

Marketing and Communications

How proactive is your business about marketing to new and existing customers? A strong marketing strategy can attract new customers to your pool and increase retention among existing customers, often at very little cost.

Why marketing?

Marketing is crucial to the success of your business. You could have the best pool, most innovative sessions that match customer's needs and cleanest changing rooms in the country, however, if potential customers aren't aware of these factors, they are no more likely to come to your facility. Marketing can also be used to encourage old customers to come back or existing customers to try something new within your facility.

Marketing can help you to:

- Increase the number of people swimming overall
- Increase awareness of particular sessions in the pool
- Increase awareness of memberships
- Increase awareness of the benefits of swimming
- Reduce negative perceptions about swimming
- Show the diversity of your aquatics offer
- De-mystify the swimming pool

All of which have a positive effect on your business!

The marketing strategy

However large or small your facility is, the best way to ensure you're marketing to the right people in the right places is by creating a marketing strategy. Your marketing strategy should answer the following questions as a minimum:

- What do you want to achieve with your marketing?
- Who are my customers currently and who isn't a customer at the moment but could be?
- Where do these customer groups go and what do they do? (i.e. Are they active on social media? Are they likely to visit mother and baby community groups?)
- What do your competitors offer? (i.e. Does the low cost gym down the street offer free classes for members?)
- What can I offer that others can't? (i.e. pools are often a unique feature to a leisure centre – is this true in your area? What classes do you offer in the pool that others do not?)
- What is your marketing budget?

These questions should get you thinking about your unique value proposition to new and existing customers. Ways of targeting these customers can then be identified by using the answers to the questions above.

Remember, budget need not be a blocker to marketing activity. Many social media platforms offer free accounts opening up large new markets in your area. If you really want to explore the possibilities of market, Google's Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) Tools can be accessed for free allowing you to ensure your facility is the first result when potential customers search for exercise classes in your area.

The important bit

Don't be scared of marketing! Marketing can often seem like a buzzword used by large technology organisations in London. It isn't! Marketing could be something as small as a flyer for an Aquafit class on your reception desk.

Thinking about these small details and your visibility as a brand can make a huge difference to the success of your aquatics business.