



COOL THINGS WE'RE SEEING AND HEARING REGARDING REOPENING

There is one thing we can all agree upon and that is that the pandemic has had a huge impact on our lives and businesses. It has forced centers to evaluate every aspect of the business in order to be smarter, more efficient, take advantage of every opportunity and get revenue back on track. However, it has also sparked a lot of creativity and aggressive marketing.

COMPETITIVE

Mid-week sweepers

- Pick days that could use a boost and plan during normal league time slot to make it attractive for traditional league bowlers and get new bowlers attracted to that slot in hopes they will join a fall league.
- Feature different formats- Baker doubles, Scotch doubles, Handicap doubles or trio with cap averages.
- Mix it up! Use games to keep everyone engaged, from the most experienced to the least. From classic games like no tap or 3-6-9 to more creative ones offered in BES X. The possibilities are unlimited...be creative.
 - Head Hunter
 - Last Pin Standing
 - Low Game
 - Best Frame
 - Best Ball
 - Odds & Evens
 - Even Better
 - Odd Duck
- Do not forget to approach vendors for prizes or contributing in some way. Often times, beer and liquor distributors are looking for venues to do promotions and this makes a nice addition to sweepers.
- Myrtle Beach Bowl is having tremendous success with Sweepers and they are seeing new faces and more money in the register. What better results can one ask for?

Flex leagues

- COVID-19 has turned schedules upside down. Many people are taking on new or additional jobs, working from home and juggling taking care of kids. Having a routine weekly schedule is often very rare.
- Bowlers can come in any time Monday – Sunday to bowl their games. Restrictions can apply, if desired.
- Points are earned for participation each week and for each person they beat each week or perhaps there is another way you think YOUR customer would like...don't be afraid to put a new twist on an old idea. You might just be surprised at the response and results!
- A flex league is a great format for merchandise. How about putting new equipment or branded merchandise in the bowler's hands?

PARTIES/GROUPS

Fun Size Parties

- Some customers are not quite ready to socialize with friends and family outside their household but are ready for a little fun.
- Offer Fun Size parties for up to 6 and pull out all the stops, just like you do with traditional parties.
- This offering will be attractive to bowlers that would otherwise choose to stay home.

Private time

- Cater to the needs of the particular audience. Play oldies music or Disney favorites on the radio.
- By reservation only time for Senior Citizens.
 - Play oldies music
 - If early morning, have donuts and pastries available in the in the restaurant or snack bar.
- By reservation only time slot for families with small children.
 - Play mom approved music.
 - Offer kid friendly snack and meal options.
 - Make it fun. Utilize Lucky Train or Lane Lotto for fun prizes.
- Some centers are offering these times outside of normal operating hours.

FACEMASKS

- Masks are not people's favorite accessory these days but they are necessary to flatten the COVID-19 curve so we might as well have a little fun with them.
- Since masks cover up one of the most unique characteristics of people, their smile, have a contest with the employees to design their facemask to best reflect their personality.
- How about a contest for the most original facemask?
- Consider having a Facebook contest encouraging customers to post their coolest masks and the mask with the most votes, wins a pizza party at the center.
- Many centers are purchasing branded masks as part of the employee uniforms. Consider using these custom masks as prizes at the sweepers.

UNIQUE PROGRAMS/PROMOTIONS

- An hour of free bowling for the class of 2020. Not only does this expose the center to potential new customers but can help to generate food and beverage revenue.
- Free frontline workers event
 - Andrew, at Bowl-O-Rama in Portsmouth, hosted three evenings that included 2 hours of bowling, shoes, a slice of pizza and fountain drink. The center was featured on the local television news, radio and in the newspaper. This community goodwill was amazing and resulted in free advertising and spread the news by word of mouth that they are safe and open for business.
 - This was also done at Strikes and Spares in Mishawaka who had two, by reservation only events and they were both full. They had participation from many of their vendors. The event was planned prior to the first day of reopening their center. They too, enjoyed free media coverage and even received emails and letters from those attending, giving testimonials as to how much fun it was and how much it the event was appreciated. Home run!!!

MARKETING

- Be clever and get free advertising. I recently observed a group of young adults standing outside a Bowl and Barrel location taking pictures of something on the window and either texting or posting it on social media. They were laughing and having a good time talking about whatever this was. As I got closer I understood what had captured their attention...a very clever marketing sign that read "We're back with the Cleanest Balls in San Antonio. Okay, get your mind out of the gutter". I'm quite sure that between the 5 young adults in this group, it would be easy to say this sign was seen by over 1000 people. Be creative with your marketing. You never know what might take off and go viral. Another shout out to Bowl and Barrel for their Very Merry Unbirthday program which offers 1 hour of bowling for missed birthdays during the COVID-19 shutdown. Clever!!

- Approach reopening the center as if you were opening for the very first time. Be aggressive in getting new business. Don't assume everyone knows the center is in town and what you offer. Create relationships with other business owners and help one another grow. Have a dedicated plan and do not deviate from it, no matter if business goes back to normal or not. There is always room in the cash register for more money.

OTHER CREATIVITY

- Use QR Codes on stationary marketing material to introduce customers to specials/options/menu/features/guidelines to avoid customers having to touch promotional material. Most smartphones will scan the code automatically and take the customer directly to the message.
- Offer center parking lot for local food distribution. Provide each food recipient with a voucher for an offer in the center.
- Having trouble getting customers to abide by the social distancing floor stickers? Put numbers of the floor stickers and randomly call out numbers for prizes. This will bring attention to the stickers and encourage people to stay on the sticker.
- John Mc Carthy, Kingpin Lanes, who was a recently a panelist on a webinar, shared that he took blue painters tape, and taped out a square box on the concourse and designated the area for personal equipment. This helped free up the obstacles that might otherwise jeopardize customers trying to abide with social distancing. This can also be an opportunity to sell sponsorships and have the dedicated area identified with floor stickers containing advertisement. They also removed all the house balls from the concourse to free up space, put them in a dedicated room when they are sanitized and made ready for the next customer.
- Some centers that are doing reservations only are taking cell phone numbers and asking customers to text when they arrive and the center will let them know when their lane is cleaned and ready for the fun to begin. This can also be a good way to gather mobile numbers to start a text message program. Remember to have the customer opt in prior to sending text messages.

These are just a few of the things centers have done upon reopening that are unique. The emphasis on a clean experience is something that will help change the negative image that many still have of bowling alleys and should be continued long after the pandemic is over. Going forward, customers are going to be much more aware of cleanliness and have higher expectations as a result.

Let's hope that the aggressiveness, creativeness and eagerness to think outside the box doesn't end when the pandemic does. Let's keep the momentum going and not only get back to Pre Covid-19 numbers, but exceed them. Keep up the great work!

We'd love to hear some of the creative things your center is doing to get back on track! Leave your ideas and best practices below!

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