



July 2012

Australian Bridge Federation Inc

Club Administrators – ABF Marketing Update

1. Encourage emerging talent – *the Novice segment*

As 70% of our membership has less than 100 masterpoints, we need to encourage our novice players to gain maximum enjoyment from their sport. It would be wonderful to see many more of these players participating in competitions at a local, Regional and National level. Once people get a *taste* for competitive play, they will be back for more!

In 2013 both the Summer Festival of Bridge and the Gold Coast Congress will be **increasing** opportunities for our novice players to participate and '*get a taste*' of competitive play.

The Summer Festival of Bridge will be introducing a novice pairs event for people with **0-20** masterpoints as well as novice teams events for people with 0-20, 21-50 and 51-150 masterpoints.

In addition to the usual novice events, the Gold Coast Congress will also be introducing a novice pairs event for people with **0-10** masterpoints.

This is just a heads-up - final details (*including naming the events*) are still under development.

The focus for all novice players at these two major events will be to ensure that people are in a 'safe', enjoyable and learning environment where we can foster a love for competitive play.

Please ensure that your novice players are aware that competition organisers are happy to 'match them up' with another player (*or to make up a team*) should they not have a partner interested in competing with them! Many of our new members are not aware of this service.

It would be great to see each ABF affiliated club represented at these events. Your novice players are our stars of tomorrow! Please start now to encourage these members to get involved and develop a love of competitive play.

2. Summer Festival of Bridge – January 2013

Please let your members know that the timing of 41st anniversary of the Summer Festival of Bridge will coincide with two significant events in Canberra.

- I. [Toulouse Lautrec : Paris and the Moulin Rouge](#) – this show will be on at the National Gallery of Australia and will involve over 120 of his works.
- II. [Australia Day celebrations](#) – people can go to Federation Mall on the lawns of Parliament House to see the *Australian of the Year* ceremony – this is held after play at around 6.00 pm on the 25th January. People can also view the spectacular fireworks display from the shores of Lake Burley Griffin – this commences around 7.45 pm on Australia Day (26th January) and can be viewed from many vantage points.¹

3. Tips for attracting members

Forget paid advertising and leaflet dropping and concentrate on:

- word of mouth – get your members involved. Make sure your members are happy and they will ‘sell’ bridge to their friends and family members. Offer them five free vouchers for anyone they attract to your beginner classes, have gift certificates available for them to purchase (*especially around Christmas time*) and make sure they are aware of ABF membership benefits (*our travel insurance offer alone is attracting many new members to Clubs*). Consider advising your members of these issues before each session! Reinforce through your Club Newsletter in each issue and place information on your Notice Board.

Research indicates that people need to hear things **five** times before they take any notice.

ABF research confirms that recruitment of new members is most effectively achieved through our existing members. So, make sure your members are *happy little vegemites!*

- developing a relationship with local organisations - especially Doctor’s surgeries, Lions and Rotary clubs, bowls and golf clubs. Put up posters and stress that *bridge reduces cerebral degeneration and is fun*.
- free promotional opportunities – develop a relationship with your community newspaper by providing them with interesting material. Alert them to charity days, significant milestones (*eg 90th birthdays/ new premises etc*), any youth activities during school holidays and significant events. Offer journalists free lessons – involve them in your Club!

More information on free promotion of bridge is available at

<http://www.abf.com.au/marketing/docs/MarketingTipsPromotingBridge.pdf> .

- your website – make sure that when someone ‘lands’ on your website they get the information they need about lessons either within 3 clicks or 8 seconds. They will want to know where/when/cost/length of beginner classes, who to contact and how to enrol. Also ensure that your State/Territory Secretary is kept up to date with this information for the Regional website.

Make sure your web site is one of your marketing tools rather than just a source of static information for existing members.

4. Membership retention strategies

On a recent visit to a meeting of the NSWBA I heard of situations where people have left the sport due to a range of circumstances, including the death of their long-term bridge partner and issues associated with ill health and/or reduced mobility. This is extremely sad as in many cases playing bridge is an important factor in maintaining good physical and mental health as well as providing many of our elderly members with their only opportunity for social interaction.

Wherever possible, and I appreciate that it is difficult, Clubs should consider whether they can offer:

- **Transportation to / from the club for people with reduced mobility**

If one of your members finds it difficult to get to and from your premises because of reduced mobility, see whether another member would be able to provide transportation for them. This already happens in many clubs and people seem to be more than happy to assist.

- **A ‘find-a-partner’ service**

This could be as simple as a Club register for people to highlight their need for a temporary partner for particular session/s (*their regular partner may be sick or on holidays*) or for a permanent partner at specific sessions.

