

Queens^W Marketing Consulting

Akron Premier League Planbook

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Akron Premier League is seeking an IMC campaign with the goals of increasing brand awareness and increasing the number of active stakeholders including players or audience members. The campaign will include a rebrand effort with a new logo which is tied to symbolically retell APL's story and a brand identity kit to help with consistency across all media platforms.

Our research found that APL's strengths include a passionate community, already established media channels, unique history and a growth mindset. However, research determined weakness of missing market opportunities, low brand recall, communication design and quality media channels.

Recommendations to strengthen the APL's brand, increase awareness, and attendance of players/audience will include a rebrand, events, merchandise, PR and social media recommendations. The new logo will tell APL's story, create movement, and will be unique in order to be memorable. The events will be low budget, family friendly, fun, exclusive and work towards fulfilling campaign objectives. Merchandise ideas of totes and stickers will increase brand awareness and create revenue for more marketing in the future. PR and social media tools will aid in getting the APL's message to the community in a consistent manner and in a channel that will provide the most benefit.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Our client, Akron Premier League, is an organization centered around providing competitive involvement to individuals, more specifically males between the ages of 17 to 35, who are passionate about the sport of soccer in the Northeast Ohio area. The Akron Premier League, APL, was founded by their President, William Antunez, and is sustained with the help of five other soccer-loving staff members. The APL has a total of eight soccer teams with a total of 136 players in the league. Their players can range from individuals who are just looking to play the game of soccer for fun to competitive, professionals. All of the APL players and staff members are from different walks of life, but are brought together by their love for the beautiful game of soccer.

The Akron Premier League's current target market is males, ages 17 to 35. Their current promotional efforts include their website, *akronpremierleague.com*, their facebook page, and posters. The APL has three main goals they want to achieve, increasing the number of players in the league, increasing brand awareness, and possibly a rebrand of the organization with a potential new slogan and logo with a budget of \$750 to \$1,000. To help achieve these goals, The Akron Premier League decided to seek help from Sydney Chinchanchokchai's Integrated Marketing Communications class at The University of Akron.

II. STATEMENTS OF RESEARCH SAMPLE, OBJECTIVES, METHODS USED AND KEY RESULTS

A. Primary Research Findings

Primary data was collected in two different ways, an online survey through Google Forms and an online interview involving two members from the Akron Premier League. An

online survey was sent out to our target market, which were potential spectators, avid soccer fans, and future APL soccer players. The online survey was sent out via text message and email link and received a total forty responses. Our survey participants were active individuals of any gender who ranged from the ages of 17 to 35. The goal of the online survey was to gain data regarding the target market's thoughts and opinions on participation. There was a total of 40 responses to the online survey. Here are some of the key insights from our online survey. Only 10 out of 40 participants were aware of the Akron Premier League. About 47.5% of survey participants say the most interesting part of the soccer game is the game itself. The majority of participants did not associate the logo image with soccer upon initial viewing. Facebook, the league's only social media presence, is survey participants' second most preferred social media platform, while Instagram was their most preferred. Less than 5.1% of survey participants found flyers and posters to be effective at capturing their attention. Lastly, 100% of participants value relationships between local teams and their communities.

The other form of primary research that was conducted was through an online interview with current Akron Premier League players. We interviewed two current APL players, Milos Kulina and Damjan Djosanovic from the team FK Gavriilo Princip. The goal of the interviews was to gather information about how to target potential players and information about how to retain current players. Examples of questions asked include: "Favorite part of being a member?" and "In your opinion, does the APL do a good job of recruiting new players?" The interviews gained us insight on what current APL players like about the organization and what the organization could do better.

a.) Highlights of the interviews

Question: "Favorite part of being a member?"

Damjan, 22: “The professionalism of the APL staff”

Milos, 20: “Meeting new players and playing the sport I love.”

Question: “If you are a returning member, what keeps you coming back every year?”

Damjan, 22: “The organization”

Milos, 20: “I keep coming back because I love playing soccer and I always will. The APL gives players an opportunity to play leisurely and competitively.”

Question: “Can you list some benefits of being a part of APL as both a player and a person?”

Damjan, 22: “More organized league which has caused less stress when needing to reschedule or cancel games.”

Milos, 20: “Met a ton of new people from all sorts of backgrounds. Made me a better team player.”

Question: “In your opinion, does the APL do a good job of recruiting new players?”

Damjan, 22: “I wouldn’t say the APL recruits new players as much as the teams, managers, and players on those teams”

Milos, 20: “I think they can do a better job. The only reason I know about this league is by word of mouth from players that play on my church team. Never heard it from anyone else.”

B. Secondary Research Findings

To gather secondary data on the Akron Premier League, we analyzed multiple different Akron Premier League channels. We looked at the APL’s website, social media, poster advertisements, and client brief. The APL’s website provides a plethora of information about the organization, the league, teams and players, and other information. The APL only utilizes one social media platform, which is Facebook. The client brief provided us with basic information

about the APL, their main goals, their target market, and our budget. These secondary data resources will allow us to suggest attainable recommendations.

III. SITUATION ANALYSIS

A. *SWOT Analysis*

The main goal of this SWOT Analysis is to identify and explain the *strengths*, *weaknesses*, *opportunities*, and *threats* for the Akron Premier League. Strengths and weaknesses focus on the internal aspects of the APL, while opportunities and threats focus on the external aspects. Strengths can be characterized as the favorable internal activities, processes, and behaviors of the company. More specifically what the company does well and what contributes to the success of the company and the brand. Weaknesses are internal disadvantages and highlight areas that need improvement. The company's goal should be to identify areas of weakness and turn them into strengths. Opportunities are external factors that can help contribute to the organization's strengths and allow them to grow their company and brand. Threats are potential problems or risks that can occur because of external factors. It is important that the APL identify these potential threats beforehand to hopefully be able to avoid them in the future.

Figure 1 is a graphical representation of our SWOT Analysis for the Akron Premier League.

Figure 1

Strengths: 1. Passionate 2. Strong Sense of Community 3. Growth Mindset 4. Established Website 5. Established Facebook Page (350 follows) 6. Unique History/Backstory	Weaknesses: 1. Limited to Male Players Excludes Female Market 2. Year-Round Social Media Maintenance 3. Brand Consistency 4. Communication Design 5. Quality of Media
Opportunities: 1. Collaborate with Local Businesses 2. Strengthening Brand Consistency Design 3. Reach New Markets for APL 4. Build Report with NEO Community 5. Get Recognized and Covered by Press 6. Tell Unique Story Behind Brand	Threats: 1. Other Existing Competitive Soccer Leagues in NEO and Substitutes 2. New Emerging Soccer Leagues 3. Changing COVID Environment 4. Seasonality

Strengths

The Akron Premier League has many different strengths that can help benefit the brand's overall success and differentiate them from their competitors. Some notable strengths include a

passionate organization filled with passionate players and staff members, as well as a strong sense of community within the organization. Everyone involved with the APL possesses a love for soccer, which allows the players and the APL staff to create an unbreakable bond. The organization has a strong sense of community because they have created a welcoming environment for individuals, who come from all different tracks of life. The APL has a growth mindset, which means they hold the belief that they learn more or “grow” if they work hard and persevere through any tough situation. The APL is open to any opportunity or idea that would help build their organization in a positive manner.

