

Marketing Mavens

NSAA ANNOUNCED ITS SALES AND MARKETING AWARD WINNERS IN SAN DIEGO. THE FOCUS: GROWING SKIING AND SNOWBOARDING.

While feasting on bok choy and Mountain Dew—hopefully not at the same time—the 250 people attending this year’s annual Sales and Marketing Awards got an added bonus when *Transworld Snowboarding* editors also recognized the winners of their 2002 Readers’ Poll. In total, 15 ski areas were honored at a luncheon held at the NSAA show in San Diego.

The Sales and Marketing Awards showcase the best marketing programs from resorts around the country. In recent years, the awards have focused primarily on the Model for Growth and initiatives created to boost skiing/boarding conversion rates. As this season’s record visitor numbers show, efforts to draw beginners back are working. The winning programs detailed below are just a few examples of solid, successful efforts and are great templates for other resorts.



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Marketing awards were presented to four resorts each in three categories: Best Program to Grow the Sport to New Participants; Best Program to Increase Frequency of Core Participants; and Best Program to Convert New Participants to Core Participants. And the winners were...

Best Program to Convert New Participants to Core Participants 500,000+ skier visits

The Creekside Lodge; Holiday Valley, N.Y.

Judge Gaylene Nagel called it a strategic and comprehensive approach, while Livewire’s



Holiday Valley’s Chip Day.



From left, John Mahanna, Cynthia Stepleton and Ken Stone from Angel Fire Resort, N.M.

PHOTOS BY APRIL DARROW

Andrew Heltzel labeled it an outstanding symbol of commitment to growing snowsports. At Holiday Valley’s new adult learning center, the Creekside Lodge, guests are greeted at the door, informed of package prices, assisted in filling out forms and directed to the rental shop within the building. The student then meets the other members of their group and all participate in a two-hour lesson (with no more than six people per group). The Creekside Lodge offers amenities to help acclimate the guest to resort surroundings. The resort tracks return visits with a plastic swipe card that is given to the guest when they return rental equipment at the end of the day.

250,000–500,000 skier visits

First Class; Windham Mountain, N.Y.

First Class was created so that new participants could get acquainted with the ski/board experience with discount offers that kept them coming back. New participants were assigned an instructor who not only taught them to ski or ride, but also guided them from curbside all the way to après ski hot chocolate. The day started at the lodge, the first step in the curb-to-snow process. The program included an all-day lower mountain pass, equipment rental, 3.5-hour small group lesson, lunch, insider tips

and bargains, e-mail support and information, souvenir photograph and, of course, hot chocolate.

100,000–250,000 skier visits

You Keep the Gear; Angel Fire Resort, N.M.

Angel Fire’s You Keep The Gear program was such a hit that a panelist at one of the conversion sessions in San Diego pointed it out as a great example for other resorts and asked Angel Fire’s Ken Stone to stand up and describe it. Through the program, the resort offered guests the chance to learn to ski or snowboard on brand new equipment and then keep the gear (boards, boots, bindings) when the lesson ended. The package included two half-day group lessons, K2, Morrow or Head equipment, custom fitting and adjustments and two vouchers for half-price lift tickets good anytime. The program provided custom fitted equipment adjusted to skier/rider level.

0–100,000 skier visits

Kids Free Pass Program; Mad River Glen, Vt.

Children aged 12 and under received a free season pass at Mad River Glen if a parent purchased an adult season pass or Mad Card (valid for three days of skiing). The resort developed this kids-ski-free program after research showed that many of the children on



Sean Hersey accepts Mountain High's award.

Chip Perfect of Indiana's Perfect North Slopes.



Snow Summit's Dick Kun and Mammoth's Pam Murphy with their Transworld Snowboarding Readers' Poll awards.

the slopes were those of long-time Mad River Glen skiers. The resort wanted to grow their core market with families who provide the greatest potential for long-term value. Revenues increased dramatically since the inception of the program. The number of Mad Cards sold also increased, providing an opportunity for first-timers to try the sport.

Best Program to Increase Frequency of Core Participants

500,000+ skier visits

The Quad; Mountain High Resort, Calif.

Mountain High earned quite a few honors at this year's convention and wasn't forgotten in the marketing department. To increase frequency of regular skiers and snowboarders, Mountain High initiated a night program called The Quad. It capitalized on the resort's easy access and promoted visitation in the evenings after school or work. For \$59, The Quad consisted of four fully transferable adult night tickets good all season long. To fuel late-season attendance, Quad tickets

turned into eight-hour tickets on March 31, giving guests the option to visit day or night. The Quad program represented an estimated 12,000 skier visits and increased sales by 227 percent over the initial season.

250,000–500,000 skier visits

Vertical Plus and Season Pass Frequent Snowsporting Program; Sierra-at-Tahoe Snowsport Resort, Calif.

A two-time winner, Sierra-at-Tahoe's Vertical Plus and Season Pass Frequent Snowsporting Program offered core participants lift ticket discounts as well as a benefit package program. The Vertical Plus program calculated the number of vertical feet members skied or rode throughout the season, then participants redeemed their vertical feet for prizes. On specific days, participants earned 1.5 times the normal vertical feet and, on "Double Days," they earned twice the amount. The number of guests who purchased a season pass and upgraded to Vertical Plus increased by 29 percent in 2002/03. Of the program's participants, 79 percent were intermediate, advanced or expert skiers.

