Marketing Guide
For Synchronized Swimming Clubs

Learn how to promote your synchronized swimming program through marketing, promotions, and public relations.

Revised in 2017 by the Marketing Committee
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Marketing Basics

Introduction
If you are starting a new synchronized swimming club, your primary objectives might include:

- Securing pool time at a facility.
- Creating general awareness of synchronized swimming at the facility and in the community through education about the sport and about your program.
- Attracting swimmers and their parents.
- Attracting coaches.
- Retaining satisfied swimmers and their equally satisfied parents.

As your club grows, you might find that your priorities change but many of these goals will remain the same. Your objective might now include:

- Maximizing membership by attracting new and retaining existing swimmers
- Enhancing your image in the community
- Securing team or event sponsorship(s)
- Contributing to the growth and success of the swimmers

Whether your club is brand new or has been around for decades, you will find that marketing, promotions, advertising, public relations, and sponsorship, if done properly, can have an enormous effect on your club’s success. The National Office exists to portray the image of USA Synchro at a national level, but the local club level is where it all starts.

Research your Market

- Identify competitors: Look at other local or regional synchro clubs, but do not overlook the presence of non-synchro programs (i.e., swim teams, dance, gymnastics, diving, cheerleading).

- Identify target market: This is generally active youth ages 6-18 with some interest in aquatics.
  - In addition to building a typical synchro program, consider developing programs which target specific populations. Examples include:
    - Programs aimed at elementary and middle school boys/girls that teach synchronized swimming and include a curriculum which addresses self-esteem, healthy habits, and encourages healthy emotional, social, and physical development.
    - Programs emphasizing fitness, aimed at older participants such as high school aged boys/girls.
    - Competitive high school or collegiate synchro programs.
Examine the existing programs:
- How often do they train or practice?
- How is the program priced?
- What are the parental commitments?
- How flexible is the schedule?
- Is it a competitive or recreational program?
- What does the program offer in addition to lessons or training opportunities (i.e., dance recitals, participation in community events)?
- What is the quality of coaching/instruction?
- What is the business structure (i.e., 501(c)(3), private ownership, recreation center)

Develop an understanding of parent, swimmer and coach expectations:
- Talk with parents
- Conduct a survey of current or potential participants
- Talk to representatives of other synchronized swimming programs
- Talk to your coaches to examine their goals, as well as your own goals

Determine Program Parameters
In marketing terms, this is developing your marketing mix or the 4 Ps – product, price, place and promotion.

Program (i.e., product and services). Determine what you will offer initially and what you want to offer down the road. Be realistic about the goals and rewards you seek for members. Not every child aims to be an Olympian, and your program should address that. Emphasize quality instruction/coaching.

Pricing. Consider your expenses (facility, insurance, and coaching costs), competitor pricing, perceived value of your program and alternative methods of revenue generation such as bingo, grants and other fundraising, when setting pricing. Some strategies include:
- Markup pricing (adding a markup to costs of program)
- Going-rate pricing (based mostly on competitive pricing)
- Psychological pricing (First, buyers compare prices to a “reference price”. In other words, if your competitors charge monthly rates, you might want to set up your program that way so that buyers are comparing monthly cost to monthly cost. Second, buyers sometimes associate price with quality. So don’t underprice your program.)

Place. Where you will reach your potential swimmers. This might start at the facility where you offer your program but should be much broader to include other community pools, dance studios, gymnastics centers, schools, grocery stores, community centers and events, swim and sportswear shops, etc.

Promotion. How you will communicate and sell to potential participants. This includes printed materials and display, online tools, paid and unpaid advertising, promotional events, word of mouth from satisfied swimmers and public relations.
Determine Marketing Message

If you have done your homework and understand your target market, you will be able to develop a message that:

- **Is relevant.** What is your target market looking for? What gets the target market particularly excited and peaks their interest?

- **States the benefits of your program.** What are the proven benefits of your program? Some benefits might include:
  - Quality of coaching (experience, track record, certification)
  - Flexible scheduling
  - Competitive pricing
  - Quality of facilities
  - Nationally and internationally competitive athletes
  - Opportunity to travel, perhaps even internationally
  - Focus on improvement of fitness (flexibility, strength, power, endurance, agility)
  - Development of creativity, artistry and performance skills
  - Development of teamwork and leadership skills
  - Development of good sportsmanship and healthy lifestyle habits
  - Development of friendships and having fun
  - Development of a good work ethic and learning the value of commitment and focus
  - Participation in community shows or local competitions
  - Development of characteristics which can enhance academic performance including: increased confidence, better time management and prioritization, improvement in focus and concentration, and understanding the value of perseverance and hard work