The APL has an established website and an established Facebook page with about 350 followers. Already having these two established communication channels allows the APL to be able to build their social media following, continue to increase brand awareness, and post relevant information about their organization on their website and Facebook page. Another major strength is the unique history and backstory behind the APL’s logo. The President of the APL, William Antunez, chose an owl to be the symbol of the organization because of his daughter, who loves owls. Antunez pointed out that the idea of the APL owl could be compared to a phoenix rising from the ashes. Overall, the Akron Premier League has many different internal strengths that can help them succeed in the near future.

Weaknesses

Identifying weaknesses in a SWOT analysis allows the organization to turn their weaknesses to strengths, in the future. The Akron Premier League has more strengths than weaknesses, but it’s important to still discuss the weaknesses. Their first weakness is their target market is only targeted towards males, not females. This limits the number of players they can have in their league. Other weaknesses include their social media presence and the quality of

their social media. The APL has a small social media presence because they only utilize one platform, which is Facebook. Facebook is perfect for an older audience, but the APL is trying to target individuals who are a bit younger, between the ages of 17 to 35. Brand consistency is a weakness for the APL. Currently, the APL does not have a strong brand identity established. If you go to their website, Facebook page, and look at their flyers, there is only one thing that defines them as a brand, the APL logo. The APL should have certain elements that are constant and help their brand stay consistent. The last weakness is their communication design. If you look at APL's content, they have some communication issues. Their website can be hard to navigate, and the information presented can be somewhat confusing or hard to understand. This also goes for their Facebook posts and flyers. Their social media posts are often too wordy, and their flyers are hard to look at because they are too busy. It is important that APL takes these internal weaknesses and converts them to internal strengths.

Opportunities

The Akron Premier League has many different potential external opportunities. The first opportunity being the collaboration between the APL community and business, which is the local Akron area. This opportunity can lead into a bigger opportunity, which is building a report with the Northeast Ohio area. This report would include a positive brand image for the APL, which can help spread brand awareness. There is an opportunity to strengthen their brand consistency, which means maintaining strong communication and positioning that aligns with its value and makes a brand who they are. The APL has the opportunity to reach new target markets. These new target markets could include women, individuals of an older age, or individuals of younger age such as 16. There are even bigger opportunities for the APL. The APL has the opportunity to get recognized by the press, like local newspapers, local tv news, and etc. The attention from

local Akron press could allow the APL to speak about their unique story, upbringing, and accomplishments, while still promoting their brand and recruiting more soccer enthusiasts to join the league. These opportunities could greatly benefit the APL, so it is recommended that the APL tries to accomplish all of them.

Threats

There are a couple of potential threats that can affect the Akron Premier League. The biggest threat being there are other existing competitive soccer leagues in the Northeast Ohio area like Pinnacle Sports and North Coast Soccer League. These brands have been around longer than the APL, therefore their leagues are bigger with more players and more teams. This threat can also mean that the APL can lose players to these two organizations. There is also a threat that new soccer leagues could emerge in the Northeast Ohio area and greatly affect APL's brand and business as a whole. Another threat is the constant uncertainty with COVID rules and regulations. The future with COVID is unknown, there is a possibility where the United States could shut down again; closing business, shutting down organizations, and forcing people to stay inside of their homes. The last potential threat is the seasonality with outdoor soccer. Since the APL is located in Ohio, where there are limited days with ideal outdoor soccer weather, this could pose a threat. The APL only participates in outdoor soccer, but their competitors have both outdoor soccer and indoor soccer. If the APL acknowledges these threats, then they are prepared in case one of these threats takes place.

B. Competitor Analysis

Akron Premier League has many direct competitors in the Northeast Ohio area. One direct competitor to APL is Pinnacle Sports located in Medina, Ohio. Pinnacle Sports' motto is "Developing Athletes For Life." Pinnacle Sports offers year-round soccer leagues for adults of

all ages and genders. They offer several different adult leagues, which include men, coed, and age specific.

- **Open Men's Soccer League:** Five outfield players and one goalkeeper with a minimum age of 16.
- **Men's 30+ Soccer League:** Five outfield players and one goalkeeper with a minimum age of 30. Each team is permitted to have a maximum of 2 players aged 28 or older. Players must be 28 at the time of the first game of the session.
- **Open Co-Ed Soccer League:** Six outfield players, three of which must be female, and one goalkeeper with a minimum age of 16. Goalkeeper must be male.
- **30+ Co-Ed Soccer League:** Six outfield players, three of which must be female, and one goalkeeper with a minimum age of 30. Each team is permitted to have a maximum of 2 players aged 28 or older. Players must be 28 at the time of the first game of the session. Goalkeeper must be male.

From April to October, leagues are played outdoors on our turf field and during the winter months, leagues move indoors onto two indoor fields. The Pinnacle Sport indoor soccer facility has two large (180×80) fields and one small (40×80) field in a 72,000 sq. ft. arena. If potential players are over the age of forty, they offer Men's Pickup games for males over the age of thirty. These games are a perfect way to stay involved in the game and play with like-minded individuals in a non-competitive environment. Pinnacle Sports utilizes multiple communication channels to help promote their business. Pinnacle Sports has a website, Facebook page, Instagram, and Twitter account. Pinnacle Sports' website, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are all up to date, well-organized, and filled with a plethora of easy-to-understand information about all of the different soccer leagues.

The other direct competitor to Akron Premier League is North Coast Soccer League (NCSL) located in Cleveland, Ohio. The North Coast Soccer League was founded in 1982 and has been the premier adult soccer organization in the Northeast Ohio area for the past 39 years. The NCSL has over 500 players from 30 member clubs and offers four divisions of competition: Men's Under 23, Men's Open, Men's Over 30, and Women's Open. They offer both indoor and outdoor soccer leagues for people to participate. The NCSL only offers two communication channels, a NCSL website and Facebook page. Both the website and Facebook page are extremely out to date with limited information. The website was last updated in 2019 and is missing a lot of important information that is essential to people looking to join a soccer league. The schedule tab on the website only has schedules for 2019 Under 23, 2019 Open Outdoor, 2019 Over 30 Outdoor, and 2019 Indoor. They have no information about their history, and the only thing under that specific tab is "coming soon." North Coast Soccer League is still a strong competitor to the Akron Premier League.

IV. CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

A. Target Audience

Our team established two different target audiences to help increase brand awareness. The primary target audience identified for Akron Premier League are males between the ages of 17 to 35, who live within a 30-mile radius of Akron. This is considered the primary target audience because this is the main goal the APL needed help achieving, which is increasing the number of players in the league. Therefore, the target audience would be males within the previous mentioned age range. The target audience is directed towards males, who live an active and healthy lifestyle, enjoy being a part of a team, and work well with others to achieve an end

goal. Another important characteristic of the target audience is that the individual must have some experience and knowledge about the game of soccer. The target audience are males, who are either very serious and competitive about soccer or looking to play for fun.

