Bowl still possesses great value for brands, it simply isn't making as much sense as it used to spend that kind of money.

Other Brands Are Getting Creative

While some major companies are pulling out of the Super Bowl, others are finding ways to be innovative. This year, the Doritos brand has launched its fourth annual Doritos “Crash the Super Bowl” challenge, inviting regular people to create self-made advertisements to be aired during the big game. For the past few years Doritos has been getting interactive with its fans and consumers by allowing them this opportunity. This year there is an added incentive. According to a press release, contestants this year “are shooting to make history by beating the ad pros and garnering the top three spots in USA TODAY’s annual Ad Meter. If they can do it, Doritos will award the winners a shared \$5 million cash prize.” Online consumers will decide which of the six finalists (chosen by Doritos) will have their ads run in the Super Bowl. Fans in the U.S. can vote once per day between January 5 and 31, 2010.

Doritos has done a nice job with this campaign. By creating an interactive and engaging process for their fans, they have created an “out of the box” Super Bowl campaign. For them, it’s worth it to spend the rumored \$2.5-2.8 million per commercial, because they are building their brand and engaging with customers along

the way. They created a captivating campaign that will build up to the Super Bowl that has a lot of people invested. You can bet all of those fans who voted will tune in to see which commercial made it.

One note I would point out is that, while they are promoting the campaign through Twitter and Facebook, their Twitter account (@DoritosUSA) has around 700 followers. While their Facebook page has about 750,000 fans, there is no real community there. Fans post infrequently, and their status updates don't get a lot of interaction. It seems Doritos doesn't focus too much on their social media accounts. I think the campaign could have been a real home run had the brand found a way to incorporate social media a bit more.

A Tough Decision

So what do you think? Is it still worth it for advertisers to spend the money on Super Bowl commercials when they can spread that amount of money over a much larger campaign through social media and probably see more meaningful results? In my opinion, it's really a case-by-case basis. The Super Bowl is heavily watched, and there is solid proof that about half of the audience is just watching for the commercials. The Super Bowl has always been known for its great commercials, and I don't think that will change just yet. Each year, we will see 30-second commercial spots continue to drop in price as brands see less of a reason to spend the money. Pepsi, FedEx, and GM have already bailed, and more companies will follow their lead. We now live in a world where brands have to engage. With that shifting mentality, it will be interesting to see if and when Super Bowl commercials will become obsolete.

100 Reasons You Are Still Searching for Sponsors in Sports

Kris Mathis

Things have to get better than this year right? The best part about 2009 is that it has re-focused both buyers and sellers on what really matters in sponsorship. Marketers are creating leaner, more effective sponsorship portfolios and properties (“sellers”) have been forced by the competitive environment to take an honest look at their sales practices and offerings. In the end, I’m convinced we’ll all come out better for it. Properties will sell better, sponsors will have more positive outcomes, and sponsorship as a practice will have more successful case studies. Until then...

100. You sold exposure, your prospect wanted relevance

99. Your property wasn’t “green” enough

98. Your team fixed a race

97. You didn’t prospect for multi-nationals

96. Your title left and so went their business partners

95. It competed with yours and took your sponsors

94. The sponsor decided to create their own property

93. You bought a certified measurement

92. The sponsor did their own certified measurement

91. New legislation ate it

90. You focused on your assets
89. You didn't focus on their needs
88. You spent too much time watching webinars
87. You didn't spend enough time listening to sponsors
86. You called it alliance
85. You called it sponsorship
84. You called it partnership
83. Your prospect was thoroughly confused
82. You didn't "sell up" through regional and local constituents
81. The proposal management system ate it
80. Your property isn't big enough
79. Not enough media
78. Your consultant over-promised
77. The prospect's agency ate your proposal
76. You didn't look outside of sponsorship periodicals for business and marketing trends
75. You didn't explore new categories
74. Your boss' pricing expectations were unrealistic
73. You thought SpongeTech would sponsor forever
72. You sold name awareness, not brand

71. You sent a wrap-up report that looked like a sales brochure
70. Your prospect was too lazy to forecast ROI
69. Your sponsorship opp didn't have cross-divisional appeal
68. You listened to "experts," instead of your sponsor
67. Financials are hibernating
66. You sent your prospect to a PayPal button
65. Your prospect is going more direct to customer this year
64. You didn't have a witty reply to "it's the economy"
63. Your prospect's budget was too low
62. Your asking price was too high
61. Your sponsor got ambushed last year
60. Your prospect found a way to ambush
59. Your book of sources was outdated when it was printed
58. You didn't follow-up with conference contacts
57. That contact from the conference referred you to...
56. The auto industry
55. They're spending on the —— festival instead this year
54. You didn't know your audience demographics
53. Your team's not winning

52. The jersey patch didn't peak interest
51. Your athletes have competing sponsors
50. Your teams have a competing sponsor
49. You have a competing sponsor
48. You didn't share contacts/leads with peer properties
47. You don't know how much traffic your website gets
46. You didn't start selling early enough
45. You inflated attendance numbers
44. You started with "banner inclusion"
43. Your prospects CEO doesn't play [insert sport]
42. No sponsor summit
41. Your sponsors didn't give you case studies
40. You didn't sell your sponsor success stories
39. You looked at your sponsors as competing for attention at your event
38. You're competitor sold cross-partnership opportunities among his/her sponsors
37. You sold a multi-year package
36. Your prospect wanted to "test the waters"
35. Your existing sponsors didn't activate making you look bad