- **Relates the benefits of your program to your target market:** When someone asks, “Why should Janie swim synchro rather than play volleyball?” what do you say? Some examples might be that synchro:
  - Combines the skills of swimming, dance, gymnastics and diving
  - Requires incredible athleticism and artistic flair
  - Allows for individual talents, contributions and creativity while requiring true team work – Synchro is the Ultimate Team Sport

Develop a Brand

A brand is the combination of consistent visual, written and verbal elements that are used in marketing. Your brand is your team’s identity. When developing a brand, remember to:

- Consistently articulate your purpose, attributes, image and personality (get parents, swimmers, coaches, Board members, etc., to understand and communicate the same message).

- Use every day as an opportunity to promote your club and your club’s brand. How your team looks, from attire to performance, will affect your club’s image. Create awareness of and pride in your program through cohesive flyers, brochures, websites, t-shirts, swim caps, and car magnets, to name a few. Develop a presence by performing at community events.
Understand that a good design is peripheral. Your club name, colors and logo can be a fun way to develop an identity, but what will really sell your team is the experience your swimmers have and how well they and their parents are able to disseminate that message.

Sample Team Images:

- A fun, competitively-priced recreational program where swimmers make friends, learn new skills and put on an annual water show that draws the local community
- An elite, nationally-ranked competitive program with a long, proud history of champions
- A competitive age group team with a highly-qualified, dedicated coaching staff
Promoting Your Program

Printed Materials and Display
Decide what materials you will use to promote your program and determine a budget. Materials and paid advertising could include:

- **Brochure** with photos of your swimmers and facility with descriptions of your program philosophy, marketing message, programs offered, successes, etc.

- **“For more information” postcards** to collect contact information in order to build a contact list. Include in your brochure or handout at school, parties, events, etc.

- **Other displays** (e.g., bulletin boards with pictures and information about your program, tables at events).

- **Flyers** posted at your pool, community centers, grocery stores, swim shops, sporting goods stores, pool supply stores, local dance studios and gymnastics facilities.

- **Handouts** like a business card with candy, pencils with team logo or coupon for free lessons to be given away at Halloween, community parades, special events, or sporting competitions.

Online and Electronic Tools

- **Set up a website** with information about your team and synchro in general. You can search online for other teams' websites to find effective examples.

- **Use social media** to create an online community for existing swimmers and to attract new members.
  - Set up a fan page on Facebook, a blog about your team, or useful information about synchro or your team on Twitter.
  - Consider using social media to do the following:
    - Share practice schedules, relevant articles, or other information
    - Encourage positive feedback and comments
    - Thank volunteers, participants, coaches and the community
    - Disseminate useful email addresses, phone numbers, and other contact information

- **Use social networking sites** such as eventbrite.com or meetup.com to promote and sell as admission to competitions, clinics, classes or camps.

- **Use social calendar tools** such as flowh.com to manage scheduling.

- **Create a team e-newsletter** which could include information about upcoming events, current participants, competition results, and general education about the sport.
Establish an email distribution list to send out your team e-newsletter, information about registration for new classes, synchro exhibitions, competitions, and other relevant information.

Get your program information added to online sports directories for local resources lists and parent group lists.

Paid and Unpaid Advertising

- Purchase an ad in local parenting and lifestyle magazines, especially if they advertise activities, sports or summer camps. You might be able to have your program listed in their directories for no charge.

- Submit to community newspapers announcing the new program.

- Use team apparel (t-shirts, swim caps) and merchandise (car magnets, stadium cups) to advertise your club and even to be sold as a fundraiser.

- Take advantage of free advertising:
  - Assemble a modified club publicity kit focusing on the “image” of your team. Include head shots, action photos and team member bios highlighting their civic accomplishments. Utilize a university class or photo club to have professional-style photos taken for free or greatly discounted.
  - Acquire a mailing list of advertising, marketing and PR firms in your area (sources include online yellow pages, local PRSA chapter, or Better Business Bureau). At the same time, watch local TV, print ads and billboards to see which local companies advertise the most.
  - Prepare a mailing list to the creative directors of each firm and local advertiser identified above. Include a letter stating what you do, what you can do to help that firm create a unique campaign for a local business. Use key words with universal business appeal like “teamwork”, “precision”, and “power”, plus key phrases like “get in sync”, “photogenic”, “youthful”, etc.
  - Follow up with phone calls. Most will say they have your information on file and that’s okay. It’s a waiting game.