The secondary target audience for Akron Premier League are individuals, who will come to the APL games as spectators or fans. Out of 40 survey participants 33 individuals of all genders (82.5%) said they would consider themselves soccer fans. Therefore, the target audience for spectators and people attending the games are individuals of all ages and genders. Important characteristics include individuals who enjoy watching the sport of soccer and enjoy community involvement.

B. Marketing Objectives

Akron Premier League's overall goal is to increase the number of players in the league, the number of people attending the soccer games, and increasing the overall brand awareness. This marketing campaign is designed to be sustainable for many years, with a strong focus on the first year of the campaign, from January 2022 through December 2022. The organization currently has 136 players, so the goal is to have 200 players or more players by the end of the campaign's first year. To reach this goal, the organization should see an average of 5 - 10 new players per month. The campaign should mainly focus on previously stated target markets, which are active males, ages 17 -35, and within a 30-mile radius of Akron. The organization also only has a small number of people attending the games, so the goal is to see a large increase in the number of people attending the games. Another marketing objective is creating a steady revenue stream, where the APL can continue to increase their marketing budget yearly. This will allow the APL to grow their campaigns, branch out into other marketing channels, and overall, just increase their brand awareness. The last marketing objective is for APL to gain a following on

different social media channels, such as Facebook and Instagram, with basic social media campaigns. In our survey, 37.5% of participants said they use Instagram the most and 27.5% of participants said they use Facebook the most.

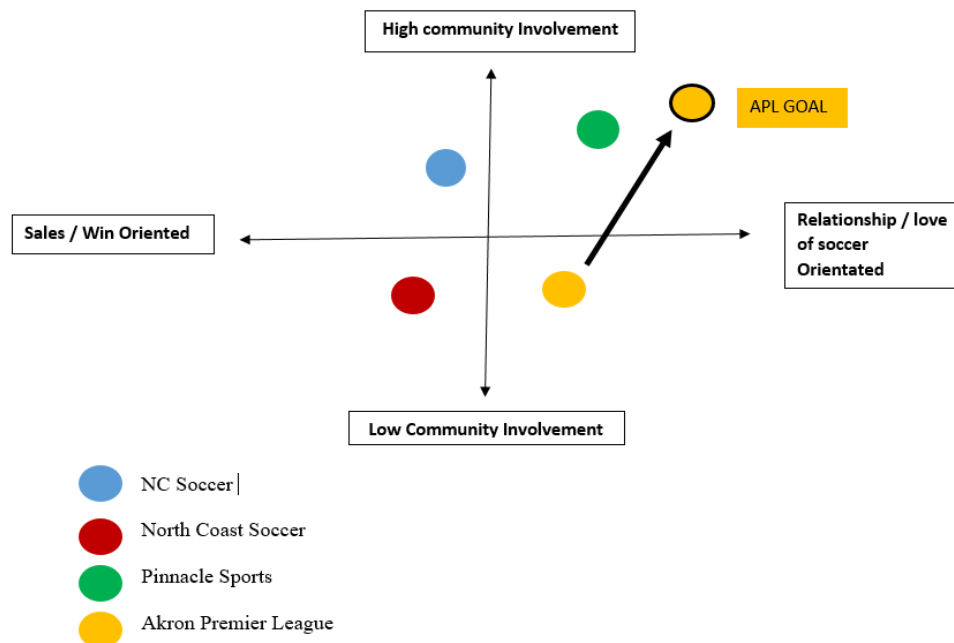
C. Communication Objectives

Akron Premier League's main area of communication that needs improvement is increasing their brand awareness. More specifically focusing on multiple different social media platforms to help promote their brand and help improve their communication to specific target markets. An important communication objective for the APL is enhancing their Facebook page by constantly promoting their organization, creating attention-getting posts, and having easy to find, updated information. Like previously stated, 27.5% of participants said they use Facebook the most. Another important objective is creating an Instagram to help promote APL. The majority of our survey participants, ages 17 -35, said that Instagram is their most used social media platform at 37.5%. Creating an Instagram will allow the APL to reach a larger target audience than they previously have reached. The last communication objective is focusing their attention on the APL website. The website is where individuals will go to seek information about the APL, so it is imperative that the information is correct, up to date, and promoting the positive aspects of the organization.

V. CREATIVE STRATEGY STATEMENT

Our team designed a creative strategy that will enhance the APL's relationships within the team and the Akron community. In creating this strategy, we utilized the team's strongest attributes and results of our data collection. The APL presents and prides itself as a league with players from all walks of life that share a love for the game. In addition, 100% of all our survey

takers agree that they value a team's relationship with its community. Much like the APL, Akron's community is full of people from all backgrounds. By combining the APL's strong attributes with Akron community pride, we believe that our team can both enhance brand awareness and target new audiences of both potential players and fans. In order to kick start this brand revamp, our team suggests use of a APL hashtag (such as #APLTogether) throughout all forms of media. Through emphasizing community pride and spirit, our team believes we can set The APL aside from other leagues. Below we have provided a perceptual map that displays both current standing and where we believe our team can put the APL compared to competitors.



● NC Soccer: The website homepage shows community sponsors such as Akron Children's Hospital. In addition, the website also advertises a plethora of sporting products for sale and space rental.

 North Coast Soccer: The website has tabs for team standings, but little to no information about players outside of their stats. The website also has a sponsor tab, but only leads to a form to become a sponsor.

 Pinnacle Sports: The website lists many local Akron sponsors. Additionally, the mission statement highlights character development and a welcoming community. This makes Pinnacle Sports the APL's strongest competitor.

 Akron Premier League: Currently, The APL's website showcases individual players, which shows pride and support for each player as an individual. The mission statement is also displayed and highlights the league's love of soccer and diverse personalities that make joining the team a great experience.

As mentioned, the APL has several strong attributes that we would like to emphasize in our strategy. The league contains players from all walks of life that value both the game and relationships formed because of it. By connecting the APL with the experience of being part of a prideful community, our team believes transformational advertising will encourage viewers to want to learn more about the league. Advertisements, both online and physical, should utilize emotional appeals such as community spirit and sentiment. A new logo was designed as a possible new storytelling element to raise brand awareness. (See Appendix A). A custom brand identity kit was created to help with creation of all media and design. (See Appendix B) Our team has created a video advertisement for recruiting players that highlights community, relationships, and the love of soccer: <https://youtu.be/hVlJoxxbwVc> .

VI. IMC RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the initial data gathered from our research we have determined that our theme should be “community connection”. The research we gathered showed one consistency from all who had participated in our online questionnaire, and that was that 100% of participants thought it was important for sports teams to support their communities. This theme is central to all of our campaign recommendations.