34. Your sponsor changed marketing strategy
33. You didn't offer the opportunity to shift assets with it
32. You didn't look for ways to cross-partner with similar properties
31. You didn't have a cause/charity tie-in
30. You thought social media meant MySpace
29. Your sponsor went bankrupt
28. Your sponsor had layoffs
27. New legislation changed your sponsor's objectives
26. You sold sponsorship manager, but...
25. Your company contact left the company
24. Your sales agent ate it
23. You didn't sell multiple constituents within your target co.
22. You didn't focus on how the sponsor can prove ROI
21. Naming rights are so 2000
20. People don't want to party (hospitality)
19. You had a PR nightmare
18. You didn't use your network to find new company contacts
17. You kept calling... and calling
16. Your website is outdated

15. You couldn't find the decision-maker
14. You went through the sponsor's agency
13. You didn't use all of the online tools at your disposal
12. You didn't use that same agency to build support
11. You didn't get creative with benefits
10. You waited expectantly from a single company in the category
09. You didn't pitch to other companies in the category
08. You focused too much on signage and seats
07. You didn't spend enough time selling spirit and "soft benefits" of your event
06. You already sold a category that was too broad
05. You pitched hospitality to scared banks and autos
04. You didn't research your prospect's biz
03. You weren't flexible with fee structure
02. Your prospect didn't want to be your 77th sponsor

... And when all else fails...

1. The Economy

Don't let that get you down though. After all just think of the alternatives to sponsorships. You're certainly not alone if you haven't met your sponsorship goals this year. Some things you can control, some things you can't. The point of this exercise wasn't meant to be a downer, but rather show you that there are a million

ways to sour a sponsorship deal, and only one sure way to win one...

The #1 reason you got a sponsorship:

You adapted to a volatile environment and sold to specific sponsor needs

Will Social Media Become Ambush Marketing's Favorite New Ammo?

Kris Mathis

As we look ahead, let us address a topic most marketers have a strong opinion on: ambush. Whether you believe ambush marketing of official events is creative and cost-efficient or an unethical, illegal mortal marketing sin, the fact is we will see more of it than many marketers care to envision. Global events such as the Olympics and World Cup will fuel the fire, as they have in the past, but this time the battleground may be waged on a relatively new frontier: social media.

Sure, some will attempt to solve ambush with legal claims such as trademark infringement and unfair competition. Major League Soccer filed a lawsuit against Black and Decker for their Dewalt promotion around exhibition matches (competitor, Makita, is the official sponsor of MLS). However, ambush marketers – and their legal teams – will likely find new ways to skirt IP issues with the Olympics, especially in an environment without precedent like social media. When you're spending \$100 million for an official deal, both property and sponsor should probably be proactively identifying ways to mitigate ambush rather than (or at least as well as) relying on reactive legal remedies. Consider this, Coke spent an estimated \$70 million to be one of the top 12 Olympic sponsors — and \$5 million to \$15 million more on the torch relay. But according to at least one study, up to 60% of consumers believed Pepsi was the official sponsor in Beijing. This is scary stuff for CMO's and properties.

So what exactly is ambush? There's a lot of debate around the definition itself. Wikipedia sets it out like this:

Ambush marketing is a marketing campaign that takes place around an event but does not involve payment of a sponsorship fee to the event. For most events of any significance, one brand will pay to become the exclusive and official sponsor of the event in a particular category or categories, and this exclusivity creates a problem for one or more other brands. Those other brands then find ways to promote themselves in connection with the same event, without paying the sponsorship fee and without breaking any laws.

Ambush is nothing new. Here's a few of the most notorious cases around the Olympics and World Cup, courtesy of Nicholas Burton and Simon Chadwick's *Typology of Ambush Marketing: The Methods and Strategies of Ambushing in Sport*, which examined over 350 recent examples of ambush.

Burton and Chadwick note that the practice has evolved over time from broadcast sponsorship campaigns and billboard advertising around venues to more aggressive off-site strategies. Some go as far as getting fans to distribute the ambush marketer's messages for them. Is social media the natural evolution? The scary thing for official sponsors should be the fact that the costs to scale an ambush campaign are greatly reduced through social media. At least with past mediums, there were still some relevant hard costs involved in scaling broadcast, billboard and street team ambush campaigns, even if palling in comparison to official rights fees. Not so with social media. It gets even more complicated when you're talking about events like the World Cup where 99.99% of the engaged audience is a viewer, not an attendee. Properties stand a much better chance of "owning" their on-site experience with their official sponsors. It's much harder to own an online experience, especially when content is so widely disseminated among various sites and sources. In many cases properties can't even keep their broadcasts ambush free.

In 2004, John Crompton issued a report entitled "Sponsorship ambushing in sport" that outlined these categories of ambush:

- the sponsorship of event broadcasts or television time around an un-sponsored event
- the sponsorship of associated entities (other than the organizers/rights holders)
- the use of advertising media near/in proximity of the event/venues
- advertising using a theme or implied association
- creating a competitive attraction to distract from the event
- accidental ambushing of an event due to a lack of diligence on the part of the organizer

Social media probably fits into at least three of these categories. Or perhaps similar to other trends, social media marketers will need to completely re-examine the potential of social media's ambush potential on sponsor campaigns of all shapes and sizes.

While Coca-Cola is an official sponsor of both the Olympics and World Cup, look for Pepsi to play the social media villain (or hero depending on how you view ambush) in 2010. Pepsi has already announced plans to run an online competition around the World Cup. The winning fan will have a chance to sing in its new football-themed World Cup campaign alongside Akon and Keri Hilson.

Legal remedies or not, there is no doubt that some "official" sponsors will be relegated to afterthought by clever and vastly less expensive online ambush campaigns. Are sponsors (and properties for that matter) giving their full attention to the possible social media threats of ambush marketing? It's a familiar battle, but new surroundings. One tweet, fantasy league and fan page at a time; properties and official sponsors will have to take an honest look at how they plan to overcome ambush in digital environments. It's a tough question and I certainly don't have the answer (do you?!). It seems likely that the best remedy will be the effectiveness of each sponsor's own social media activation strategy.