100,000–250,000 skier visits

Time is on Your Side; Perfect North Slopes, Ind.

The Time is on Your Side pass program was music to the ears of Perfect North patrons. With it, the resort reduced its pass program to four simple options and changed hours of operation to better suit the customer. Reducing the number of programs made it simple for guests and increased the number of total pass holders. The resort introduced the "flex ticket," which counted the total skiing time, starting when a participant got their lift ticket. The new pass system resulted in a 30 percent increase in number of pass holders. Guests upgraded to more expensive passes with greater flexibility and pass revenue grew 32 percent. By offering guests more time to use passes, ski and snowboard visits increased and related gross revenue jumped 27 percent.

0–100,000 skier visits

Ladies Ski Free Program; Mount Bohemia, Mich.

Mount Bohemia has always marketed itself as a place for backcountry and powder skiing, but this angle led few women to the slopes. So last season, the resort introduced a ladies ski free program, offered to all ages,



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all season long. At the end of the season, women comprised 33 percent of the resort's total audience; three times more than at the end of the 2001/02 season. Not surprisingly, the male audience increased by 20 percent. "Free says it all! And if you develop the young women's market, the young men will follow," said Judge Mac McMenamy.

Best Program to Grow The Sport To New Participants

500,000+ skier visits

Bounceback Program; Whitetail, Liberty and Roundtop Resorts, Pa.

Participants in the Bounceback Program purchased a First Class Learn to Ski or Snowboard package for \$15. This included a lift ticket for beginner chairs and trails, rental skis or board and a 1.5-hour group lesson. At the end of the lesson, participants received a card that provided a discounted rate of \$39 (down from \$84) for an All Mountain Package to be used on a return visit. The All Mountain Package included a ticket for all lifts and trails, rental equipment, and another group lesson. On the next visit, the guest was eligible for the free First



Dollars and Sense

SALES AND MARKETING
AWARD WINNERS TO
RECEIVE CASH IN 2004.

Now, it makes even more sense for resorts to enter their creative campaigns into the running for NSAA's annual Sales and Marketing Awards.

PepsiCo Foodservice's Frank Tansey has announced that Pepsi, which sponsors the annual awards luncheon, will honor each 2003/04 winner with a cash prize.

Ski area contacts will receive a call for entry and other information about the awards in December and, as in the past, submission deadline will fall in early March. All entries must be programs that are new to your resort this season. Good luck!

Class Advantage Card, essentially a frequent skier card. The card entitled the guest to a 40 percent discount on lift tickets and rentals each time they visited for the rest of the season. Then, every sixth visit was free with the Advantage Card. All benefits of the Bounceback Program were fully interchangeable at the three resorts. All saw a dramatic increase in beginner packages, Bouncebacks and Advantage Cards.

250,000–500,000 skier visits

Bookin' at the Basin; Arapahoe Basin, Colo.

A-Basin increased interest in ski school programs by offering season passes to local Summit County middle school kids through a literacy program called Bookin' at the Basin. Students were given a chance to earn a free season pass by reading 34 hours at home or at school. Teachers and parents kept track of the hours, and students had

twelve weeks to complete the program. During that time, the students participated in a safety assembly hosted by ski patrol. During the season, A-Basin handed out passes to 150 of 600 students, an increase of more than 50 percent from two years ago.

100,000–250,000 skier visits

Online Group Sales Program; Mad River Mountain, Ohio

Mad River created an Online Group Sales Program (OGS) to improve the quality of the customer experience and free up marketing, sales and service staff for other resort initiatives. OGS offered a completely automated group season pass sales process and rewarded the participants with cost savings and efficiency. Groups of 15 or more could book online; the more people in a group, the more they received back. The program encouraged core participants to invite new participants to

the resort. Mad River experienced a 30 percent increase in program numbers and had more than 10,000 participants.

0-100,000 skier visits

Master of the Mountain; Hidden Valley Ski Area, Md.

Master of the Mountain encouraged groups to try skiing or boarding by walking them through the learning process at a fraction of the regular season pass price. The program sought group leaders who recruited friends to receive ski passes, training and equipment. Each leader received gifts ranging from a free season pass to cash. The group leaders were provided flyers and brochures to use in recruitment efforts. Different packages consisted of the 4-Week Program, the Once-a-Week Program and the Anytime



EACH LEADER RECEIVED GIFTS

RANGING FROM A FREE SEASON

PASS TO CASH.



Club. The Master of the Mountain program was successful in capturing first time skiers. Group leaders received benefits, skiers received training, and Hidden Valley increased the number of patrons.

Transworld's 2002 Readers' Poll winners were: Mammoth Mountain, Calif. (#1 Halfpipe); Snow Summit, Calif. (#1 Snowboard Park); and Whistler/Blackcomb, Canada (#1 Overall Snowboard Resort). On hand to accept their awards were Mammoth's Pam Murphy and Snow Summit's Dick Kun.

Special thanks to PepsiCo Foodservice for sponsoring the Sales and Marketing Awards, to the resorts that sent entries, and to the judges: Anke Corbin (Mountain Sports Media), Andrew Heltzel (Livewire International), Mac McMenamy (Omni Promotional), Gaylene Nagel (Electronic Arts) and Dave Rosenberger (Quiksilver). ■

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