A. Event Planning/ Event Sponsorship

Objective

For Event Planning/Event Sponsorship we suggest 2 larger events, 3 event fundraisers, and 5 smaller events throughout a 12-month time period. According to our initial research we gathered from the online questionnaire the majority of participants said they were more likely to attend a game that consisted of more than just the game itself. Examples listed in the survey questions included charity fundraiser, side events, cook outs, and games for fans. These events correspond with the marketing objective to increase players joining APL, as well as increasing brand awareness and building rapport with the northeast Ohio community.

Strategy

A suggested strategy for all of the events large, medium, or small would be to form partnerships with different organizations known in the Northeast Ohio community. The goal would be to spread more information about the APL, but also have the APL start building relationships with the community as a whole. Holding meaningful special events targeting specific groups can not only get the APL some instant interest but inspire a long-term growth for the organization. During the events if a prospect shows interest in the APL, we also recommend having informational tools ready to help the prospect learn more or take action. Interconnecting

with the sales promotion recommendation we would also recommend that APL should have APL merchandise available for purchase at the events, to help spread brand awareness.

Tactics

2 large events

Future APL Player Event- This event would target students who are in middle school and high school. It might not bring in many immediate players, but it would let young soccer enthusiasts know the APL is a good option when they graduate and are looking to join a soccer league. At this event there will be information about the APL handed out and future APL players will have an opportunity to mingle with current APL players. This will cost \$150 for a Copley Park Pavillion venue that can hold up to 80 people. We also recommend APL to buy 4 large Marco's Pizzas for \$51.96 and 65 cans of pop for \$30.67 from Bjs.com.

Family and Friends Day- This event would encourage APL stakeholders to invite their friends and family that might not be as familiar with APL to a fun picnic event. This will cost \$150 for a Copley Park Pavilion venue that can hold up to 80 people. We also recommend APL to buy 4 large Marco's Pizzas for \$51.96 and 65 cans of pop for \$30.67 from Bjs.com.

3 Event Fundraisers

Chipotle offers the option to do a fundraising night for local organizations. 33% of the sales made that night will go to the APL to generate additional revenue according to the Chipotle website (2021).

Krispy Kreme offers a program for sports teams to sell donuts and keep 50% of their profits. The APL could hold an event where community members could come together to buy Krispy Kreme donuts to help raise money for the APL according to the Krispy Kreme website (2021).

Event Banner Sponsor would ask local businesses to sponsor a banner which will be shown at an APL sponsor appreciation recreational soccer game. All of the local organizations' banners will be hung and displayed and the different businesses' employees that sponsored the event can have a chance to join a soccer team for the day. A 1.7 X 3 banner off VistaPrint (2001-2021) costs \$11.78 so APL would ask sponsors for \$25 to make their banner and could add 1 employee to the game.

5 small events

After Game Cookout would be a small picnic type event with hotdogs and beverages for around 40 people. We recommend APL purchase the food items from Bjs.com all together with food, drink, and paper products it would cost around \$75.29.

Game Day would be very basic but fun for APL fans. It would happen after an APL game, and it would consist of fun games that fans could play with the soccer players. There would be small prizes to win with a chance to win. Prizes will be 16 soccer bracelets and 15 keychains bought from Amazon for \$23.99.

Akron Charity 50/50 Raffle would be an in-game event where the APL will sell 50/50 raffle tickets to help support a relevant charity. During half time the 50/50 winner will be announced and APL will give the winner 50% of the proceeds and give the charity the other 50% of the proceeds. The cost of 200 tickets off of Amazon would be \$5.75 and the goal would be to sell 100 tickets with 1 ticket at \$3 or 2 tickets for \$5. If the goal is met, APL will have between \$125-\$150 to donate to a local charity.

Mini Soccer Players Day would be after the APL game. Kids who are fans can have a small meet and greet with APL players and would have a chance to learn cool professional soccer tricks from APL soccer players.

Honoring Military Day would be a day that military members would be honored at half time at an APL soccer game.

B. Digital/Social Media

Objective

For social media recommendations, we suggest maintaining the current Facebook account in addition to opening up a new social media channel by creating an Instagram account. These social channels correspond with our communication objectives and focus on APL's ability to keep its community members up to date, as well as, receive feedback from them with two way communication. The purpose to why these two social media platforms should be focused on specifically is that Instagram scored as the most popular social media channel, and Facebook scored as the second most popular social media channel according to our research. We believe putting focus on these two channels will prove the most effective for APL to build a good communication channel and help them grow their community.

Strategy

As an overall strategy for both social media platforms we intend to share updated information/news related to APL, promote special events, collaborate with other local organizations, and create opportunities for fans to get involved in content creation. As to strategic planning of the scheduling of the posts we recommended every time a new post is created to not post it simultaneously to both platforms. In order to create long term success and growth your post content and timing must be preplanned and with purpose. If executed correctly, this can help your fanbase, engagement, and rapport with stakeholders grow.

Instagram

When sharing content on Instagram we recommend focusing more on creating a two way communication with stakeholders side of the objective. (See Appendix C) The reasoning for this is according to our secondary research Hootsuite (Newberry, 2021) 81% of Instagram users use Instagram to research products and services. Therefore, for the message of the content posted on the platform it might be more beneficial to focus on APL's brand and stakeholder relationship building.

Facebook

When sharing content to Facebook we recommend focusing more on the news and information sharing with the community side of the objective. (See Appendix D) According to Hootsuite (Newberry, 2021) and our secondary research 36% of people get their news from Facebook. Therefore, having APL's Facebook aesthetic be more geared towards posting communication and news/information might be more impactful.

Tactics

Some tactics can be used interchangeably between Facebook and Instagram, but in this situation, we will be recommending the primary uses on each media platform.

Instagram

From a tactical perspective Instagram should be more heavily reliant on posting media such as photos and short videos as content and focus less words. As it applies to the APL for primary content posting, we recommend posting photos/videos with players playing soccer, players in group photos, players selfies, and photos of fans/APL community members supporting their teams. For the occasional secondary content, we suggest posting APL related photos/videos with graphic overlays for special announcements. Another way the APL could utilize Instagram is with hashtags and stories. To encourage users' engagement and feedback APL could use

stories to encourage an action from an APL community member, for example through a survey or to go to their website to RSVP for an event. APL could also get their stakeholders to share APL related content by designing specific hashtags for specific events, causes, or campaigns. As for Instagram, the prime day and time to post is Tuesdays 11 a.m., but Tuesdays from 11 a.m.-2p.m. and Monday-Friday at 11 a.m. are also good options. It is also recommended to avoid posting on Sundays when using Instagram (Arens, 2021).

Facebook

From a tactical perspective Facebook should use a balance of photo, video, and moderate to heavy amount of writing. As it applies to APL, we recommend the primary content posted to Facebook should be photos accompanied by a more detailed news/informational caption. Secondary content could be infographics and videos with a less detailed description and perhaps a link to another page. Facebook also has stories which can be used to share news, make announcements, or redirect to another site to share more information with the viewer. Some examples of Facebook posts APL could do is a meet a player post each month, a player takes a good photo with a small bio on themselves, a game/event coming up, or an announcement if they win a game with a victory photo. We also suggest that APL works on filling in more brand information on the about section of their Facebook page. One other example of facebook tactic recommended is to produce a commercial which can also double as a traditional media commercial but would be primarily used for a commercial post to Facebook. According to our secondary research the best times to post on Facebook are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., and avoid posting on Saturdays (Arens, 2021).