Promotional Events

At the club level, here are some ideas to keep your program in the public eye. Many of these ideas can be turned into fundraisers:

Community Outreach:

- **Public events.** Set up a table with flyers and other information at a community fair, festival, or flea market. Set up a table with TV/DVD or computer and show them the sport.

- **Parents.** Get your team’s info to the Junior League, Jaycees, Rotary or Lions clubs, etc.
Sports Commission. Talk to your local sports commission or city & visitor’s bureau; many pride themselves on contributing to the development of youth sports in the community.

Community Involvement:

- **Introductory or free lessons.** Partner with local pools to offer limited introductory lessons for members. Offer a free lesson before your regular session starts. Pass out flyers to graduates of learn to swim programs and offer them a free lesson.

- **Brownie or Girl Scout clinics.** Partner with your Girl Scout district to offer a program for Girl Scouts where they can learn about the sport of synchronized swimming.

- **Summer league/health club/city park and rec sessions.** Offer quarterly or seasonal programming to local community pools, health clubs, country clubs, and parks and rec.

- **Summer camps.** Work with aquatic centers, youth centers, health clubs, churches, schools, city parks, etc. to incorporate a synchronized swimming module into existing summer camp programs or create a summer camp specific to synchronized swimming.

Community Promotion:

- **Regional, zone, national or international competition.** Holding a synchronized swimming event at your pool provides an opportunity for the community to see the sport—from an age group to an elite international level. If the event is well publicized, this can be an invaluable promotional opportunity for not only the sport but your club.

- **Team exhibitions or demonstrations.** Get the word out by holding an exhibition at your pool or at a festival and use this as an opportunity for people in the community to see what your program is about.

- **Local hotels.** Keep in touch with local hotels, not only for deals if you are hosting a meet, but to provide synchro entertainment at parties and receptions hosted by the hotel.

- **Large event/party planners.** Get your press kits to large party planners in your town who might be looking for an unusual twist to a poolside party.

- **Water parks.** The annual opening or holiday celebrations at the area water park are great opportunities to show your routines.

Community Presence

- **Participate in local parades, carnivals and school events as a team.**

- **Volunteer for a local cause.** Walk in a charity walk, buy a table at a gala, volunteer at community events, hand deliver tokens of appreciation to local heroes, or participate in wellness programs for senior citizens.
Word of Mouth Advertising
Your current swimmers and their parents are probably the best advertisement you have for your program. Your goal should be to create and retain satisfied customers (swimmers and their parents), who will then tell their friends, and so on, and so on. Here are some ways to create satisfied swimmers and parents:

- **Provide a quality program.** To the extent possible, provide quality instruction/coaching, flexible scheduling, competitive pricing, appropriate facilities and equipment, as well as providing a fun, fair and supportive environment for the swimmers.

- **Set up thorough and effective communication with parents and swimmers.** This includes establishing fair and consistent policies and procedures.

- **Welcome complaints and concerns.** Often complaints and concerns are due to misunderstandings or lack of communication.

- **Respond promptly to questions or concerns.** If you can’t handle the volume, find an assistant or a parent volunteer who can help.

- **Solicit formal feedback from participants.** Survey your constituents to get positive and negative comments. Find out why participants leave your program and determine if there is a pattern that needs to be addressed. Don’t forget to also find out why they stay and use their comments on your website or printed materials.
“Without adequate publicity, all else fails.” -- Joseph Pulitzer

Public and Media Relations

Public relations is informing and persuading the public through newspapers, television, radio and the web. The club publicist is responsible for placing information about your organization’s events and programs before the public by every method possible. This includes working with the media, clubs’ sponsors or donors, area youth programs, health clubs and any number of other publicity outlets.

Creating Public Awareness through the Media

In order to capitalize on the efforts of local media, you need to create your own public awareness. When doing so, be sure to recognize these key components:

- **Publicity is like sales:** You must know your product, its most attractive features, and its limitations. You can’t sell the media and adequately answer questions if you don’t know what you are selling.

- **Anticipate the questions and formulate positive answers.** For events, know who, what, when, where and why. For general stories and team promotion, be able to sell a visit to your practice or event by answering these questions -- “what is interesting about your team”, “why would a media person want to talk to you or your swimmers”, “who on the team can present the team in the best light on camera”, etc.

- **Do your research.** Get a local media list from your town’s Convention and Visitors Bureau, Mayor’s PR office and/or local college athletics department that includes: name, organization, address, phone, fax and email (at a minimum). Check the web, your tourism bureau or newsstands at the grocery store for free magazines or news weeklies, especially kid-oriented publications. Watch TV sports reports, morning news programs, read the sports and community pages, listen to talk radio and the radio stations to which your swimmers listen. Familiarize yourself with the media that are most likely to advertise your club and sport. Your market for PR and recruiting is the same as their market for readers, viewers and listeners.