Will Coke's story be compelling enough to drown out Pepsi's noise?

7 Social Media Tips for Sponsorship Sales

Kris Mathis

Marketers, and especially sports marketers, in my opinion are vastly more educated in social media than the majority of other professions. 99% of the talk about social media, however, is on how it can be used to market to consumers. Are there social media tips and tricks sponsorship pros can use to better support their sponsorship case to potential corporate buyers? You bet... and they're constantly evolving. Let's rundown a few:

1. Don't assume your audience is the same. You likely provide consensus demographics for on-site and broadcast. Okay, that's great, but are you also considering the variance between your audience on-site and your audience online? Whether it's Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or a number of other sites, presumably you'll be finding ways for your sponsors to interact with consumers on these platforms too. The audience profile may vary dramatically from on-site (for better or for worse). As technologies mature, your on-site audience will likely more closely mirror your social media audience, but until then it's wise to keep in mind the variance across your consumer touch points.

2. Encourage sponsors to tailor activation to the medium. Each network has its own merits, but that doesn't mean you can treat each medium the same. Would it make sense for a B2B event/sponsor to activate on MySpace or Facebook? If you want direct dialogue, your sponsor's activation tactic might be better suited to Twitter than LinkedIn's cluttered message boards. But you only have 140 characters and sponsor backlash can spread like wildfire on Twitter, while more insulated on a message board. Does your sponsor have an iPhone app? Great, but how tech savvy is your audience? Make sure you consider the nuances of each individual platform, and tailor your social media activation accordingly.

3. Manage sponsor expectations. As Skittles found out the hard way, social media can be cultivated, but it cannot be controlled. Make sure your sponsors know the difference. If you're a property and you host an activation where the sponsor gets flamed, you want to make sure that your sponsors are fully aware of the risks.

4. Leverage networks for sponsors leads. Are you fully grooming your social and professional networks for sponsor leads? Networks like LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook make it easier than ever to see who knows who. In a relationship biz, there's nothing better than a personal introduction. Your existing contact might not be the perfect fit for a sale, but you should also be examining their networks for second degree sponsor leads. Of course, this only applies if you're willing to give as much as you get. If that's you, then don't be shy!

5. Expand your marketing platform. You may not have an event or broadcast this month, but social media provides the perfect medium to keep in touch with (and allow your sponsors to tap into) your fan base during seasonal lulls. If your event is one weekend a year, make sure that your sponsors know that your social media efforts can expand their consumer interaction well beyond those 48 hours.

6. Call to action. Pretty much every sponsor loves a good call to action opportunity that translates to sales. Unlike other sponsor assets (Premiums, TV, Print, etc.), social media by its nature allows for sponsors to learn, be flexible, tailor and adapt their activations to shifting business conditions. Be nimble and let sponsors time their activation to seasonal business conditions, specific inventory conditions, new locations and more.

7. Measurement. Make sure that your sponsors know how to properly measure (and credit you for) the social media tactics that they're incorporating into their sponsorship platform. This, of course, is highly dependent on determining what the sponsor's specific objectives are in the first place, but don't fall short on measurement by simply counting a sponsor's direct interactions (i.e. followers) with your fans/consumers. Digital Royalty's

Return on Influence (ROI) formula is a great place to start learning about social media measurement, for you and your partners.

Ticket Sales

“Make your product easier to buy than your competition, or you will find your customers buying from them, not you.”

-Mark Cuban, *owner of the Dallas Mavericks of the NBA*

Budgets are for Cowards! How to Fight Back

Bill Guertin

Every account executive in sports sales would be rich if they had a nickel for every time they've heard "It's not in the budget" this year. It's the all-purpose excuse for the new normal. After all, it's an easy out for the prospect; how can any rep argue with a budget that they can't see?

As a group of sales professionals, our success against a stingy budget boils down to two things:

- A rock-solid understanding of the value of our product to our clients, and;
- An iron will to continue to sell through their initial resistance.

Most everyone that has the power to write a check is nervous about the pressure they're getting from all sides. Spending money in the "wrong" way has been the kiss of death for many executives, and no one wants to be the next victim.

Regardless of how nervous our prospects are, the reality is that whether or not their budget is gone, the need for your product's solution may still be there. Your challenge – and your opportunity – is to discover what your buyer's greatest challenges are, find out what those problems are costing them, and lay out how an investment with you can improve their situation.

Bottom line: Don't take the objection at face value!

When you hear, "Sorry, it's not in the budget this year," here are a few of the kinds of responses I recommend:

#1: *“We hear the ‘B’ Word a lot! Let me ask you: even though your budget is gone, is the need for (motivating your salespeople/entertaining your best clients/employee appreciation) still there? With all due respect for your budget, what are the consequences of choosing NOT to invest in that in 2010?”* Discuss the negatives of doing nothing, what they will cost, and the relative good that can come from being a part of your team for 2010.

#2: *“Staying within budget is always a challenge. What would you say your biggest business challenge is this year?”* This kind of discussion gets your prospects thinking in terms of issues and the need to resolve them, and you’ll have the chance to connect your product with these kinds of solutions.

#3: *“I understand. If budget wasn’t an issue – if the seats I had were FREE – what would you do with them? How would you use them to build your business?”* Remove the budget issue completely, and allow your prospect to dream about how your product would be used if given access. Many prospects actually enjoy this activity, and their answers will give you valuable insight into their potential intentions.

If these don’t sound like you would say them, change the words around until they sound and feel right. As long as you keep the intent intact, you should be fine.