Tool Recommendations:

1. Animoto (2021) can be used as a user-friendly method to turn average content into a professional looking message. The best part is Animoto offers a free plan that APL could take advantage of, and if APL finds value in the free content later down the road there are options to upgrade.
2. Hootsuite (2021) is an online social media management tool. In Hootsuite you are able to schedule out social media posts months in advance, measure your account analytics, promote posts, and more. There is a free version of Hootsuite that APL could use to preschedule their posts, and if they like what Hootsuite has to offer there are upgrade options. There is even an online Hootsuite Certification if training would be helpful to an APL staff who wanted to learn how to do in house social media management.

C. Publicity and Public Relations

Objective

Our publicity and public relation recommendation is to use a news release to earn publicity by having press cover/report on events. We recommend APL primarily focus on local newspapers. The reason we chose this channel is because it is a more personable option to build up trust and respect on a local community level. The news release will correspond with the event planning/event sponsorship recommendation. (See Appendix E) This recommendation also connects to the marketing objective to raise brand awareness within the Northeast Ohio community and indirectly get more players in hopes people will experience the publicity for one of the large events, hopefully making more people want to attend.

Strategy

The strategy would be to find which media outlets would connect most with our target market and the Northeast Ohio community. We would strategically time when to send out news

releases to maximize the chances of getting the event covered. The media outlets that are reached out to for each event might differ depending on the relevance of the angle to be newsworthy for the journalist/media person. Specifically, we recommend sending out at least one news release for the future APL player event.

Tactics

Akron Beacon Journal- We suggest sending out a news release 1-2 weeks in advance and sending them to Brad Bournival, the freelance journalist that works for the Akron Beacon Journal. The reason this journalist was chosen is because it appears he has a sports beat. (Beat means the theme that a journalist writes to) If you look at his past content, he has covered soccer specifically several times both on a high school and college level. Because this event features students within the high school age range you could pitch this event from that angle to increase chances of being covered.

Brad Bournival Contact information: bournival929@gmail.com

D. Sales Promotions

Objective

Our recommendation for sales promotion was to create a tote bag with an APL logo design on it and a car sticker with an APL logo design on it and the words “Akron Premier League” underneath the logo. (See Appendix F) The sale of these APL branded merchandise serves two purposes as it relates to our marketing objectives. The first is to spread APL brand awareness around the Northeast Ohio community, and the second is to generate a new stream of revenue to be integrated into next year's marketing budget which will create more opportunity for the APL brand to grow. How we suspect this will work is people will buy the merchandise

which generates the revenue for the APL, and then people will use the merchandise they bought which will then be seen by others and the knowledge of the APL brand spreads.

Strategy

Our strategy for both are interconnected with our event planning/event sponsorship recommendation and our digital/social media recommendation. We recommend having the APL merchandise available at the events, so if an attendee wants one, they can buy it instantly. We also recommend making a few social media posts to bring awareness to the merchandise and as another avenue for customers to buy one of the APL products. It is also recommended to use the term “Limited Edition” when describing the bags and stickers. This is because they are of a limited quantity, and by using those words the buyer's urgency perception increases because they don't want to miss out on buying the product.

Tactics

Tote bags

For the production of the tote bags, we recommend using VistaPrint (2021) Medium Promotional Tote Bag. The production cost is \$2.75 per bag when you order 50 bags, and the total cost for bags would come out to about \$137.50. We recommend selling each tote bag for the price of \$10 which will make you a \$7.25 profit on each bag sold. When you sell all 50 bags you will make a total bag profit of \$362.50. The goal would be to sell out within 12 months meaning 4-5 tote bags would need to be sold per month. An example to promote sales throughout the year APL could do is ask APL stakeholders who have bought the bag to share a photo on Instagram with #APLTOTE or hold an APL tote bag photo contest where the winner gets featured on the Instagram page.

Car Stickers

For the production of the car stickers, we recommend using CARSTICKERS's 3X3 9 square inch car sticker. The production cost is \$1.04 per sticker when you buy 100 stickers, and the total cost for stickers would come out to be about \$104.00. We recommend selling each car sticker for \$5 which gives you a profit of \$3.96 per sticker sold. When you sell all 100 stickers you will have made a total car sticker profit of \$396. The goal would be to sell out within 12 months meaning 8-9 car stickers would need to be sold per month. An example to promote sales throughout the year APL could do is ask APL stakeholders who have bought the car sticker to enter in an Instagram contest with #TAKEAPLEVERYWHERE with a photo and short story of where they have traveled with their APL car sticker. The contest winner could win a meet and greet with their favorite APL player.

All Products

All together the total cost to make merchandise would be \$241.50, the total revenue made would be \$1000, the profit after subtracting costs would be \$758.50. Assuming merchandise sold out that would mean APL would have an additional \$758.50 to add to next year's marketing budget. People who purchased APL merchandise would use it therefore others would see the APL brand/ logo both virtually and in person. The exposures would contribute to brand awareness and growth in the community.

VII. MEDIA PLANNING STRATEGY

A. Timeline/Media schedule

After evaluating the results of our survey, we concluded that Instagram was the most popular social media platform. Therefore, we recommend creating an account to keep APL fans in the know. APL can use this platform to post game schedules, results, events, and more. Additionally, starting as soon as possible will give APL more time to build rapport with its

fanbase and the northeast Ohio community. To utilize social media to its fullest extent, we recommend you post twice a week and on a consistent schedule, this way fans will know when to expect the next APL update. (See Appendix G)

The next step APL can take is to get featured in local newspapers/newsletters. This is a really great way to reiterate the importance “community” has on your organization, and it will also keep northeast Ohio up to date on the APL’s daily doings. By writing a news release and sending it to local newspapers and newsletters, you can get featured for free.

At the start of the next season, we recommend APL then begin having small events and fundraisers throughout the season. We recommend two large scale events: Family and Friends Day, where the APL will host a picnic in a local park and the community can come play soccer and learn about the organization, and Future APL Players Day where younger children can come and play with the professionals. Secondly, there should be three fundraisers each season. We really want to embrace a sense of community between APL and northeast Ohio, specifically the Akron area. The first fundraiser event would be a local Chipotle night. It is free to partner with a local store for fundraising, and it gets your name out there. Secondly, you can sell Krispy Kreme donuts and keep 50% of your proceeds. Lastly, sponsors can purchase a banner to be designed and displayed. This will increase support for the organization and increase merchandise sales.