- **Identify media figure that already has an interest.** The amateur sports beat writers, columnists who mention swimming, TV reporters who are out in the field trying out what they report on, radio guys who discuss anything unusual coming to town, etc. Get their names and work hours, add them to your media list, and contact them directly.

- **Check for opportunities to submit your own story.** Many newspapers and TV have “submit your own story sections, especially online editions.

- **List your program in local directories.** Look for sections of the local newspaper or local magazines where you can list your practices, upcoming events, weekend “to do” activities and clinics. Some will even let you submit photos for free!

- **Establishing personal contact is more than a phone call.** Often times you will hear the response, “Do you have anything you can send us?” A great way to respond is by asking, “Is there a good time when I can bring the information to you?” If not to them, ask who you
should bring the information to. And always follow up with a phone call. 80% of sales close after 5 contacts; 80% of sales people quit after 3 contacts.

- **It's OK for parents to call the sports desk** as the proverbial “squeaky wheel” and promote the team. However, as Publicity Chair, you should be the only contact with the head honcho, and most certainly should be their contact to call when they have questions. Make sure parents have a “cheat sheet” so that their message is consistent and on target.

- **Timing is everything.** Calling after your club wins zones is not the right time; instead, call three weeks in advance for TV, two weeks in advance for print, then follow up in the week before the event. That ensures they'll take your call or fax when you have results.

- **Be interesting!** Don't just tell a reporter your team has a meet. Tell your reporter that you have the best team in the region, that your duet has overcome adversity, or that your soloist is also an A student and all-region soccer player, etc.

- **Be realistic.** Don't expect a reporter to come to your meet on Super Bowl Sunday. Reporters must prioritize, and national events usually come before local ones. However, early-morning news programs are excellent targets for getting synchro on TV.

- **Be realistic: Part 2.** Figure meets are of less interest than the national, zone, regional or exhibition event the club is hosting. So plan and prioritize a publicity campaign for the year, and if possible, event by event. Anticipate what the public will want to know. Make a calendar to remind you who and when to contact each outlet, and track your contacts in a database.

- **Always include your contact information.** It sounds simple, but many people forget. Include your name, phone, cell phone, email, and club web site in every media contact you make; add the same info for a back-up contact if you anticipate being unavailable.

- **One media outlet is not like the other.** If you've ever watched public television or listened to public radio, then you know they need content. Talk to the local affiliate's Community Affairs director to pitch your athletes for an interview.

- **Invent your own publicity.** Don’t depend only on news media.
  
  - **Host A Synchro Challenge.** A media representative gets in the water and attempts some progressively more difficult synchro skills alongside team members. A sample of a Synchro Challenge invitation follows. One way to spice it up is to invite local celebrities or sports stars to participate with the media. Keep in mind, though, that the Challenge only works about once a year. See Appendix A for an example.

  - **Synchronized Segment.** Another bit to pitch to TV is the “Synchronized Segment.” A similar piece won an Emmy back in 1998. Two announcers present a piece on the team, athlete or event. Sounds simple. The selling point is they dress the same, talk the same, perform synchronized gestures to the camera, and a synchronized interview complete with two microphones, etc. It’s a light-hearted interview that attracts a lot of attention.
Creating a Press Kit

When they ask, “Do you have anything you can send us?” here’s what they expect (usually electronically):

- Detailed contact information
- Summary of the story you’re pitching – a press release is fine
- Team overview – where you train, how you recruit, club size and growth, demographics, sponsors & supporters
- Results history – include significant performances, successful past or present athletes
- Athlete bios – bios and head shots of top athletes and head coach (see Appendix B)
- Visual aids – team action shots, head shots, or footage of your team or the sport in action. Short clips might be used to show the media the sport – although these couldn’t be included in the broadcast without permission of the production company or rights holder.
- Calendar of events (local, regional and national meets, exhibitions, clinics or camps) - include the following facts: dates, name of event, site, schedule of events, contact (Meet Director), phone, email
- Past articles on the team

The Written Word: Press Releases

- Clear, concise, effective writing is essential. Just because someone is articulate does not mean he/she can write. Have a good editor available to “tightly up” news releases.
- Always include a brief, active title that highlights the most important point of your story. For example: “Synchro Stars Win Regional Meet.”
- In the first sentence, restate your most important point, and include the date and place of the event.
- In the second paragraph, state why winning regionals is important (i.e., qualifies the routine for zones or nationals).
- Be brief. Only include pertinent facts. For example: “Mary Smith (Central HS) placed second in solos with a team record score of 95.000.” Skip the details: “Wearing a red and white suit, Mary Smith swam her routine to the song ‘La Vida Loca’.”
- Wrap up every release by mentioning the next event on your calendar.
- Include contact information.
The Spoken Word: Calling the Media

- Think through what you have to say very carefully before you ever lift the receiver. Write it down or rehearse it, if necessary. Start with the less important calls in order to smooth and develop your presentation.

