



Case Study: Okanagan Gymnastics

Okanagan Gymnastics Centre's Marketing Tactics Generate an Online Registration Launch with 51% Adoption

Background

From recreational to competitive gymnastics and from babies to adults, the Okanagan Gymnastics Centre (OGC) is a modern, well-equipped facility with exciting programs and exceptional coaches to teach athletes of all ages and skill levels the fundamentals of gymnastics. Founded in 1981, the OGC now serves as many as 3,000 athletes each year. Registrations for OGC's classes occur four times a year and, in the past, lines have created up to a two hour wait.

Challenge

The Centre previously relied on manual, paper-based processes to manage registrations. Volunteers were brought in during registration periods to fill out forms, then copy information to a registration booklet and on to rosters, and eventually transfer the information into an electronic database. Sally Lockhart, Business Manager of the OGC, explained, "One child's name could be rewritten three times before ever making into our database. The manual processes created a large opportunity for error. Even our members were inconvenienced because they had to physically visit the Centre and wait in line for hours and, in some cases, parents were forced to take time off of work just to register a child." But that wasn't the case this year.

Solution

OGC staff members started looking for online registration solutions via the Internet and through referrals from other gymnasiums. They even distributed an e-mail to parents. "The Active Network's name came up the most in our search for an online registration provider," said Lockhart. OGC came across several gymnasiums that had developed their own online registration system, but according to Lockhart, they had huge problems. "Once built, the online registration program was costly to maintain and if a key administrator left the organization, no one would know how to maintain and operate the program. What's more, it's risky to handle transactions on your own. Using a vendor's software program such as The Active Network's solution, we wouldn't have to worry about security issues."

The OGC selected The Active Network's hosted, Web-based ActiveNet solution. "We trained in January, and then took a break to work with ActiveNet on our own," explained Lockhart. "The Active Network's trainers came back for a couple of days in February to answer any questions. Breaking up the training into two clusters really worked well for us."

Customer at a Glance

Customer: Okanagan Gymnastics Centre

Solution: Online Activity Registration, Facility Reservation, Membership Management, POS

URL:
www.okanagangymnastics.com

"The Active Network's eMarketing Center is a great place to find marketing ideas, tips and tools, especially if you have little to no marketing experience."

– Sally Lockhart, Business Manager, Okanagan Gymnastics Center

OGC's Lessons for Successfully Marketing Online Registration:

1. Utilize the eMarketing Center

Take advantage of The Active Network's eMarketing Center for ideas and tips for a successful online registration debut.

2. Develop a Marketing Plan

Put a marketing plan in place at least two months prior to the launch that includes dates, schedules and a concise timeline of activities.

3. Set Up Accounts Prior to Launch

Allow patrons to explore the online system and set up their personal accounts at least two weeks before opening online registrations.

4. Build Awareness

Hang posters, circulate ads, take advantage of word-of-mouth advertising, and make the online registration buttons and links clearly visible on Web site pages.

5. Educate Patrons

Put directions for setting up an account and registering online on the back of flyers and other promotional materials to walk patrons through each step of the process.

6. Offer Early Bird Registration

Accept online registrations at least one week before accepting walk-in registrations to reinforce that, "Online you're first in line"

Implementation

In mid-February, OGC offered its members the opportunity to set up their accounts prior to registration opening day. To promote the availability of the online service, The Active Network offers a free online marketing resource center that includes a guide with marketing how-to's; samples of flyers, brochures, catalogues, e-mails, press releases, posters and images; online registration success stories; Internet seminars; buttons and links to display online registration; and even a regular eMarketing newsletter with new ideas and information. OGC staff utilized a number of Active's recommended marketing tactics, including half-page ads in the local community recreational magazines, flyers with upcoming activity schedules, posters set up around the Centre, and ads on its Web site.

Lockhart also took advantage of The Active Network's suggested slogan, "Online you're first in line" and she used Active's screen buttons for online registration and made it visible on the Centre's home page. The OGC also opened registrations to members taking advantage of the online service a week before staff began accepting walk-in registrations. "With all of the marketing tactics we employed, we had a great deal of success launching online registration, with nearly half of our members taking advantage of the online option right away."

Results

Since launching online registration, members have been providing the Centre with positive feedback. "We love hearing that our members spent five minutes registering for a program while still in their pajamas, as opposed to standing in line for two hours. It's very rewarding to hear those comments." And while the Centre does require convenience fees to be paid by members, Lockhart noted that doesn't deter anyone from the online service. "People's time is far more important than just a few dollars for convenience and security."

Staff time is equally as important and, as Lockhart noted, "We now have more time in the office to manage other tasks, including marketing, driving sales and developing programs. 50% of the workload is managed for us in ActiveNet." Lockhart has also seen a reduction in errors. "I can now accurately assess how many transactions have occurred, how much money has been collected, and how many classes are full, at any time, on any given day. It used to take me hours to get that same data!"

"ActiveNet really empowers both office staff and customers with access to information," said Lockhart. "Everything is viewable online and is documented via receipts."

The OGC plans to launch The Active Network's point-of-sale system in May, distribute marketing e-mails in June, and send out directions to open an online account via flyers in July. By putting The Active Network's marketing tips to use, the Centre anticipates that nearly 75% of its members will sign-up for programs online during its next registration period.