We also recommend organizing five small scale events for the APL. These would occur during or after game times and would be low cost. Host an after-game cookout to encourage patrons to stick around and learn more about the APL and about joining it. One night can be game night, where people go out on the field, compete in games, and win small prizes. Host a charity raffle night where you sell raffle tickets and the winner of the drawing gets 50% of the profits, and the other half goes to a local charity. Mini soccer players night is completely free,

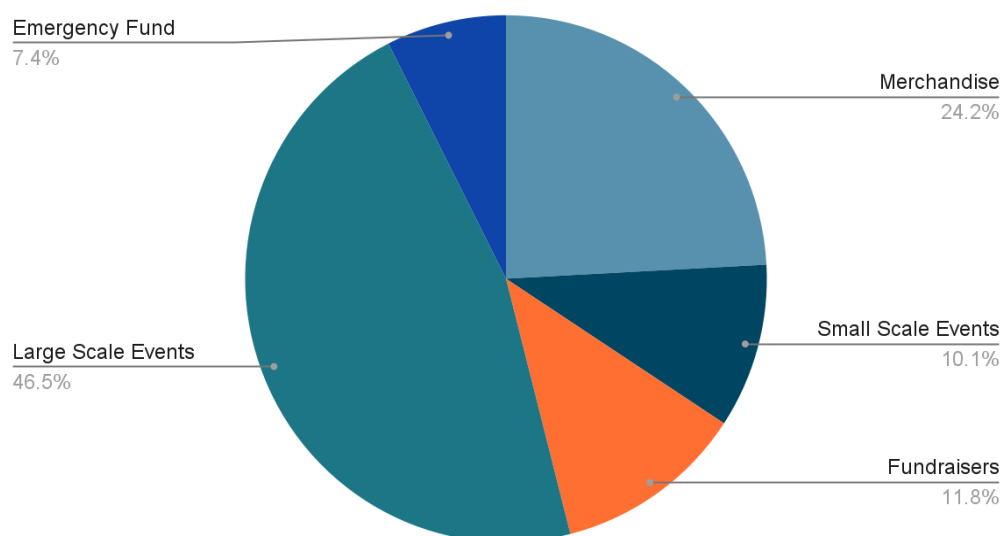
and the team will kick around with little kids after a game to encourage them to follow the APL and join when they are older. Lastly, at halftime during one game, the APL can honor the military, and this is also entirely free.

We also recommend that APL have merchandise to sell by the start of next season. Having a table or two full of new Akron Premier League merchandise at the first game is a great way to kick off a new season. Announcements should be made throughout the games directing patrons to the merchandise tables to check out the new ways to support the team and learn about fan contests featuring the gear they buy.

VIII. CAMPAIGN BUDGET

The budget allocated for this campaign was \$750-\$1000 (See Appendix H). All of the \$1,000 budget was utilized, and the chart above shows how the budget was broken down. As for the APL merchandise, the car stickers cost \$104.00 to produce and the tote bags cost \$137.50. This makes a total of \$241.50 towards merchandise advertising.

Annual Budget Breakdown



The five small scale advertising events total \$101.00. The after-game cookout supplies will cost \$75.29, split up as follows: Artstyle 6.75" Paper Plates- White \$6.99, Sprite 7.5-oz. Cans, 30 pk \$12.99, Heinz Ketchup, Mustard and Relish Picnic Pack, 4 pk./118oz. \$7.99, Wellsley Farms Hot Dog Rolls, 16 ct. \$8.07, Ball Park Beef Hot Dogs. 24 ct. \$15.98, Coca-Cola, 35 pk. 12 oz. cans \$12.99 (Bj's). This is enough to feed 40 people and can be purchased off BJs.com.

For the game day event, a \$23.99 (Amazon) assorted prizes pack can be bought off of Amazon.com (2021). Some of the Emergency Funds could be allocated here if APL wanted to provide food at this event.

The Akron charity 50/50 raffle will cost \$5.79 (Amazon) The only expense for this event is a roll of raffle tickets, which can be purchased off Amazon.com. This is an excellent and cheap way of bringing the community closer by donating 50% of the raffle revenue to a local charity. Mini soccer players day is entirely free. Children are invited to come and play soccer with the professionals after a match to encourage them to follow APL and join when they are older. The last small event would be a Military night where the APL will honor the military and veterans during halftime. This is also a completely free community event.

We recommend three fundraiser events equally spaced throughout the season. The first is Chipotle night. It is free to partner with a local store, it gets your name out in the community, and you keep some of the proceeds. Next, the APL can sell Krispy Kreme donuts. Again, it is free to partner with the company, and you can keep 50% of whatever profits you make. Lastly, you can sell banners to sponsors. They would cost about \$12 to make and you could sell up to 10 to keep your expenses at \$117.80. We recommend selling these banners at the merchandise table during one game.

For the two large-scale events we have Future APL Players Day, which is an all-day picnic event in a local park where high schoolers and children can come play soccer with current APL players. It would cost \$232 for the event; \$150 of that to book the venue, \$51.96 for four large pizzas from Marco's, and 65 cans of soda from BJs.com for \$30.67. We also recommended a Family and Friends Day. \$150 to rent out the local park, and the same food costs as the previous event, APL players can invite their family and friends to this cookout to just enjoy a day of togetherness and soccer. This leaves \$74.44 leftover of the \$1,000 budget that can be allocated to any of the recommended events or can be put to use any way the APL sees best fit.

IX. METHOD OF EVALUATION

Our team has three main objectives for our campaign; increase brand awareness, brand recognition and participation. These objectives align with the goals of the APL: increase players in the league, increase attendees, and increase brand awareness (possible rebrand).

Our research shows that awareness of the APL's brand is lower than we would like across target markets we collected data from. In order to accurately test if our strategy is working several months from now, a survey with the same target audience characteristics as our previous one should be sent out. If APL brand awareness increases by a significant number as we expect, it can be concluded that our strategy for increasing brand awareness was a success.

A significant number of our survey takers showed interest in joining the league if further information were to be provided. Through utilization of advertisements such as the one we

provided; we expect the amount of APL players to grow. The success of these advertisements can be seen if the number of APL members increases 10% or more six months from now.

Our interview data found that current APL players see value in the strong relationships developed by joining the league both with other players and the league's staff. In addition, 100% of survey takers value relationships between teams and their communities. If our brand revamp theme of community is working, we should see turnout at APL games and/or future promotional events.

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Appendix

A. Logos



B. Brand Identity Kit

Akron Premier League Brand Identity Kit

APL Logos



APL Color Palette



Black

RGB Color ID:
Red:0 Green:0 Blue:0



APL Red

RGB Color ID:
Red:225 Green:0 Blue:6



APL Blue

RGB Color ID:
Red:0 Green:27 Blue:225



APL Yellow

RGB Color ID:
Red:255 Green:243 Blue:0

APL Typefaces

Informational

Primary Font

Times New Roman-Normal
Times New Roman-Bold

Formal Font

Merriweather-Normal
Merriweather-Bold

Marketing

Simple Font

Comfortaa-Normal
Comfortaa-Bold

Powerful Font

STENCIL-NORMAL
STENCIL-BOLD

APL Brand Personality

APL's Voice should portray positivity and express love for the game of soccer. Using the #APLTogether shows the strong connections and bonds that the APL organization creates internally and externally. By using this hashtag among all medias when announcing an accomplishment displays pride for APL as an organization, but also pride for the Northeast Ohio community.

