

Selling Your Services

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by Federico Mas

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As tennis teaching professionals and coaches, our ability to sell our services plays a major role in our overall success. While having a good playing background and teaching education are important determining factors for success, being able to sell yourself and your products are key to attaining and maintaining tennis clientele. If you hope to increase your client base, you must advertise programs, recruit players and promote yourself regularly. Additionally, tennis associates in most clubs are expected to have a plan to advertise and grow programs, classes and private lessons.

The following are tips that will help you in the process of attaining and retaining more clients.

Exceptional Customer Service and Professionalism

Although it is not always obvious, your professionalism is highly appreciated by members, and has a tremendous effect on their interest in participating in your club's programs.

Always arrive on time and prepared for lessons and classes. Be sure to put yourself out there and get in front of people by attending events and simply by hanging out in the lobby and higher traffic areas of your club. In doing this, you will have the opportunity to chat with a larger number of people and, the more people see you, the more they will remember you as one of the 'go to' pros at the club.

Remember that members feel more connected and interested in taking lessons with pros that are more active at the club. Go out of your way to say hello and ask someone about their day, tennis match or practice, and take an interest in the player's tennis experience. As they share their feedback about their game, suggest some practice options to them and offer to help them. Be genuine and sincere. You do not want to come off too strong or that you only care about filling your lesson schedule. If you are sincere and truly care about the experience of the player, it will show on its own.

Lastly, show up on time and look presentable with your clothing and grooming. Your appearance as a tennis professional makes you more credible and respectful.

Organization

Keep your email addresses in groups, and easy access to phone numbers and emails. Take the time to create and sub-segment your lists.

Keep notes of your hours on court, private lessons and groups, along with attendance in the classes all in one place. Be very aware of open 'pockets' of time in your schedule, as well as the court schedule that you would like to fill. Have a list of second options that may not be ideal to you, but are convenient for the member.

Don't give up on players who are not committed to a weekly lesson, and keep their names handy. You never know when they may come around again to work on their game with you. Touch base with them every few weeks to check in and let them know you are available if they ever need help with their game. This is a good way to keep yourself visible without being pushy.

Follow Up

Touch base with the member after a lesson, especially if they are new to the program and not yet committed to a weekly lesson time. After an initial lesson, it is important to touch base to show your interest in working with them again, and to provide them with information on how to proceed with lessons.

Here is a sample email script.

Hi Joe,

Thank you for choosing me as your tennis professional. It was great to meet you and a pleasure to work with you on your serve today. Please see the bullet points below to review what we covered [add appropriate bullet point feedback in the email or add an attachment].

I wanted to let you know that I have [day/time] open for a weekly lesson. Please let me know if you would like to reserve this while it is still available. If you are interested, I would be happy to save it for you.

I can be reached at 215-555-1212. Thanks again.

Federico Mas, Head Professional

The player will appreciate the email feedback; and the review of what you worked on may motivate them to continue to work on that stroke or tactic.

Following up is very important. While some players love tennis and make it a weekly priority, many others don't have it on the top of their To-Do list, and may need the encouragement. Some players may require more contact from the pro to keep them active and involved. This is where you step in to facilitate the process by reaching out to the player, offer exact times available with exact starting dates for lessons or classes.

Be clear when offering days and times, and do not just leave it to the customer to do the planning!

Offer Extras

Set yourself apart by offering extras that add value to your teaching. There is much competition in the tennis teaching, even within our own clubs. It is important that you are able to set yourself apart to attract people to your services.

Extras may include email feedback on lessons, but also follow up with junior parents to offer feedback and have a Q and A about the player's development. Offer play opportunities in addition to lessons. Have a goal sheet for participants and help them fill it out. Stay involved with students by following their progress in tournaments and club matches, and connect with them in social club events. Take a professional interest in the student's life, not only in tennis, but outside the club, as this will help solidify your coach-to-student relationship.

Come up with extras you want to offer that you think may be of value given what you know about the player. Brainstorm and be creative!