Alternatively, your Club may be in a position to allocate responsibility to a specific person to match players – *aligning their aspirations, personalities and bidding systems to the greatest extent possible.*

Consideration could also be given to matching people up when one wants to participate in a local, Regional or National competition and their partner is either not interested or not available. Also, as mentioned earlier, ensure that your

members know that competition organisers are happy to match them up with another player if they do not have a partner for a specific event.

Another option would be to see whether your member would like to become a mentor for your emerging players? They could serve to transition your *'rookies'* to *'open'* play – *but only if they possess good interpersonal skills.*

- **A *'walk-in'* policy whereby people can show up at certain sessions and be guaranteed a partner.**

This policy is extremely useful and if you already have one, you should advertise it on your website!

I know that before my retirement I travelled extensively and had to give the sport away for 13 years because of this. If more clubs enabled people to show up and be guaranteed a game people in this sort of situation could continue in the sport.

Maybe consideration could be given to nominating one or two sessions when this service can be provided. Perhaps you have a couple of members who live nearby and who would be prepared to be *'on-call'* should the need arise? Draw up a roster!

Caution: so as not to abuse this service Clubs may wish to advise members that whilst a non-playing Director will play to make up a pair when necessary, a limit of 3 times per year would apply for each Club member.

If your Club has implemented different strategies to address this issue please let me know so that I can share best practice with all affiliated Clubs. Send information to marketing@abf.com.au . Let's help our members stay in the sport.

5. Charity Partnership

Remember that Make-A-Wish will make a volunteer available to any ABF affiliated club in Australia which is interested in undertaking a fund-raising event for their charity. This may be something as simple as a raffle (*for which they will provide the prize*). All donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.

If you would like to sponsor a fund-raising event for this charity please notify Sandra Mulcahy at marketing@abf.com.au .

6. Membership Benefits

Please bring these benefits to the attention of your members as you will be supporting organisations who support our sport.

Remember – if your members are happy they will make fantastic bridge ambassadors and this in turn will make their family and friends more likely to also give bridge a try. Further details on all these offers can be found at <http://www.abf.com.au/marketing/benefits.htm> .

- Toga Hospitality's offer of heavily discounted accommodation rates for their hotels in Australia, New Zealand and parts of Europe is gaining in popularity (*Travelodge, Adina Hotels, Medina and Vibe Apartments*). These rates are usually well below those available through *wotif* and *lastminute* etc.

Members need to access instructions on how to book this discounted accommodation on the ABF website under Marketing / Membership Benefits. Only by doing this will they have access to the special rates for members of ABF affiliated Clubs.

- We are trialling group travel to international bridge events through Cornerstone Travel. The advantages of booking through this travel agency are:
 - ✓ make new friends from within the Australian and international bridge community
 - ✓ the arrangements are made for you; and
 - ✓ reduced prices for your travel (*ie bulk travel rates*).

Offers are available for:

[New Zealand National Congress, Hamilton \(29 September – 6 October 2012\)](#)

[Fall North American Bridge Championships, San Francisco \(22 November - 2 December\)](#)

- Over 1,500 of our members have taken up the annual travel insurance policy available through our major sponsor, TBIB. Detailed information about this offer can be viewed under Marketing / Membership Benefits on the ABF website.

A reminder that a senior insurance broker from TBIB is available at the times listed below to discuss insurance matters with Club administrators and to speak briefly to your members (*prior to a normal club session*) about the travel insurance offer. This has proved very popular in Brisbane clubs with members enjoying the opportunity to raise issues of particular interest to them.

- ✓ [Brisbane](#) : offer available at your convenience
- ✓ [Sydney](#) : 8 – 10 August 2012
- ✓ [Canberra](#) : July 2012

To make a booking contact Steve Weil, TBIB senior insurance broker, on:

- **Ph:** (07) 3252 5254

- **Mobile:** 0431 570 561
- **Email:** steveveil@tbib.com.au
- **Web:** www.tbib.com.au

Attached to this email are promotional flyers outlining all of these offers which can be placed on your Notice Board. Take a few minutes to bring them to the attention of your members as they could save them a lot of money.

7. Conveying key messages to your Club members

Please consider conveying some of these key messages to your members:

- ✓ prior to the commencement of your sessions
- ✓ by placing information on your Notice Board; and/or
- ✓ by including articles in your Club Newsletter .

Anecdotal evidence points to some very happy members who have discovered they can save money through our sponsorship deals! They are telling their friends and this is creating a lot of buzz about bridge within the broader community. This makes for excellent, free promotion.

At my home club in Brisbane copies of the flyers for these membership benefits are left near the exit and I have been advised that they are very popular as 'take-aways'.

If you know of anyone who may be interested in sponsorship with the ABF, please have them contact the ABF National Marketing Officer, Sandra Mulcahy, at marketing@abf.com.au or on 0417 920 816.

Happy bridging everyone!