C. Instagram Content

akron_premier_leag...



6 Posts90 Followers0 Following

Akron Premier League Project

Edit Profile



AKRON_PREMIER_LEAGUE

Posts



akron_premier_league

#APLTOTE

45 minutes ago

akron_premier_league

1 hour ago

AKRON_PREMIER_LEAGUE

Posts



akron_premier_league

#APLTogether

3 hours ago

akron_premier_league

11 seconds ago

AKRON_PREMIER_LEAGUE

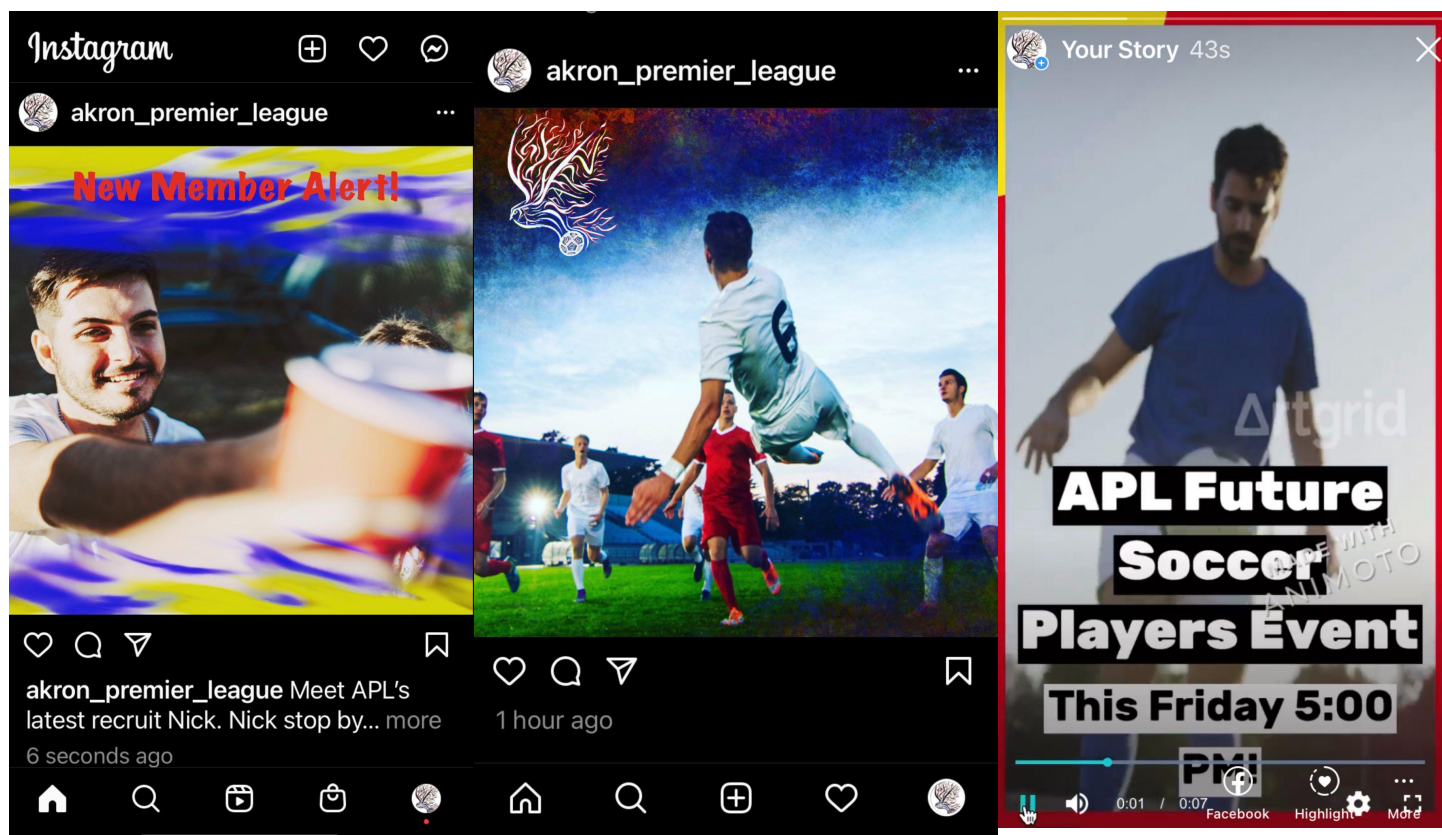
Posts



akron_premier_league

#TAKEAPLEVERYWHERE

1 hour ago



D. Facebook Content



Akron Premier League



photo.

Oct 10, 2021 · 🌐

Update: After the first game of the season, a small cook out event is going to be held in celebration of the new season! There will be hotdogs, beverages, and soccer lovers at the event. A perfect recipe for fun, if you ask us. 🤗🎉⚽🌭

Please RSVP if you plan to attend as spots are limited.
Contact: Name at XXX-XXX-XXXX

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share



Akron Premier League
photo.



Oct 10, 2021 · 🌐



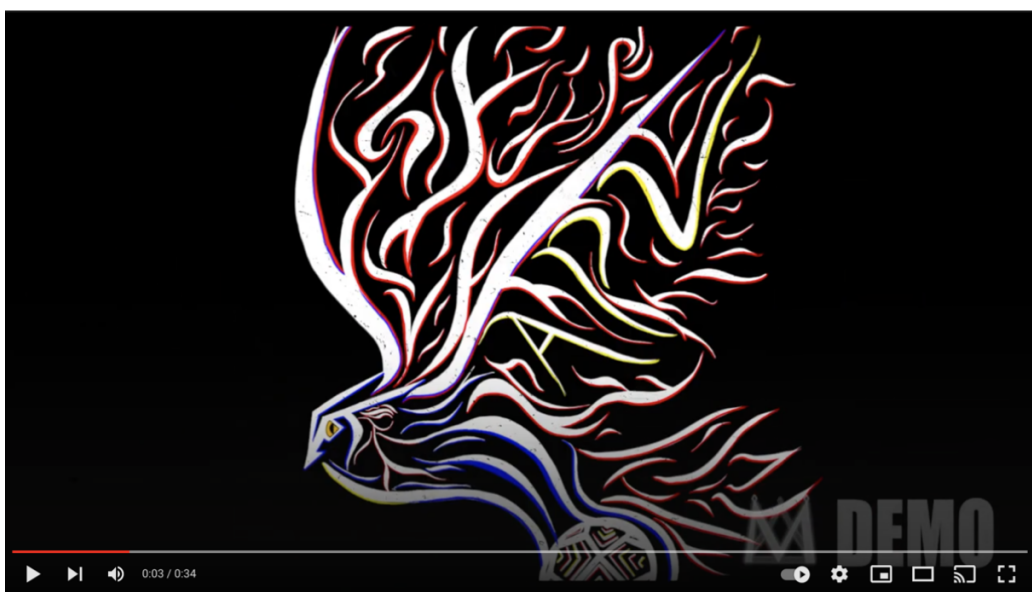
👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share



Akron Premier League
photo.