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Imagine you are in a typical office space. Look around you – there are patterns everywhere you can see. Perhaps it is the plain stripes on the carpet, the ugly tiled ceiling, or even the usual clutter of your workspace. Now that those patterns have been identified, what will you do about them? Do you clean up the clutter or not? How much time and money would it take to make these changes? Is it worth it? Essentially, informed business decisions work the same way – identifying patterns and using data to support conclusions.

Collecting data takes time and effort spent through surveys, emails and other means, so why bother? Let's look at one example in particular – Walmart. If Walmart, a company averaging more than \$470 billion in revenue, could more accurately predict customer spending patterns by just 5%, Walmart would generate over \$23 billion more. I think it's safe to say that the effort of collecting data is worth it.

Data analysis is by no means new. As a concept, it has existed since ancient Egypt, where a census was required for the building of the pyramids. More modern means for collecting data were invented in the 1890s with the creation of the Tabulating Machine, a punch card system of storing data, and today we have computers to take over the meticulous processes. If data analysis isn't new, then why has it only become used recently?

In one word, the answer - leadership. For example, *Moneyball*, a movie about the birth of modern baseball statistics, accurately depicts how professionals believed that expert opinion outweighs data. Billy Beane, the manager of the Oakland A's, realized that athleticism did not win games; it was the runs scored that mattered. He proved the methodology of data analysis through winning 20 games straight, even with a very constrained budget.

Tennis is no stranger to data analysis - in fact, it has become increasingly common in recent years. Rather than solely for professional use, such as the statistics that appear on the TV screen after a set, coaches have begun to use statistical measures for analyzing a player's shot selection and consistency. In fact, it is generally more effective than traditional coaching methods, as players are able to better visualize areas of improvement through the expression of data.

The real takeaway from the application of data analysis to sports is that quantitative observations always beat out qualitative. One experiment proves this by taking 87 Harvard law professors and pitting them against a statistical model with six variables to see which side can more accurately predict Supreme Court cases. Of course, the model won. Opinions are always biased, but data never is - and that is why data is always more accurate than opinion.

In order to better analyze their market, businesses group customers into like areas. There are three ways of doing this: clustering, network analysis and text mining. Clustering is measuring similarities between customers, including purchasing patterns, location and demographics. Network analysis distinguishes how customers are interrelated. Text mining is analysis of social media and other online means and extracting what the customers want. Once this is done, a statistical model can assign predictive scores based on data from past experience.

In today's competitive business world, data analysis is a necessity rather than just a benefit. As shown by Walmart's revenue example, utilizing data properly makes a gargantuan difference, and revenue-generating techniques such as these are never passed up by corporations. Practically every large company or corporation utilizes data analysis, and so it has become a baseline standard for businesses, which is why it is important that companies take the time to understand and apply this technology.

Data analysis is a useful tool for businesses to identify their market. It can be utilized to generate profit through accurately marketing to customers. Businesses should use data analysis to better understand their market and make money.

Selling Your Services

Be Persistent

Ask yourself, "Do I give up and stop trying when there is difficulty in connecting with a potential client? Do I keep trying to find a way to make things work?"

As pros, we must be proactive and persistent when recruiting for lessons. This does not mean being pushy. You'll know when to accept 'No' for an answer. However, don't give up on putting yourself out there and have persistence when there is potential.

Think about how to involve people in more programs. Actively recruit by emailing, texting and in-person reminders of upcoming programs that would be of interest to them. This is a requirement for anyone leading a clinic, event or practice, and an absolute must if you are the coordinator of any club program or for any pro looking to increase their teaching hours.

Follow up a second and third time when attempting to pin down a lesson time, and don't give up in a scheduling process that can sometimes be tedious. You may have to communicate with three to five calls or emails before finally nailing down a lesson time. Your extra effort will always pay off in the end.

Building a full time clientele takes time. It hardly ever happens overnight. Apply these tips on an ongoing basis and you will be on the way, even if it takes a while. In the meantime, stay positive and enjoy yourself in the process.