

Have you ever attended a baseball game because you knew there would be an amazing fireworks display afterwards? Or have you attended a concert because you knew there would be a fireworks display afterwards? In the world of sports and events, you can use creative ideas to gain new customers and keep current customers coming back again and again, sport/event marketers must generate some “out-of-the-box,” or fresh, creative ideas for sales promotions. “Out-of-the-box” sales promotions catch people’s attention, create excitement for the game or event, and stand out from the crowd of competitors. Read on to learn how you can identify great ideas for these one-of-a-kind opportunities.

SAMPLE PAGE

Objectives



Explain reasons for using “out-of-the-box” sales promotion ideas for sports/events.



Identify “out-of-the-box” sales promotion ideas for sports/events.

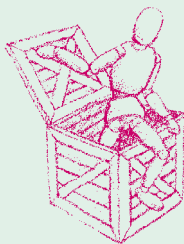
Thinking Outside the Box



Sales Promotions

No doubt you’ve heard the phrase, “Think outside the box,” before. But what does it mean? Think of it this way—everything “inside the box” has been done before. “Inside the box” is conventional thinking, tried-and-true methods of doing things. Even though “inside-the-box” methods may have proven to work well in the past, they can get boring over time and can begin to lose their effectiveness. For example, a \$1-million sweepstakes contest might cause you to choose one brand of potato chips over another, but after a while, won’t that promotion become less and less exciting? Good marketers know that it will, and that’s why they start to “think outside the box.” They know that only fresh, new sales promotions will give them the competitive edge they need.

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



An “Out-of-the-Box” Idea

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

The Gray Zone



Shane works in marketing for a semi-professional lacrosse team. Ticket sales have been slumping, and his bosses want him to come up with a creative sales promotion to boost ticket sales. He sits down with his manager and a small group of colleagues to brainstorm an advertising campaign designed around the sweepstakes.

Two weeks into the ad campaign, Shane's boss tells him that the team doesn't have the money to cover the \$100,000 grand prize. Shane's boss thinks that they should continue with the sweepstakes and only award the smaller cash prizes, creating a fake winner for the grand prize. He tells Shane that no one will find out, and everyone will be a winner, especially the team. Shane isn't sure if it's the right thing to do. To cancel the contest now would definitely hurt the team's public relations, but to keep going could cause even greater problems in the future. What should Shane do?

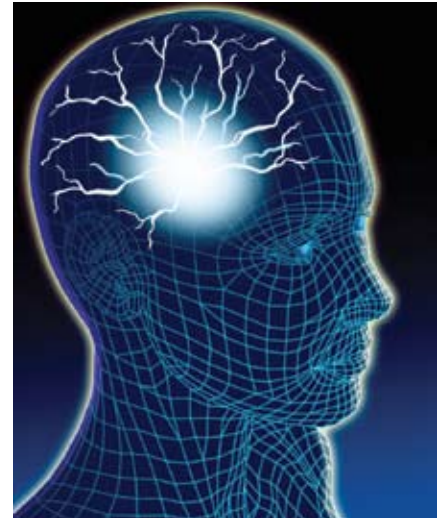
and Asian-American Heritage Night. At each game, special seating sections were reserved for fans purchasing Heritage Night tickets, and live music and entertainment highlighted each of the unique ethnicities. Heritage Night ticket holders also received hats or T-shirts combining the Giants' logo with colors or symbols associated with their particular culture.

Techniques for Creative Thinking

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

Brainstorming is a creative-thinking technique involving the identification of as many different ideas as possible during a certain time frame. You can brainstorm by yourself, but the technique works best in a group setting. Gather your colleagues (or even your friends and family, if you're trying to generate ideas at home), and set a time limit of 30 minutes or so for brainstorming. Have the brainstormers throw out every sales promotion idea that comes to their minds, and assign one person to write down all the ideas on a piece of paper that's large enough for everyone to see. No one should make judgments about any of the ideas until the brainstorming session is over. When the session is over, go back through the ideas and analyze each one. Some ideas will be discarded as impractical, too expensive, or not creative enough, but even the ones that won't work may eventually lead you to the one that will.

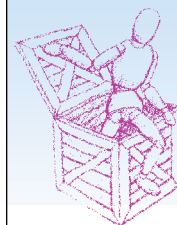
If all else fails, some good, old-fashioned research might just do the trick. Looking through sales promotion ideas on team/organization web sites and in trade magazines, such as *SportsBusiness Journal* or *Event Solutions*, can help to get your creative thoughts flowing.



SAMPLE PAGE

An "Out-of-the-Box" Idea

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



LAKWOOD



Blue Claws