Oct 10, 2021 · 🌐



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

E. News Release Examples



Akron Premier League

Address

City, State Zip

Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXX

For Immediate Release or For Release on Date

Media Contact: Name of Media Person

Phone: XXX-XXX-XXX

E-mail: Example@gmail.com

Akron Premier League Holds Event for Aspiring Young Soccer Player (Head)

A chance for kids in grades 6-12 who have an interest in soccer to be mentored for a day by an APL soccer player. (Subhead)

AKRON, Ohio – Oct. 1, 2021 – This is your lead try your best to make it no more than three sentences. The lead should contain your key message and newsworthy angle. If an event release contains most relevant event information. (who, what, where, when, why, how)

“This is the quote paragraph, and should always be the second paragraph,” (Title at Organization), (First Name) (Last Name) said, “This quote usually comes from someone in a leadership position and the only part of the release that should show strong emotion.”

You can add additional information about the event in the following paragraphs. You should have the more important information at the top of the release, and less important information towards the end.

Usually, you can include the greater details of the who, what, where, when, why, and how in these paragraphs. It is also important to try to write as factual as possible in these paragraphs. **DON'T GIVE OPINION STATEMENT!**

If you are including any sort of number, state, city, or time you can google AP style rules to help you seem like a professional PR person. AP style rules are important to journalists and can help your story get chosen over others if used.

“This can be a second quote, but is not required, and usually comes from a person who is not leadership in the organization,” (First Name) (Last Name), (Title) said.

This is your closing paragraph where you come to a conclusion in the news release.

About the Akron Premier League

This is called a boiler plate your organization most relevant information goes here. This could include your founding, mission, and any awards or achievements your organization might have. Also always put your website link at the end. <http://akronpremierleague.com/>

(End Signal)

F. Sales Promotion Examples

Help is here.
1.866.207.4955

My Account

Cart

All Products

Holiday Cards & Gifts

Holiday for Business

Business Cards

Marketing Materials

Signs & Banners

Invitations & Stationery

Clothing & Bags

Promotional Products

Labels & Stickers

Digital Marketing

Design Services

Trending Now

Deals

Review Your Promotional Tote Bag - Medium - Black

Front - [View Larger](#) | [Edit](#)

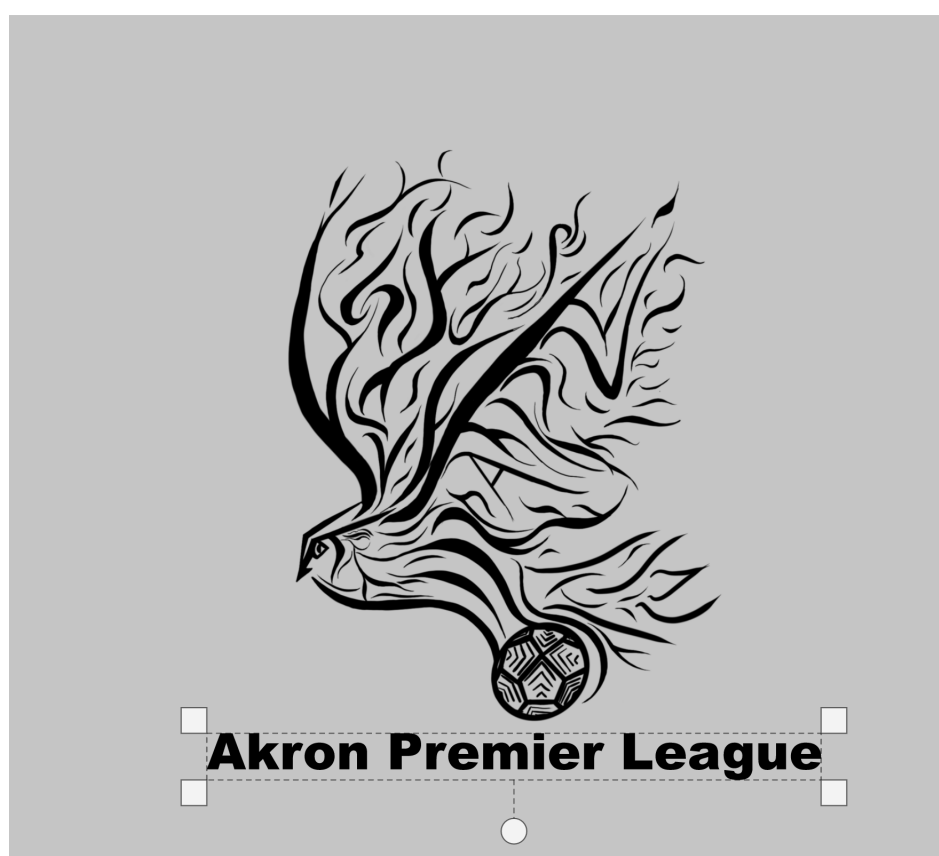


Things to check for:

- Text size is legible and color stands out against background
- Nothing is overlapping or too close to the margins
- Information is accurate and spelled correctly
- Images are clear and don't appear blurry

☒ I have reviewed and approve my design.

Next



G. Media Timeline



Media Plan

Social Media Plan: Facebook & Instagram

- **Preseason:** January - March (1-2 times); **April** (2 - 3 times)
 - Promoting Small Events, Fundraisers, **Recruiting New Players & Coaches**
- **In-Season:** May - September (2 - 3 times)
 - Winning Teams, Top Players of the Week
 - Events: Friends & Family and Future APL Player
- **Post-Season:** October - December (1 - 2 times)
 - Reflection on the year, Events, and Fundraisers

News Release

- **Follows the Future APL Player Event**
 - Written By The APL
 - No Cost

H. Budget Breakdown

Merchandise	Cost	Percentage of Budget	2 Large Scale Events		
Merchandise (Tote Bags)	\$137.50		Family & Friends Day (venue)	\$150	
Merchandise (Car Stickers)	\$104.00		4 Large Marco's Pizza's	\$51.96	
Total Merchandise	\$241.50	24%	65 Soda Cans BJ's	\$30.67	
5 Small Scale Events			Total Family & Friends Day	\$232.63	
After Game Cookout (Prizes)	\$23.99		Future APL Player Event (venue)	\$150	
(Food & Beverage)	\$65.01		4 Large Marco's Pizza's	\$51.96	
In-Game Raffle #1	\$6.00		65 Soda Cans BJ's	\$30.67	
In-Game Raffle #2	\$6.00		Total Future APL	\$232.63	
Mini Soccer Players Day	\$ -		Total Large Scale Events	\$465.26	47%
Military Night	\$ -				
Total Small Scale Events	\$101.00	10%			
3 Fundraisers			TOTAL ADVERTISING COSTS	\$925.56	93%
Chipotle Night	\$ -				
Krispy Kreme Sales	\$ -				
Event Banner Sponsors (\$11.78 each)	\$117.80		Leftover Emergency Fund	\$74.44	7%
Total Fundraisers	\$117.80	12%			