There are more reasons than ever for people to say “No” to our offers. What’s important to remember is that there are just as many reasons to say “Yes” – if we’re well-prepared to overcome today’s objections with compelling reasons for our prospects to reconsider their answer.

Sell Your Ideas, Not Tickets

Josh Feinberg

Raise your hand if you are a salesman (you all should have your hands up). We are all in sales, whether you are selling yourself, selling your product or service. Are you in the business of selling *ideas*, *passion*, or *events*? I am...it's called Minor League Baseball. Sales in Minor League Baseball can come in many shapes and sizes, be it groups, mini-plans, and of course season tickets. More often than not, *Theme Nights* held at the ballpark will come into play. Try to sell an idea before you attempt to sell tickets.

Theme nights translate into ideas, passion, and events. Is your passion dogs? Then organize a "Bark in the Park" event for fans and their pets. Maybe your passion is music and performing. I have a great idea for your local schools, why don't you bring your chorus out to sing the National Anthem or "Take Me out to the Ballgame". I bet there are some Chess fans out there. Use some open space on the concourse to host a chess tournament during a game.

Do you have a contact with the local little league? Sell them an event. The little leagues we work with can participate in a pre-game parade, run on the field with the players, have a pre-game catch in the outfield, throw out a first pitch, work the concession stands, and then play their own a game after our game! I most certainly call that an event.

The list goes on and on. A few more ideas that come to mind...Firefighter Night, Karate Night, Networking Events, Bowling Night, and theme nights such as Italian, Jewish or Irish Heritage events. Whenever you can mix in aspects that include nostalgic items like bagpipes or kosher food, the theme night

concept reaches closer to an *event*, not *just* a minor league baseball game.

Sell groups that revolve around the hot topic, popular hobby, or current fad. Sell patrons on a purpose other than minor league baseball. Do not *just* sell tickets – sell **IDEAS, EVENTS, and PASSION!**

Reach out in New and Creative Ways for Ticket Sales

Tyler Johnson

I always take the opportunity to reach out to a customer and show off a brand I represent. I won't lie; I had a college professor that pounded this into my head for a semester. Working in ticket sales a few years later, I searched for ways to capitalize on this point.

In today's ticket selling environment some of the most frequent "reaching" out to customers is often through an e-mail blast or annual phone call of some sort. These customers receive the same treatment from companies across all industries, not just ticket sales people. I search for new ways to build rapport and trust with current and hopefully future customers. I'm trying to differentiate myself along with the brand I represent!

One of my favorite activities is sending out our Holiday cards. Year round I still love sending hand written notes, almost as much as the customer does receiving them. It's rare to receive something personal from a company just to say "Hello." I continue to come across people that I may not remember sending a card or a few ticket vouchers, but they always remember me. Some return as customers, others refer their friends while some just acknowledge a well done "Hello" from their favorite team. I've even been called out as the "White Sox Networking guy!" at the bar. Either way, when I call, they feel my purpose is not simply to "sell them" but to find out what I can do for them. They know I'll be there whether they buy what I have to offer or not, and as a serious fan they don't wander too far off.

As the online world continues to grow, I've found ways to let my customers know they're not just on my radar come payment time in the digital world. The social media window of opportunity has come! Adding this new avenue in reaching out to customers or leads that way has gone a long way for me. Whether it's Twitter,

Facebook or LinkedIn, it is more personal than an e-mail blast. Even better, those pages provide great information that help build rapport and provide even more information about the person whom I'm trying to sell. I have my Twitter and LinkedIn links in my company signature. It excites me when I see a new Sox fan or customer following me because the window of opportunity just opened a little further.

The referral factor gets multiplied with the use of social media. The more people who know where to find me and look for the answers to their White Sox related questions, the better. Utilizing this area over the past year has allowed the quality and quantity of my leads to rise.

Finding the right mix is always crucial and depends on the customer, as they are each different and unique in their own way. Seek to find ways that people will remember you and reach out to them with a few marketing touch points.

Top 100 Pieces of Advice for Sports Ticket Sales Reps

Bill Guertin

1. Ask yourself, “Why do I want to be in sports ticket sales?” If it’s because you’ve always wanted to work for a sports team, consider that you may have wanted the job for the wrong reasons.
2. Be in love with success as much as you are in love with the job. Don’t take the job simply because you wanted to see your name next to the team logo on a business card.
3. Understand that you’ll have all kinds of people you’ll need to interact with effectively, including some that you wouldn’t want to necessarily hang out with. Look past your own personal bias, and treat everyone the same: Like Gold.
4. Learn just enough about the team’s packages to be dangerous, then start selling. You’ll learn more in those first 100 calls about what you need to study further than anything your literature will ever tell you.
5. Don’t get “Analysis Paralysis” – thinking that you have to study everything about the team, the packages, and every nuance of the sport before you can get out and sell it. Good is better than perfect.
6. Study successful people you admire in your office that have been there for a while. Listen to how they do what they do, and borrow what you can reasonably incorporate into your own style.
7. Read books and publications that give you a taste of others’ selling styles; try several things, and begin to create your own style based on the success of others. (For starters, go to

www.The800PoundGorilla.com and click on Free Articles and Helpful Stuff.)

8. Do NOT take someone else's entire selling style and try to force it into your body! Learn from others, then adapt it and make it your own.

9. Be confident that every phone call has the potential to result in a sale. There are no "throwaway" calls! Be at your best on every one, whether it's the first or the fiftieth of the day.

10. Remember that every single phone call you make is to your next potential employer. If you're any good at all, you'll get a lot of job offers from your prospects. How many offers will you receive? The better you become at selling, the more you'll get. (It's a great barometer of how well you're doing!)

11. Be nice and get along with as many people as possible in your office; you'll need every one of them at one time or another in your career with the team.

