

Small Change, Big Results

A Marketing System for Martial Arts Schools

Introduction

When I opened my martial arts school, I did what most conventional martial arts entrepreneurs would do: spend some significant dollars on advertising and promotion. After all, I thought, how else would one go about attracting students? How will the general public know I exist? How will I compete with Kung Fu Charlie down the street? I spent a considerable amount of money on newspaper and radio advertising, the Yellow Pages, home-delivered coupons — and received miserable results. I rarely broke even. I was struggling to increase my student base, so I could take home a paycheck.

The answer was to create and execute a simple marketing system and low-cost or no-cost programs that work!

Martial Arts Marketing Made Simple

During 1998, I thought long and hard about marketing my fitness kickboxing class, and asked myself the following questions (You can use the same questions for any class you wish to promote):

Six Questions To A Successful Marketing Plan

1. Who is my market?
2. Who are the decision makers?
3. Where do they congregate?
4. How do I reach them?
5. What incentives will entice them?
6. How do I measure my success?

I researched and focused on those questions, as it relates to fitness kickboxing, which resulted in these answers.

1. Who Is My Market?

Answer: 18–40 year old women (average age, 30).

2. Who Are the Decision Makers?

Answer: Those same 18–40 women. (Note: If you asking these questions for a children's program, then the decision makers are very likely mothers (adult women), age 30 – 35.)

3. Where Do They Congregate?

Answers: (Note: Not a complete list, but good enough for this project.)

- Hair, nail and tanning salons
- Spas
- Grocery stores
- Health food stores

4. How Do I Reach My Market?

Answer: I analyzed what type of woman, approximate age 30, would want to take fitness kickboxing classes. She is a woman who cares about her health and wants to look good, be in shape, lose weight, etc.

Based on my analysis, I decided that “looking good” ranked at the top of the list. My marketing plan then evolved.

I used the 2 column by 6” fitness kickboxing ads and customized them with an offer for a free week of classes. I padded them (at Kinkos, Office Depot, Office Max, etc.) in pads of 25 sheets. I then visited and distributed the pads to hair, nail and tanning salons within a five-mile radius of my facility.

Here is your pitch to those business owners:

“Hi, my name is _____, and I own _____ just a short distance from here. I am starting a new fitness kickboxing program and would like to offer your employees and customers complimentary classes...etc.

1. Give the manager/owner gift certificates for a month of kickboxing.

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MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR THE OWNER AND INSTRUCTOR

2. Give the employees gift certificates for two weeks of classes.
3. Ask that, in return, they put a pad of your kickboxing ads, with the offer for a free week of classes, besides their cash registers and to give them to customers beside who they think might enjoy fitness kickboxing.

Here's what occurred (and still does):

Some of the owners, managers and employees came to class. Some enrolled as students. Those who experienced the class were much more motivated to distribute the free-offer ad, and did like crazy!

I enrolled 100 fitness kickboxing students in 100 days.

5. *What Incentives Will Entice Them?*

Answer: For \$70 per month, they can attend unlimited classes. They will receive free gloves, hand wraps and a sport bag to carry their "stuff " to class. My investment was \$19.50. I received \$70, and I have a student at \$70 per month!

Gloves	\$13.00
Hand Wraps	3.00
Bag Printed	3.50
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Total	\$19.50

6. *How Do I Measure My Success?*

Answer: Color code the pads: the green pads are beauty salons, pink pads are tanning salons, blue for nail salons and so on. Keep a tally!

I am confident that this program will work for you as well as it has for me. Besides, marketing your classes forces you to leave your school and network within your community.

Other Marketing Tactics to Drive Enrollments

Use The News (Newspaper and Broadcast Media)

Learn to read the local newspapers from a martial arts marketing perspective. Most newspapers have event sections that publicize engagements, weddings, births, job promotions, charitable events and news stories to

which you can respond, as the martial arts expert and business person in your town or city. Send a postcard or note, with a special offer, recognizing their event.

Respond to:

- Weddings
- Engagements
- Confirmations
- Births
- Promotions
- New Businesses
- Local News Stories

Publicize Yourself

Make certain to publicize yourself and your school at least once per month. Promote yourself as the martial arts expert in your community that is available to provide information and interviews for the local media.

General Topics:

January	Fitness Resolutions
February	Heart Month
March	Rapid Child Search
April	Earth Day Project
May	Women's Self-Defense
June	Stranger Awareness
July	Rapid Child Search
August	Back to School
September	Bully Avoidance
October	Halloween Safety
November	Kick-A-Thon
December	Collecting food, etc.

Local media editors (print and broadcast) need press releases to do their job. Because they are always busy and have deadlines, they need information presented in a concise and easy-to-read manner.

The perfect press release answers the following basic questions of any journalism story; often known as the five W's and one H. It is also important to know who is

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the audience for your press release, so you write it to capture that audience's interest.

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

How?

Of Interest to Whom?

Create a local media list, including all contact information of editors and reporters who might be interested in your press releases. For instance, the sports editor is a better target than the editorial page editor. Send press releases regularly to your list of local newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, etc.

Classified Advertising

Classified advertising is inexpensive and very effective when run consistently. Your classified ad campaign must be cleverly conceived and ask for a response from readers. Make your classified ad leap from the page by creating a different design than the norm, and include an incentive, such as a free uniform or a free week of classes. My classified ad campaign costs \$35.00 per week.

Your School's Web Site

It is important to drive students and the general public to your website. Many websites are under-utilized. A well-developed website could be a potential gold mine for your school. My website address appears on every item that is printed about my school.

The Helpful Links tab on my website is an important part of my marketing program.

- *Wellness Assessment* — Nutriscan provides a free wellness assessment for current students and new students. If your students should decide to purchase custom-made vitamins, based on their wellness assessment, then you receive a commission on every sale.
- *Character Counts* — Reinforces our character building program.

- *Random Acts Of Kindness* — Helps children excel in building character through random acts of kindness.
- *Stop Bullying Now* — A government site that has information about bullying, for children as well as adults.
- *Send An Ecard* — Ecards are the perfect way for your students to communicate with others, while advertising for your school. It is the perfect word-of-mouth advertising tool.