- Be succinct and clear, yet prepared to go into details if there is an opportunity. Always deliver the ‘who, what, where, and when’ first. While the why is important, your first purpose is to get the news crew to the event. Always be sensitive to the person on the other end of the line – he or she may be on deadline.

- Learn the names of assignment desk editors, and always keep them updated on your press list. When developing your list, it may be useful to call the news outlets and get the names of these important people. Weekend assignment editors are often different than weekday editors. Ask for them by name. Always try to work with the same person - this is how relationships develop.

- A typical press call should begin like this: “Hello, this is Zsa-Zsa Gabor with the Beached Whales Synchro Club here in Smogville. I'm calling to be sure you received the press release we sent/faxed/ emailed about the upcoming West Zone Synchronized Swimming Championships scheduled for next weekend at the Wavy Aquatic Center, and to answer any questions you might have about the event.” Be sure to leave your telephone number so you can be reached for follow-up.

- Don’t attempt to call a TV station from 11-noon or 4-6:30 p.m. As a general rule, for both print and TV media, sports guys show up at about 2 p.m. Assignment Desks are always open. Morning show producers work 12-8 a.m. so expect to leave a message.

- If your press release has been lost among the hundreds that have crossed their desk, fax or deliver another immediately while it’s fresh on their minds.

And Finally …

When approaching the press or any outside entity about synchronized swimming, you are representing their impression of the entire organization. It is very important to be aware of the image you are projecting. You’ll want to look and act professional, be prepared with facts or where to find them, be patient, persistent, sincere, enthusiastic, helpful, and most importantly, be accurate in the information you give out.
Sponsors

When trying to solicit sponsorships for your club, you must become a sales professional. **You are selling your club and the sport of synchronized swimming to potential sponsors, fans and members.** To be the most effective sales professional for your club you need to **start and finish with your prospect's needs as the focus.** In a world filled with parity and services, sales professionals who best present themselves to their potential sponsors come out on top. In a sales situation, it is essential that your prospect be receptive to the communications signals you will be sending, simplified here as the **three Vs** – the Visual (what the listener sees: your stance, facial expressions and enthusiasm), the Vocal (how you say it, tone of voice), and the Verbal (what you say). While all three are important, in some situations what you say may not be as important as how you say it; for others, the way you look and the facial expressions you use will influence the impression your presentation leaves. Your ultimate credibility as a sales professional will be determined by how well you master the three Vs.

Remember that sponsors are approached by many, many organizations and may direct you to standard forms or online entries. Follow their procedures so that you are not dismissed out of hand and follow up with each step.

Put yourself in their shoes. They are looking for publicity as much as you. Give them a reason to “co-brand” with you as a proud sponsor. They are associating their brand with your program and will be sensitive to the public perception.

**Helpful Hints in Soliciting Sponsorship**

- Identify target sponsor prospects
- Identify potential sponsor’s activity in your area
- Determine your prospect’s sponsorship means - cash or value in kind
- Understand how they are involved with similar organizations
- Create a proper timeline. Give your potential sponsor time to make a decision - at least six months before an event.
- Figure out what benefits you can offer your potential sponsor, e.g., signage, sampling/handing out coupons, media coverage, athlete appearances, hospitality, fundraising events through the potential sponsor, or logo inclusion on team apparel and printed materials.
- When approaching potential sponsors, do it on a professional level. You may get one opportunity in front of a prospect and you don’t want to miss that chance before you say a word. First impressions are the ones that last.
- Have information with you to give them as a leave behind. Make sure you don’t bog down potential sponsors with information that is unnecessary to them. The information you should include should be date and time of the event, how many athletes will be attending, how many fans you expect, what are some of the opportunities that your club
can provide, how their partnership with your club can help their business and yours, and media opportunities at the event.

- Try to think outside the box when creating successful promotional opportunities for potential sponsors.