12. Learn where the problem areas are in your arena or facility, so that you can talk intelligently with your customers about blind spots, handicapped access, the path of the sun and shade, and the other things they won't learn online.

13. Learn the positives about every seat. Believe that "every seat is a good seat" in many ways, and be able to sell each location – the good as well as the bad.

14. Use positive language for each kind of seat. You should never refer to the upper deck as the "nosebleed seats" or other negative word, even if the customer refers to them as that. Know the words to use to describe each of the sections of your facility, and USE them with your prospects!

15. Don't assume that just because you have contacts in a community, you can sell them without asking for the order. It's

great that others know you, but until and unless you ASK them to buy, they probably won't.

16. Know what's different about the team you represent compared to every other sports experience and leisure activity in town.

17. What qualifies you to be the #1 choice in your community? Learn and know what you've done in the past that makes you the prospect's best choice to work with.

18. Sales is helping people get what they want, so that you can get what you want. Don't complicate it any more than you have to!

19. People need salespeople in their lives, whether they like to admit it or not. Don't let anyone talk you out of the profession. Nothing happens in this country – or ANY country – until a sale is made!

20. You're going to have to help people make decisions about buying tickets to your sporting event. Don't be afraid to tell them what you'd do if it were YOUR money!

21. Some people are going to beat you up before they buy. That's part of your job; to absorb the negative, listen to what they have to say, acknowledge their concerns, and then ask them to buy.

22. People enjoy buying from someone they like. Be likeable!

23. Help others to feel as though they can count on you to stand behind their purchase. Let them know you'll be there to help them every step of the way, both during the season and beyond.

24. Many of us secretly want someone to give us permission to buy. As a sales professional, you should constantly give your clients the satisfaction of knowing that their choice of your seats will be the right choice. Give them the permission they're looking for to buy!

25. Think about this: Why should someone deal with you instead of your Website when buying tickets? What do you bring to the buying experience that your team's Website can't?
26. Companies don't need any more vendors; what they really want today are those who are willing to become partners in their success. Find out what your customers are looking to achieve, and help them get there with the benefits of your product.
27. Habits are formed through constant repetition each day. Get into positive habits on the job from Day One — # of prospecting calls, paperwork accuracy, less time jawboning with co-workers, etc.
28. You have 10 seconds or less to impress someone enough to have them want to continue listening to you. If you sound disinterested, unprepared, or wishy-washy, you won't get past "Hello, my name is..."
29. Read into an audio recorder as if you were on the first 10 seconds of a phone call, and then play it back. You'll never understand how good (or bad) you sound until you hear it for yourself.
30. Be as prepared to leave a great Voice Mail message as you would be prepared to discuss a potential sale with a prospect. Since over 70% of the phone calls we make result in a voice mail, shouldn't you be EXTRA-prepared to leave a message that begs to be returned?
31. Here's a test: Leave yourself a phone message on your voice mail at home at the beginning of the day, and then listen to it when you return home. Would you return your own message?
32. If you have scripts or phrases you want to memorize, read them into a digital recorder and listen to them on your iPod as you jog around, work out, or drive to and from the office. If you memorize the phrases, they'll come out of your mouth at just the right time, with just the right amount of conviction.

33. If you're not listening to yourself on an iPod or CD in your car, listen to something inspirational on the way in before work. The news won't cut it. Choose something that will inspire you to be at your best that day.
34. Hang out with positive, successful people. If you have negative friends that bring you down with them, drop them and get new ones. Your career is at stake.
35. Before you even pick up the phone, be sure you have all the information you need in front of you.
36. Make sure your mind is in a singular place when you're calling. Daydreaming about that hot date later that night isn't going to sell you any tickets right now.
37. When you finally reach your prospect, ask if it's a good time to talk. Phrases like, "Did I catch you at a good time?" or "Do you have a moment?" are two examples. If you launch into your pitch right away, your tone screams "Salesperson" right away.
38. Open the conversation strong by asking a question that the dozens of salespeople before you aren't asking.
39. Learn to vividly "paint the picture" of what the team experience is like for your prospect, in a way they'll respond to favorably.
40. Some of the best "trigger words" you can use to begin to paint the picture are: "Imagine... How do you think...?" "Just think..." "Picture this...", and "Here's what I see..."
41. Storytelling is a powerful means of selling ideas. Learn success stories of groups, individuals and businesses that have used your team's product successfully, and tell those stories to others who are experiencing similar challenges.
42. Many prospects feel guilty, frightened, nervous, or any combination of emotions when making a buying decision; as a

professional salesperson, learn how to help people say "Yes" to you by giving them "permission" to buy.

43. If your prospect begins to try to sell YOU something, politely tell them that you'd be happy to consider their offer, once you've been allowed to finish what you're calling them about.

44. Gatekeepers can be your best friends, if you're sincere about wanting to get to know them and you can prove it by taking good notes, asking questions that matter to them, and bringing up those conversation points each time you call.

45. Be prepared to answer the question, "Can I tell him/her what your call is regarding?" They're listening for you to stumble so that they have a reason to deny you access to the decision-maker.

46. If you communicate to the gatekeeper that you have something "new" to share with the decision-maker, she is more likely to let you through.

47. If you can't get through the gatekeeper, try to find someone else at the company that can help you get you to your target.

48. Have a list of questions or cheat sheet you can look at and refer to it often when you finally have a prospect on the phone.

49. Best response to gatekeeper's 'What This Regarding?': "It's a business matter of a personal nature."

50. Second-best response: "It's about his/her Season Tickets with the (team). Are you a fan too?"

51. Get a mentor that isn't afraid to tell you what you need to hear, rather than what you want to hear.

52. If you need a reason to get out of bed, make it for someone else other than you: the child that will attend their first sporting

event because of your phone call, the business that will find a way to keep their best client because of a suggestion you made, etc.

