



Australian Bridge Federation

**ABF Vision:** Australians recognise bridge as a sport which helps build their communities.

OCTOBER 2013

BRIDGE CLUB  
ADMINISTRATORS

MARKETING  
UPDATE

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### 1. Christmas Campaign – Gift Vouchers

The November issue of the ABF Newsletter will include a full-page promotion encouraging people to purchase a gift voucher for their loved one for Christmas.

Start your club promotional campaign **now** - mention gift vouchers at each of your bridge sessions, place a flyer (*enclosed*) on your Notice Board, **sell** it in your Club Newsletter and hopefully your **2014** beginner classes will be full in no time!

I have enclosed a copy of the **promotional flyer** for your Notice Board and/or club Newsletter together with a sample **Gift Voucher** should your club be interested. *Perhaps you could purchase some Christmas coloured envelopes for your gift vouchers?*

If you need help in filling out details on the gift voucher please let me know as I am happy to assist.

### 2. Exciting fund-raiser for your Club

Cool White Bunnies is keen to obtain enough funding and community interest to make a documentary on bridge in Australia. Your club can assist by getting involved and purchasing a screening kit for **Game Changer**.

Game Changer is several stories bound together into a single lesson on finding **hope and happiness** in unexpected places:

- It's **Betty Mill's** story. Betty is a woman with a life-long passion for Bridge and a desire to use that passion to inspire and serve.

- It's the story of her unlikely students at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre in Darwin, Australia, who struggle with educational and developmental basics.

Bridge is not only one of the world's most popular card games, it can also change lives for the better.

### How you can host a Game Changer screening and raise money

Want to share Game Changer with your Bridge Club, community or friends? You can **host your own Game Changer Screening** with a licence that enables you to sell tickets. Raise money for your Club, community or favourite charity.

A Game Changer Screening Kit gives Bridge clubs, other organisations and individuals a simple and convenient resource for showing the film and sharing the experience. The screening could be part of a social occasion or meeting. Afterwards you could serve refreshments and lead a positive discussion about the importance of Bridge in people's lives, volunteerism, support for at-risk youth and “bridging” traditional community divides.

Each screening kit gives you:

- Public screening licence
- Game Changer DVD (*approximately 25 minutes*)
- E-book: “How to Host a Screening of Game Changer”
- Online promotion of your event on their website

Game Changer screening kits are available for **order** now with a 15% discount and will be delivered by 30 November 2013.

Check out their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/PeopleWhoPlayBridge](http://www.facebook.com/PeopleWhoPlayBridge)

### 3. Interesting facts about advertising

Most clubs advertise their beginner classes in their community newspapers, letterbox drops etc - with varying degrees of success.

Research shows that:

- only **18%** of TV commercials provide a return on investment
- **14%** of people trust advertisements (*of any kind*); and
- **78%** of people trust **peer** recommendations.

*What could this mean for your club?* If you focus on making sure that your members are happy (*ie know what they want and work to provide it*), then they will become wonderful bridge ambassadors! They will recommend your beginner classes to their friends and loved ones.

#### 4. Sharing best practice

The South Australian Bridge Association is one of Australia's largest clubs (**930 home members – over 1000 members overall**) and last year signed up more new members than any other Club (**127**) in Australia. I contacted Gary Deaton, the Club Manager, and asked if he would share what they are doing to achieve such a wonderful result.

I already knew from my visit to the club in 2012 that Gary undertook a Business Planning process to better focus club activities and identify priorities and it looks as though this initiative is certainly paying off. In my opinion, a plan is essential for all club administrators to ensure that everyone is '*singing from the same hymn book*' and that goals, responsibilities, timeframes etc are clearly understood. A Business Plan is a *road map* to where you want your club to be in 12 months.

**Here is Gary's story:**

##### **Membership Initiatives**

When trying to grow club membership, the club has two approaches; namely

1. **bring in** new members; and
2. **retain** current members.

Both are important but require different strategies. Generally, the first is about advertising and promotional activities whilst the second is about improving each player's *experience* at their club.