**Dos and Don’ts**

**Don’t always try for cash.** Sometimes a trade deal is just as good. When you can utilize a company’s services to help your bottom line for running a meet it is just as good as cash. For example, going to a copier company and getting them to let you use a photocopier for the duration of the meet will save you money from going out and renting one. When trying for a cash sponsorship, be realistic who you are approaching and what their history is in regards to sponsorship. Don’t always go for the big bang early. The most important part when soliciting cash deals is to cover your cost. When trying to figure out how much to ask for, take into consideration how much it will cost to fulfill your deal. You will be able to put their logo on every piece of paper that is photocopied and handed out during the meet. You could offer an ad in your program. You could give them the opportunity to hand out coupons at your meet. You can give the store owner the opportunity to hand out awards, or collect business leads through a business card drop box.

**Don’t go into a company with a week before the meet.** You need to not only give them the time to decide whether they are going to partner with you but you also have to give yourself the opportunity to turn the partnership around.

**Do utilize all your exposure.** Every time you do something that is in the media, it is an added value for your sponsorship partners. For example, if you are doing a car wash to raise money, try to partner with a location that is very visible. Sell the company on the point that you will have several local media outlets here to cover the event. So every time there is a photo in the paper, television coverage or an interview taken, your sponsor is getting a media hit. These are as valuable, if not more valuable, than program ad buys. This gives your sponsor the opportunity to hit a broader demographic than just synchro fans.

**Do be creative when thinking of ideas and opportunities for sponsorship.** You can sell more opportunities than you may think. You should try to leverage sponsors to exhibitions, fundraising events, competitions, title sponsorship of individual teams, special equipment, promotional pieces, team apparel, or title sponsorship to a local meet. You need to think outside the box. Sometimes the craziest idea is the best idea.

**Don’t be afraid of the mom and pop shops.** These are sometimes the ones that need the most exposure. Synchro events may be just the thing that they are looking for to get a niche in the community.

**Do be prepared** with all the information that you want to present. Do some investigating into what the company has done on a local level and to what extent. Do they sponsor a little league team, church events, local UAW events, etc.? Try to think of any and all possible questions that a potential sponsor may ask. For example, what will they get out of it, how will it help increase business and what will it cost them. Make sure you have something to leave with them that includes a summary of what they are going to get out of it, what you are looking for and the logistics of the event.
Sponsor Ideas

- Put a local shop’s logo on your team’s apparel or promotional pieces.
- Logo inclusion or printing of a team poster
- Signage at meets
- Product sampling or handing out coupons at meets.
- Public address announcements at the meet
- Awards presenters
- Title sponsor of the meet
- Special discount for those who bring their ticket stub to the sponsor’s location following the meet
- Athlete appearance
- Exhibitions at hotels, special parties, or your own pool
- Sponsored fundraising events
- Program ads
- Sponsorship of team newsletter
- Sponsored links on your team website
- Offer exclusives for certain ad spots, for example, limiting the number of logos on a t-shirt or offering prominent display on a scoreboard.
Fundraising and Grants

Every club looks forward to the day when the Publisher's Clearing House Prize Patrol shows up outside your home during the Super Bowl to give you a $1M check. However, since that only happens once a year, chances are your club is going to have to figure out how to raise money in a more dependable fashion. Fundraising takes preparation, patience, planning, personnel, and persistence. Following are some key pointers and ideas to consider when organizing your club's fundraising campaign.

Steps to Successful Fundraising

- Create goals and objectives for the fundraiser first and allow plenty of time in advance to plan
- Design a well-prepared budget for the organization as a whole
- Itemize the budget
- Prioritize what needs to be done and determine deadlines
- Communicate
- Let everyone know the overall goal as well as why and how it is going to be attained
- Break the goals down. Each family needs to raise XX dollars that helps the team reach its goal of XX dollars.
- Share ideas. One person's ideas may be a seed for someone else's ideas.
- Give periodic updates. The club newsletter is a good place to show the status of the fundraising project. Have a visible aid for the community. Show an image of a pool that fills up with water as you reach your overall goal. No water is $0 and a full pool is your overall fundraising goal.
- Develop an organizational flowchart. Spread the workload evenly. Fundraising campaigns are not a one-person project.
- Select an energetic, well-connected, and resourceful chairperson.
- In larger clubs you might choose several group leaders. This will depend on the number of participants. No more than 10 families per group leader. These group leaders are to report to the chairperson.
- Be prepared for participation challenges
- Give options. Strongly encourage that everyone should participate.
- Families that don't participate can donate $25 per fundraiser or $100 per year as a buyout option from the fundraisers. This gives people the option to participate, but busy families can still have a way out.
Make the fundraising campaign fun!

Create challenges. This gives motivation as well as drive creativity. You can have challenges within families, within groups, and within the entire organization.