53. If you're not prepared with at least five solid answers to the "It's not in the budget" objection, you'll sell less than you're capable of selling.

54. Best open-ended answer: "Does that mean you wouldn't be open to a new idea?"

55. Second-best answer: "Which budget do you mean? Most companies have several."

56. Thought-provoking answer: "Put the budget aside for a moment. If these seats were free, how would you choose to use them?"

57. Smart answer: "Most companies I work with are re-evaluating all their expenses, and figuring out what kind of REAL return they're getting. What do you do for things like (employee incentives/sales incentives/client entertainment, etc.) right now?"

58. Best reason to keep tickets in the budget: Stress Reduction (employees, customers, suppliers, family, and the prospect).

59. If a company just laid people off, they're still a candidate for seats. Don't give up too soon!

60. Always acknowledge their painful choice to lay off people before you get into the reasons why it may be the perfect time to get involved in a cost-effective product like your team.

61. Most companies still need to operate and do business, even if they've had layoffs recently. Ask if they plan on keeping the doors open, and if so, what their plans are for pleasing customers and motivating employees going forward.

62. Get wishy-washy people to tell you "Yes" or "No" sooner rather than later!
63. Suggest that phone tag is hard to play, and politely suggest that you'd rather have a Yes or No now, to benefit both of you.
64. It's OK to get a "No", because then you can move on – and so can your prospect!
65. Don't criticize someone's choice of buying tickets at the box office on the day of the game if they're available; thank them for their support, compliment them on their choice of teams to see, and let them know what benefits they may be missing out on as a Season Ticket holder that they may not have known.
66. Too many games? Suggest that the prospect split them with others, re-sell what you can't use or give to charity – there are LOTS of ways around that objection.
67. If someone asks, 'Are you trying to sell me something?' they're playing with you, and they probably expect you to play back if you're to sell them anything.
68. Have at least 2-3 good responses to this objection. #1 suggestion: "Only if you're buying!"
69. #2 suggestion: "Only if it makes sense for you."
70. Warm and fuzzy response: "If you have a good reason to buy, then yes, I can set you up... but I promise not to sell you something you won't absolutely love. Fair enough?"
71. Quick response: "Yes. Are you in sales too?"
72. Fun suggestion: "Only if you're buying!"
73. Honest suggestion: "Selling you something is the LAST thing I'll want to do in our conversation!"

74. If you have a lousy team, remind people that the media only covers the box score, not the fun and excitement that goes on in the stands.

75. Ask the fan, “Besides the wins and losses, what’s the most important thing to you when you come to a game?” Make 2-3 suggestions as to what it might be, and engage in THAT conversation.

76. Best short response to the ‘Lousy Team’ objection: “We’re not looking in the rear-view mirror, we’re looking ahead!”

77. Regardless of the team’s record, remind your prospect that every game is an unwritten script. No one can predict the outcome, which is why they play the game in the first place!

78. If someone already has season tickets elsewhere, be sure to compliment them on their choice, and the fact that they see the value of being a season ticket holder.

79. Remember that your value of money should be left at the door when you’re selling seats. You may not think that \$250 is a price you would ever pay for a seat to a sporting event, no matter where it is – but that’s not up to YOU to decide! Lay it out for the customer and allow him or her to make that decision on their own.

80. #1 answer to ‘Your Seats are Too Expensive’: “Too expensive as compared to what?”

81. Thinking man’s response: “They’re only expensive if they’re not considered as an investment. I have clients that say that if advertising works, it’s an investment. If it doesn’t, it’s very expensive. Wouldn’t you agree?”

82. Once they have agreement to that statement, help them to see how you as their Account Executive can help them realize all the benefits of becoming a Season Ticket holder.

83. If someone says they need to talk it over with someone, ask if you can talk to them on a 3-way call right then and there.

84. If you hear, 'I'm not interested' right away, have 2-3 immediate questions ready to go in an attempt to continue the conversation. Most people are just making snap decisions, and really don't know enough about what you have to offer to be 'not interested' yet!

85. Immediate Question Option #1 for 'I'm Not Interested': "I'm not sure if you were aware of this, but..." – and then fill in with something that's positive that many people wouldn't know about the product you're selling (i.e., groups, seasons, etc.)

86. Immediate Question Option #2: "If you don't mind me asking..." – and then ask something that gets them talking, like "Are you worried about what it might cost?" or "Is there something about our team that you don't like?"

87. Option #3: "Before you go, can I ask you one more thing?"

88. If you're lucky enough to get onto the rotation for incoming calls, understand that these are leads the company has spent a great deal of marketing dollars to attract. You must be at your BEST when answering these calls!

89. Look to gain some sort of commitment from your prospect on every call you make. Examples: a firm date and time to talk again, an agreement to do certain things in a period of time, the names and phone numbers of the other persons in the party, etc.

90. Remember that for outbound sales, most salespeople give up after the first two attempts to sell someone. If you stick with it after the second attempt and go on to a third, fourth, and so on, you've outlasted almost 75% of your competitors.

91. All top salespeople have goals beyond their current job that allows them to be their very best at the job they're in today. Have

a good number of your goals written out, and have them where you can refer to them often and measure your progress.

92. The majority of all sales are made between 8am and noon. Decide that you'll devote as much time as possible to selling in the morning hours; your odds are far greater at that time of day.

93. Stay away from words and phrases like "Honestly", "To tell you the truth", "To be honest with you," and others; it may leave the subconscious impression with your prospect that you've been dishonest with them up until that point.

94. In a challenging economy, Return on Investment (ROI) is king. Don't present any proposal of yours until you find out what ROI means to your prospect, and how it's being measured.