##### **New Members**

- 1) Class Numbers are up due to an increase in advertising. We advertise in different media from time to time and have come to know which newspapers and magazines provide best value for money. I made a general assumption that a new member will play once a week. That equates to about \$500 per year. I can use this figure to assess the value for money of any advertising (*including letterbox drops*).
- 2) Class costs are kept to a minimum (*\$50 or \$40 concession for a course, including a free copy of a bridge book*). This means we run some classes at a loss, but this is offset by larger classes and therefore more new members.
- 3) Class retention rates have increased from around **20% to 90%**. How?
  - a. At the completion of the classes we offer all students a discounted membership rate.
  - b. On joining students get a "*Member's Kit*" which is a woven bag (*with the SABA logo and phone number on the outside*) containing a magnetic name tag, a free bridge cheat sheet, a SABA Info Booklet, SABA engraved pen and bridge stickers.
  - c. All students receive a Certificate of Completion.
  - d. All new members get a free game the week following their last class. This helps to maintain the "routine".
  - e. Students are also influenced by the same "*experience*" factors that have helped improve our retention rates.
  - f. Existing members are provided with free playing vouchers if they recommend a family member or friend to enrol in classes.

- 4) We are getting more past members re-joining. I think this is mainly due to the fact that our reputation has improved as a friendly place to play.

## Retaining Members

In the past, SABA had a reputation as an “unfriendly” club. Personally, I think this was more a perception than a reality. Coming into a club with 120 plus players can be a daunting experience and one of the main reasons for employing a **conciierge**. All of the following initiatives were part of improving the experience of people coming to our club.

### 1) Improved Amenities

- a. The club is going through (*an ongoing*) facelift.
    - i. Repainting
    - ii. New Kitchen, including new coffee cups (*previously we had 100's of cups of all sizes and colours, donated by members*).
    - iii. New “**Boiling Billy**” - continuous hot water system to service a new coffee point. Members enjoy free coffee, tea, hot chocolate or soup.
  - b. New larger tables throughout the club.
  - c. Introduction of bidding boxes and Bridgemates.
- 2) **New website** - I wanted a site that looked friendly and welcoming and I think we have been able to achieve that. Check it out at <http://www.saba.asn.au/>
  - 3) **Monthly Newsletter** - Our Newsletter is now produced monthly and differs from past newsletters in that it is not filled with bridge problems. Most members are not Grand Masters and don't want to know how one of our experts managed to make a difficult contract. “The Declarer” (*great name which we came by through a naming competition*) is more about providing information to members and is very much a light-hearted magazine.
  - 4) **Pianola** - This is primarily a club management tool, but does provide a fairly detailed player analysis. We have had past members re-joining so that they can have access to this. An added bonus for me was that they needed to have an email account to log in. The number of members in my membership database with email accounts has risen from about **250** to **550**.
  - 5) **Conciierge** - This has been a fantastic success and well beyond the club's expectations. We wanted someone to meet and greet new players to the club and hence improve their experience. The role has expanded, but the bonus is that it seems the existing members have taken a leaf out of the conciierge's book and the atmosphere throughout the club is noticeably friendly.
  - 6) **Other new initiatives** include:
    - a. Car pooling. We currently have about **20** members who are still playing bridge because we have been able to get them a lift to the club and home.
    - b. Partner desk. Whilst the club guarantees a game for “walk-ins” at **all** our day sessions, this is generally done as a one-off basis by the directors. The conciierge looks after members who are looking for a regular partner.
  - 7) Sub-branches. Whilst this is probably only relevant to a few bigger clubs, we have created 3 “sub-branches” in areas where a bridge club wasn't readily available. This has not only increased our membership but offered more sessions for supervised players.

Many thanks to Gary for kindly sharing his ideas and initiatives.

Has your club achieved great outcomes with a new approach? Please let me know at [marketing@abf.com.au](mailto:marketing@abf.com.au) so I can share the idea/s with all affiliated clubs!

### **5. Interesting website**

Some clubs have recently invested in improving their website.

The South Australian Bridge Association has a wonderful internet presence as does Joan Butts' site. Check it out at [www.joanbuttsbridge.com/](http://www.joanbuttsbridge.com/) . ABC Radio in Brisbane was trawling the internet for story ideas and contacted Joan for an interview when they found her site, which they loved.

Listen to the interview at [www.abf.com.au/abf-marketing/activities/](http://www.abf.com.au/abf-marketing/activities/) - look under Item 3 in June 2013.

### **6. Out and about**

On 5 October I assisted the Tasmanian Bridge Association in the development of a State Marketing Plan. The workshop was held in their fabulous new premises at New Town, Hobart.

Once again it was an absolute pleasure to work with committed and energetic people who were simply keen to identify how best to grow and improve the sport in their State.

At attachment 1 are some photographs from the workshop.

### **7. Need help?**

For information or advice please contact Sandra Mulcahy, ABF National Marketing Officer, at [marketing@abf.com.au](mailto:marketing@abf.com.au) .

*HAPPY BRIDGING EVERYONE !*

**ATTACHMENT 1**



The Tasmanian Bridge Association workshop participants

hard at work – 5 October 2013.