Reward the challenges that are met. Ask local vendors for support with rewards. Reward families/people that have exceeded their goals. An example would be to give club t-shirts to families that have exceeded their goals by $100, and those that exceed by $200 a club t-shirt as well as a towel each.

Good Relations and Clean-up. Be sure to properly thank all who donated funds. Those who donated a considerable amount should receive a certificate or a plaque showing they did so. A letter showing what was paid and to whom should be offered for tax deduction purposes.

Keep records and notes on how the fundraiser went. Learn from the experience. Pass along the knowledge. People will be fundraising long after you have left. Like anything else, fundraisers will improve with time.

**Fundraising Ideas**

For a professional fundraising organization, please contact ABC Fundraising through their Web site, www.abcfundraising.com or by phone, 1-800-368-4543. They offer various methods to fundraise. It looks very promising and is easy to do.

**Pink Flamingo.** Plan a gathering time and place for the club members. From here go out and place pink, plastic flamingos in people's yards. These people should be friends of the club.
- Contact the owner and inform them that they have been flocked and that there is a ransom to have the flamingos removed. Somewhere between $5 and $10.
- If this fundraiser is to continue year after year, let the people know that they can purchase insurance (e.g., an extra $10-15) to not have the flamingo placed in their yard year after year.
- Alert the local media to get coverage.

**One Mile of Dollar Bills.** Locate a one-mile stretch of road. One that is busy yet has lots of room off to the side and has a stoplight or signs. As people stop at the light or sign, ask for one-dollar donations. As the members get these donations, place them end to end along the side of the road. Tape or some sort of weight might be needed to keep the dollars in place.

**Yard work in local neighborhoods.** Make sure that your club has plenty of rakes, shovels, gloves and so on. These are generally donated by the member's family for usage only. The family will get the tools back. After enough tools are gathered, check around your local neighborhoods to see whom all might need some yard work done. Make sure to work as a team and schedule appropriately. Charge a fee for each person per hour, but don't be greedy.
- **Holiday Gift Wrapping.** Stores provide the gift wrap; you and your team does the gift wrapping and your club keeps any donations.

- **Discount cards and discount books.** Purchase discount cards or books with discounts to local businesses and sell at a profit.

- **Coupons and discounts.** Purchase coupons or discount offers and sell at a profit. Examples include Domino's Pizza. Macy's offers a “Shop for a Cause” for 501(c)3 organizations. Your club sells $5 coupons entitling shoppers to all day discounts, and you keep 100% of the profit.

- **Restaurant Days.** Your organization keeps a percentage of all the sales from a particular evening, or for the sale of a specific menu item.

- **Cookbook Sales.** Numerous companies will publish cookbooks for fundraising. Search “cookbook fundraisers” online and find a company that will work for your program.

- **Mall escorts.** Work with your larger local stores and malls to offer assistance during the shopping season, helping people carry bags to their cars, gift wrap, shopping bag check services, all for small or patron donations to the club. Include mall discount coupons for an even better selling point!

- **Synchro-thon.** Just like a swim-a-thon with pledges for accomplishment, with figures or laps of ballet legs and other workout laps, with the first $50 collected by each girl going to the club, and the remainder to the athlete's travel fund.

- **Volunteer at sports venues, theaters or events.** Volunteer to usher (help people find their seats), run concessions, or clean-up after at local civic center, theatre, or sports venues or events for a donation to the club.

- **Flea Market or Crafts Bazaar.** Hold a flea market or crafts bazaar. Collect a rental fee for each table or space assigned to a vendor (typically $10-20). You can also sell your own donated items to earn additional funds. Finally, you can sell baked goods and refreshments to shoppers.

- **Clean Golf Balls and Clubs for $1.** Ask a local golf course if you may have a small space to set up. Obtain cleaners, cloths, brushes, a cash box, table and chairs, and posters. Set up and put posters up so that people know you are there.

- **50-50 Raffle.** Sell raffle tickets for a nominal fee, such as $1. The winner is determined by a drawing and receives ½ of the donations, with the remaining ½ to go to your club. While easy to do, be certain the 50-50 raffle does not conflict with local or municipal laws. For example, in California, 90% of funds raised must go to the charity or organization that is raising the funds, and so this type of raffle would be illegal. Other states require permits or licenses.
Steps to Securing Grants
Numerous grant programs exist for everything from team travel to educational programs to equipment purchases to leadership and civic volunteering. Research those sources at your local library and develop grant proposals for your existing programs, or new programs you would like to initiate.