95. Get a few back issues of a trade publication of your best prospects' industry; you'll learn the language of their industry quickly, what their current concerns are, and the potential solutions that are being talked about among their peers.

96. Understand that people will be judging you, but you don't have the right to judge them. This is the challenge of serving others greatly. Accept it with reverence, and do your best to be AT your best, regardless of what your opinion of your customer might be.

97. People will be judging you in many ways; by your physical appearance, your personal hygiene, your eye contact, the way you carry yourself, your tone of voice, and a dozen other measures. Do your best to represent your organization by paying close attention to the "basics".

98. In today's selling, there is no substitute for doing that needs to be done in order to succeed. Your good looks, your Ivy League Phi Beta Kappa, your charming wit, even your blue-chip Rolodex won't bail you out. Do The Work.

99. Continually ask yourself this question throughout the day: “What’s the best use of my time right now to put myself in a position to succeed?”

100. When you get to the management level – and you WILL if you follow the 99 pieces of advice above — sales training experts from the outside can help your sales team accomplish more than you could ever do on your own. I consider it a privilege to help those in our industry to succeed, and you’re welcome to E-mail me anytime and ask about how I can help you at bill (at) The800PoundGorilla (dot) com

Why People Want “Deals” and Buy Value

Bill Guertin

The promise of a “great deal” or a “one-time-only opportunity” is an age-old advertising message that gets everyone’s attention, even in the world of sports tickets. But is “the deal” what people *really* want, or is it something else?

We’ve all bought a cheap pair of shoes, a shirt, or a bargain electronics item, and soon after we bought it we were sorry we did. You know what I’m talking about. Just look in your closet for that shirt you bought for peanuts that you’ve never worn. Ever.

Let’s say you’re shopping for a new car, and you don’t have a lot of money. Your intention might be to be frugal – to get the best car you can for the least amount of money. That’s your intention.

The reality is that for most of us, the bells and whistles on a car look and feel great. It’s hard to resist those little extras you weren’t prepared to pay for, but now seem like a shame to turn down. Those leather seats sure feel nice. The satellite radio is sweet, and it’s only, like, \$199 more, and the service is free for a year. The towing package would be handy for those used jet skis you’ve been looking at.

Your intention was to be frugal, but the reality is that we all want the best that we can reasonably afford.

(a)

That’s the magic concept. We all want the best that we can reasonably afford.

So the question is: What becomes “reasonable,” and when?

That's where we come in. *Our job as a professional sales rep is to help build the "reasonable" value case on behalf of the buyer.*

What would make their game experience more valuable? Is it seat location? Access to fan experiences with players? Fine dining opportunities? Preferred parking? What is the combination of benefits that make your more expensive options more "reasonable" to your prospect than your loss-leader package?

As a sales rep, we really have two jobs. One is to sell the prospect on the IDEA of ticket ownership, whether it's a mini-plan, group outing, or full season program. (If they're calling you, this step may already be accomplished.) Once the idea is fully connected in the brain of the prospect, the second job is to build the VALUE of the purchase that the prospect can reasonably afford, relative to his or her tastes, wants, and budget.

Not everyone will find the super-special \$99 12-game mini-plan to be what they really want. Don't just sell them what they've asked for; have the guts to ask the right questions to determine if the prospect is a legitimate candidate for the super-special deal. You may find that the benefits of your higher-priced inventory are indeed more "reasonable" for them.

How to Get More Callbacks from Prospects

Bill Guertin

When someone has decided to call us back before making a buying decision, there's a good chance (despite all their good intentions) they won't follow through. It doesn't make them liars or bad people. It's just the law of averages. We know people get busy and have other priorities come up in their lives.

Are you kidding? Something else is more important than getting back to you about their awesome seats? C'mon! You don't have to take that crap! Push the odds in your favor!

The next time someone tells you, "I'll have to call you back," try one of these responses:

"Sure, we can do that. Do you have your BlackBerry with you? Let's go ahead and both put a callback day and time into our calendars, so we'll have a time frame to work with. We don't want to let it go for too long!"

"Great! Should I work with your assistant to set up a day and time, or do you keep your own calendar?"

"OK. Let's pick a day and time, and I'll send you an E-mail reminder, just to keep us both on track. What E-mail should I use?"

Another option is to attempt to sew up the deal right then and there, eliminating the need for a callback at all:

"If you need to run this past someone, I don't have a problem getting someone else on a three-way call. Do you happen to know where they are right now?"

Here's the thing. The problem is I can't guarantee that these seats we're looking at right now will be available once I let them go. Is there any way we could put a small deposit on them? If for some reason these seats aren't what you're looking for, we can just transfer your deposit to another location. Does that work for you?"

Does your partner usually trust your judgment? Okay... then why don't we just lock in these seats right now while we can, and I'll be glad to help you go over the details with your partner later?"

We have enough to do and can't worry about people getting back to us. Take control, people! Help make it easy for others respond to you, and you'll be taking callbacks left and right... and cashing a few more checks in the process.

The Authors

Tyler Johnson

Tyler Johnson is an innovative thinker inspired by the likes of Bill Veeck, Jon Spoelstra, Pat Williams & Brooks Boyer. Most recently he worked as the New Business Development Executive with the Chicago White Sox. Tyler has also worked directly with the inventor and creator of Arena football and also for Mike Ditka's former Chicago AFL franchise. As a former collegiate athlete and business sensed individual Tyler ventured to combine his passions to get into the business side of sports.

