

To: Tournament Chairs and Unit Tournament Coordinators

Subject: Tournament Marketing

January 2016

As we begin a new year, I'm pleased to report several improvements in our District-wide efforts to deliver terrific member benefits. Of course, your tournaments are our most important and our most visible member benefit. So keep up the good work and continue to improve upon your individual and collective successes.

Tournament Summary

Attached is a summary of District 15 Tournaments for the last six years. There is a lot of data, but the key items are:

Sectional attendance has declined (note: ACBL membership in our District was in decline, but the most recent data shows an increase of 1.42% - yes that is very good news!).

The number of Sectionals in 2016 has declined. This is a good thing. We were running too many tournaments.

The 2015 surge in Intermediate/Newcomer tournaments has reverted to previous levels. It is not clear why the number of I/N tournaments doubled in 2015.

The Marketing of the Tulsa and the Wichita Regionals helped to increase our District table count by 390 tables.

General Comments

- The ACBL has unveiled a new online Partnership system. We should encourage our Partnership chairs to become familiar with it.

The old Partnership System (bridgefinesse.com) has been removed from the D-15 website. Please use the ACBL Online Partnership system for your tournaments. For information: http://www.acbl.org/learn_page/how-to-use-the-acbl-partnership-desk-in-four-simple-steps/

- The number of Regional events with less than 5 tables is a growing problem for D-15. We are experiencing declining attendance at most of our Sectionals and Regionals. Tournament Chairs are canceling some events because of too few players for the event. One aspect that we have discussed for the last three years is the number of concurrent events at our Regionals. Here is our most recent tournament

data; showing the number of concurrent events, total tables and the number of events held with less than 5 tables.

<u>2014</u>	Th-PM	Fri-PM	Sat-PM	#Tables	LT 5 tables
OKC	6	7	6	887	7
Topeka	5	5	5	390	8
Amarillo	5	5	5	258	4
Springfield	3	5	4	658	2
KC	7(Sun)	6(Mon)	6(Tue)	1000	2
 <u>2015</u>					
OKC	6	7	6	841	4
Tulsa	4	4	5	822	6
Wichita	5	5	5	745	4
KC	6	6	6	994	0
 <u>2016</u>					
OKC	6	7	6		
Topeka	Schedules not yet online				
Amarillo	“	“			
Springfield	“	“			
KC	“	“			

The data does not consider any canceled events; only those which were held and had less than 5 tables. The only ACBL requirement for Regional Tournaments is for a certain number of Championship events.

Player feedback is vitally important to our marketing efforts for subsequent years. As each of us participates in tournaments, we need to be asking our players (our guests) about their experiences and their tournament satisfaction. That player feedback needs to go directly to the Tournament Chairs so that they can make adjustments.

- With a general decline in tournament participation in D-15, each Unit should review their tournament schedules and see if it is time to make changes; which includes shutting down some Sectionals.
- Most of our Sectional Tournaments draw players from a 200 mile radius. When scheduling tournaments within two weeks of each other, attendance from overlapping areas will cause both tournaments to suffer. We don't want to be in a position where our tournaments are 'cannibalizing' each other's player pool.
- We should consider making our Intermediate/Newcomer events 0-500 MP games.

District 15 Communications and Marketing Coordinator

Recognizing the need for marketing assistance throughout our District, the Board approved a new position. The need was evident in tournament promotion, GNT, STaC, NAP events and also our 2017 KC NABC tournament. The role of the C&M person is to work with other staff members to guide and assist them in creating and implementing an effective marketing strategy.

The C&M will establish and maintain an email account, for use by District Coordinators to communicate to Unit coordinators and other identified sub-groups within our District. Broadcast email will allow us to quickly and efficiently reach our members.

The C&M will principally support Regional tournament staff, but may also provide advice, as needed, to Unit Board members. Len Fetting, NW Arkansas Unit, volunteered to fill the C&M role.

Advertising vs Marketing

For many people, advertising and marketing are viewed as being the same. Actually, there is a huge difference between the two.

Advertising is an announcement. It provides the basic information about the event; like our tournament flyers. Other examples of announcements include party invitations, birth announcements, graduation and wedding invitations.

Advertising delivers the basic who, what and where information to a broad audience. Advertising is also transactional, bottom up thinking and generally easy to do.

Marketing is a process. The five steps are: gather the data, analyze the data, formulate a plan, implement the plan and measure the results.

To market a bridge tournament, we would gather attendance information from our recent tournaments. We would analyze the data to segment our current market into several slices. We would typically look at our geographic penetration, our attendees by ranking (I/N, flight B and flight A), the duration of their attendance, and so on. We would look at Hospitality, review player comments and modify as needed to maintain a high level of 'creature comforts'.

The development of the Marketing plan should roll naturally from of the detailed analysis process. We would target the demographic groups that we feel were under-represented at prior tournaments.

Marketing messages (for each segment) will be crafted to appeal to our members' self-interests. These messages are narrative in nature and they contain a very compelling 'Call to Action'.

Last year, we used email as our primary marketing tool. Two Units participated and the attendance at each Regional increased by more than 15%. Going forward, we would hope that more Tournaments in our District embrace Marketing. It does require a lot more effort than advertising.

Looking Forward

It is no secret that we have seen a decline in Bridge players; something that began 45 years ago. I see some positive signs and I am encouraged by many of the Unit-level efforts to turn things around. The future of Bridge is in our hands. Each of us needs to embrace those activities and efforts that will deliver the positive results that we all want to achieve.

Let's continue to Build for Tomorrow.

Thank you for your many contributions to bridge.

Len Fettig