Tips for good grant writing
- Allow plenty of time
- Only submit those that are a priority
- Make it an interest of the grant maker
- Use all resources - foundations, corporations, local and state governments
- Obtain 501(c)(3) status
- Write directly to a contact person
- Use the form requested by the funder
- Have someone outside and inside your organization review your grant proposal
- Realize many organizations that provide grants talk to each other. This means you should be very prepared and professional starting with the first grant you request in order to maintain a good reputation with them.

Contents of a good grant request:

1. Executive Summary
   - Problem
   - Solution
   - Funding Requirements
   - Organization and its expertise

2. Statement of Need

3. Project Description
   - Describe objectives, goals and methods

4. Budget

5. Organizational Information
   - Make sure to review the previous success of the club. Show your accomplishments and your impact within the community.

6. Conclusion

7. Appendix
Follow up on a proposal

1. Send a thank you.

2. Report to the granter as you said you would or as the granter requires.

3. Find out when it is best to ask for additional grants.

4. Ask for additional grants. Be persistent, yet thankful for what they may have already granted.

Follow up on a rejection

1. Send a thank you.

2. Call to find out what can be done next and obtain feedback on the proposal.

3. Don’t take the rejection personally.

4. Find out when is the best time to ask again.

5. Ask again. Be persistent.
Appendix A – Host a Synchro Challenge Example

Synch ... Or Sink!

*Synchro offers “clips-on” challenge to ambitious media!*

Do you have a hands-on sports reporter who doesn't mind getting his or her feet wet?

Perhaps she’s an aggressive sports veteran who will go to great lengths for the inside scoop on a local sporting event? Maybe you’ve got a macho man who likes to show off on the links and can't turn down a chance to put his athletic talents to the test.

Then consider this a bare-bones, knockdown, drag-out challenge! To the buoyant media member goes a great experience and even greater story. To the unsuccessful reporter, a visit to the bottom of the pool.

USA Synchro, in conjunction with the __________ (insert club, competition or local event) issues a formal challenge to any and all media outlets to try synchronized swimming (under the close supervision of lifeguards, of course). Swimming alongside the challengees will be members of area synchro teams and national team contenders (edit this to reflect the athletes and their level).

Even the cockiest reporter who scoffs at any athletic event that doesn't involve helmets or physical contact will become a new person after swallowing a few gallons of water. Just ask Olympic gold medalists Mary Lou Retton, Keri Strug or Summer Sanders, or syndicated columnist Dave Barry, who took the challenge and were born-again ‘aquanuts’ after getting the synching feeling. The experience prompted Barry to exclaim in the *Miami Herald*, "This is the hardest sport in the world!"

The Synchro Challenge is arranged by appointment in consideration of the schedule of events. Wear your swimsuit and water wings. We’ll provide a nose clip, cap, goggles, and ... CPR.

The challenge is held in conjunction with the ______ (insert event, club or other details) held ___ (month and day) at the _____ (location/facility). _____ (insert other details such as number of athletes and why they are at your pool). For example, “100 athletes will be competing to qualify for the US Synchronized Swimming National Championships or the Junior Olympic Championships, the world’s largest synchronized swimming competition.

To RSVP for "The Synchro Challenge," or for more information on the _____ (insert event or competition), contact ___ (Name) at ___ (phone), or ___ (alt phone).
Appendix B – Athlete Bios

Athlete Contact Information:  
Team: ______________________

Name: _____________________________________________________________________________

Home phone: __________________________ Other phone/cell: _____________________________

Email: ____________________________________________________________________________ Best time(s) to reach you: ________________

Parent(s) name(s): __________________________________________________________________

Parent(s) phone(s): ___________________________________________________________________

Athlete Biographic Information:  
The following will be used for team publicity purposes. Please be as thorough as possible.

Place of Birth: __________________________ Date of birth: ________________ Height: ______

Current school name and year: __________________________ Years on Team: _____

Suburb/Hometown: __________________________ Years in synchro: ____

Hometown newspapers/media outlets: ____________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Goals in synchro (please be specific!) _____________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Career/education goals: ________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Other sports played: __________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Athletic honors/awards: ________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Scholastic honors/awards: ______________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Other activities, community service, etc. __________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
What obstacles (mental or physical), if any, have you overcome during your synchro career?

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

Other info? (Famous relatives, relatives in sports, unique stories, unusual skills, etc.)

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

**Athletic Accomplishments**
The following information will be used for publicity purposes. Include all association, region, zone and national meets. Please be as thorough as possible.

<table>
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<th>Competition (i.e., Sr. South Zone Championships)</th>
<th>Event(s) &amp; Placing (i.e., Solo 3rd)</th>
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