Darren Heitner

Darren Heitner created the first sports agent blog on the Internet, SportsAgentBlog.com. The site receives upwards of 5,000 unique visits per day from sports agents, athletes, media sources, and the general public. In the blog, everything, from contract negotiations to endorsement deals, is examined, providing the framework for a great deal of information upon which he has been able to depend. In 2009, Darren created EntertainmentAgentBlog.com, which has the same purpose of SAB, but focuses on the entertainment industry. Darren is also the CEO and Founder of Dynasty Athlete Representation, a full service sports and talent agency that handles contract negotiations, marketing endorsements, financial planning, legal services, etc.

Gail Sideman

Twenty years of public relations experience, including 10 in NCAA Division I sports information during which she received national awards for her work, have helped Gail Sideman emerge as a nationally respected publicity professional in sports, social media and publishing. She is also a veteran support staffer of sports television crews for events that include the NFL, NBA, MLB, NCAA regular and postseason and others.

Tim Evans

Tim is the CEO of Athlete Web Design, a web design and Internet marketing firm for athletes and sports professionals based in Chicago. Tim has been online since 1997 and is an expert in the domain name sales, acquisitions, and monetizing. This expertise in domain names has evolved into helping athletes and sports professionals with a virtual presence online through official websites for athletes and sports entities.

Ash Read

Ash is the co-founder of FundSport.com a grassroots sports community providing sports clubs and athletes from around the world with professional, easy-to-understand advice and articles on all aspects of grassroots sport including sponsorship, fundraising, the Internet, social media, club management, PR and marketing. As well as being passionate about the development of grassroots sport Ash also has a keen involvement in the sports social media industry.

Michelle Hill

Michelle Hill, sports and fitness writing specialist, writes press releases, blog posts, brochures, and website content for sports and fitness-related companies. Her mission is to help pro athletes and fitness professionals achieve a greater success score in their entrepreneurial endeavors with her writing expertise and creative turn of mind.

Wesley Mallette

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Kris Mathis

Kris is the Founder/CEO of SponsorPitch.com, a New York City-based sponsorship networking start-up. Kris started his career in sponsorship representing Fortune 500 clients at Edelman PR's sponsorship consulting division prior to jumping to a brand management position at Paris-based mobile gaming startup, Gameloft. In between, Kris attended graduate school in Nashville (Music City!), Tennessee. In his spare time, Kris enjoys eating, running, the beach, UFC and Bryant Park.

Sam Taggart

Sam is a project manager for VaynerMedia, a storytelling/branding agency based in New York City. VaynerMedia works with both personal and consumer brands to help expand their presence on the web. As project manager for the New York Jets organization and for Jets Safety Kerry Rhodes, Sam combines his passion for sports and social media on a daily basis.

Bill Guertin

Bill is CEO (Chief Enthusiasm Officer) of The 800-Pound Gorilla, a dynamic sales training and consulting company whose list of blue-chip clients includes the ticket sales departments of dozens of teams from the NBA, NFL, NHL, Major League Baseball, and Major League Soccer. He is the author of the Gold Medal-award-winning book Reality Sells, and his second book, The 800-Pound Gorilla of Sales: How to Dominate Your Market.

Ryan Stephens

Ryan serves as a social media consultant who is passionate about the power of web 2.0 and its ability to cultivate conversations, build relationships and spread of ideas. Most recently Ryan worked as an Associate Media Analyst at Sports Media Challenge where he helped champion social media strategies for sports, lifestyle and entertainment brands.

Mark Tudi

Mark is the Founder and President of SPORTS CAREERS, the ORIGINAL and most comprehensive Employment Resource in the Sports & Entertainment Industry. For over 30 years, Mark has established a high-profile track record in sports career development, with over 750 successful retained search assignments. He has represented the career interests and managed opportunities for many of the leading executives, personalities, and organizations in Sports. In addition, Mark founded the Sports & Entertainment Human Resource Forum (SEHRF) to build professional recognition and a unified Industry association for today's Human Resource Managers, Hiring Authorities and Employers. Most recently, he has resurrected the SPORTS CAREERS Conference, the Sports Industry's first and largest meeting of its kind, where people managers and the career-oriented connect.

Stephen Lombardo

Stephen is a recent graduate of St. Johns' University, with experience working for the Staten Island Yankees. Previous experiences also include working at CBS during the NCAA tournament in 2009 and writing for a fantasy baseball website.

Cord Pereira

Cord is Managing Director of BrandEntertain, a management-consulting firm for sports & entertainment properties and branded entertainment. He founded and sold Diamond Sports Management, an integrated venue, franchise and event management company, whose properties included the Boise Hawks, Sioux City Explorers and Grove Hotel & Qwest Arena.

Jason Kopeda

Jason Kobeda is Business Specialist at the Sports & Exhibition Authority of Pittsburgh. His previous experiences include operations positions with the Cleveland Browns, Houston Texans and Pittsburgh Steelers and Football Scout at Joe Butler's Metro Index Scouting Service.

Chris Ruffle

Chris is currently an account executive for The Long Island Ducks Baseball Team. He is responsible for selling the total product mix including Full and Partial Season Ticket Plans, Group Tickets, and Corporate Partnerships. He has many interests within the sports business world such as: Networking, Sharing Ideas, Social Media, and Helping others. Chris founded Sports Group Sales a web site dedicated to the sharing of ideas and practices of the industry.

Josh Feinberg

Josh Feinberg is a Regional Sales Manager for the Lakewood BlueClaws, minor league affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies. Josh coined the term “Nine Innings of Networking,” an in-game networking series during the BlueClaws season.

Brad Williamson

Brad Williamson is the founder of TheVirtualBiographer.com, which specializes in celebrity branding through the realm of online media.

Mark Washo

Mark Washo is an 18-year professional sports executive and author of Break Into Sports Through Ticket Sales. He is the current President of the Washington Freedom. Mark has experience in Minor League Baseball, the NBA, MLS and now Women’s Professional Soccer.