

Making the Most of Youth Sports Sponsorships

Kids are an important part of the customer base for hobby stores and it makes sense for stores to lend their support to local youth sports organizations. Not only does this support benefit a great cause, but it should – if marketed properly – increase the sponsoring store's sales, traffic and public awareness.

Promote your sponsorship – Make your support of youth sports visible to the customers who visit your store. Display photos of the teams you are sponsoring along with any plaques or certificates that are presented to your business in appreciation of your support. This lets customers know you are a supporter of youth activities and enhances your reputation within the community. This support will be appreciated, particularly among parents who might visit your store, and creates a positive first-time impression of your business.

A great sampling opportunity – What better way to introduce youngsters to the trading cards your store has to offer than by giving some free packs of cards to every kid (and coach) on the team you're sponsoring. Not only will these be appreciated, but it may be the first introduction to cards for some kids on the team. If possible, attach a special coupon on every pack that offers a special discount just for team members to encourage them to visit your store.

Show off your store – Offer to host a special event at your store just for team members and their families. Offer free pizza or other snacks and use the event as an informal "open house" for your store. Show kids how to play Pack Wars, let them see some of the other new products in your store and make sure they (and their parents) know if you offer services such as trade events, report card rewards or other kid-focused services. If the teams and their families associate your store with a fun atmosphere, they'll be more likely to shop at your store in the future.

Offer special events – Encourage all youth sports participants in your area to visit your store by offering special events, such as a free pack of cards for anyone wearing their youth sports uniform or T-shirt on a given day. Or offer a 10 percent discount to anyone wearing a youth sports uniform on Saturdays. Whatever the promotion, make sure it gets publicized to all youth sports participants in your area so they know your store has a special opportunity for them.

Creative marketing opportunities – In addition to having the chance to put the name of your business on shirts or uniforms, ask about the opportunity to offer ads in programs, special announcements over the public address system at games, the chance to give away hats or T-shirts promoting your store, donating prizes for fund-raising events or other events to enhance the visibility of your store.

Network with other sponsors – Pizza restaurants, video stores, bowling alleys, ice cream parlors and other businesses are frequent sponsors of youth sports. Get to know the other sponsors and discuss cross-promotional efforts with them. They may be collectors themselves and would be willing to help support fellow sponsors.

Youth sports offer a chance to get your store's name in front of the perfect demographic for your business. Take advantage of every opportunity possible to get your store's name in front of these young customers and their families.