

4-1-2009

Public Relation planning to increase Attendance Rate of Athletic Events

Jian Liang

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**Public Relation planning to increase
Attendance Rate of Athletic Events**

Jian Liang

**An Internship paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the**

Master of Public Administration

Kennesaw State University

May Fourth, 2009

Executive Summary

Kennesaw State University (KSU) is the third-largest university in the University System of Georgia with nearly 20,000 commuter and residential students, including more than 1,700 from 136 countries and the needs of the students are multiple. Athletic sports and events is an important part of daily life of college student and Athletic Department plays a critical role in all organization of KSU. Athletic Department of KSU is an excellent department with a long history, KSU played in NCAA Division I since 2004. The requirement of development will be increased along with strong competition in the University System of Georgia. The attendance rate of the athletic events is a symbol for organizational attraction. Further more increase attendance rate is a measure to improve the reputation of the athletic department. In my paper, I will focus on how to communicate with the publics, audiences and objectives to increase the attendance rate and improve the reputation of Athletic Department. Management by Object (MBO) in Public Relation field is the theoretical basis for my planning. I will analyze the situation of Attendance Rate of basketball game in KSU, and through MBO model to provide the suggestions to improve the Attendance Rate. I believe that communicate with audiences and key publics is the important technique to understand what the needs of audiences are and that will direct us on how to implement the policy to meet the needs and achieve the objectives. However, besides communication planning, many other factors will also influence on Attendance Rate for athletic events; some suggestions will be provided from different angle and aspects of Public Administration at the last.

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My Career Interests

I use to work for a public college as a teacher and basketball coach with major of Physical Education in China. Now, I have opportunity to studied Public Administration in Kennesaw State University (KSU). Be honest, I very interesting in this major, and benefit a lot from each class. In the spring semester, I fortunately got a chance to do my internship in Athletic Department of KSU. This is a satisfactory job, and it is valuable for me to compare what are the differences between Chinese public school and American public school in operation and development of athletic aspect. It is a valuable opportunity to let me combine the knowledge of Physical Education and Public Administration in practice.

Introduction of Athletic Department

History of Athletic in KSU

“Fighting Owls” and “Lady Owls” represent Kennesaw State University’s men’s and women’s sports teams, and the school mascot is Scrappy (the fighting Owls). KSU use to play in Division II in NCAA called Peach Belt Conference before 2005. Through the struggle in last several years, KSU has passed the evaluation of NCAA on aspect of Academic, Compliance and Equality and sports and play in Division I (Atlantic Sun Conference) of NCAA which totally has 347 colleges since 2005-2006 seasons. The basketball program is the biggest program in KSU, and KSU takes special pride in those athletic program and its several athletic facilities on campus. In the past of Division II of NCAA, they won the National Championships include: Baseball (1996), Men's Basketball (2004), Cheerleading (2004, 2005), Women's

Soccer (2003), Softball (1995, 1996)¹. KSU is the only Division II School to win a national championship in four different sports. Several other regional and divisional championships add to the legacy of the University's athletic program². KSU entered from Division II into Division I was a great achievement in the history of KSU. Division I is the highest level of intercollegiate athletics sanctioned by the NCAA in the United States. For Division I schools, they are the major collegiate athletic powers and require larger budgets, more elaborate facilities, and higher numbers of athletic scholarships. This level was once called the University Division of the NCAA in contrast to the College Division; this terminology was replaced with the current numeric (I, II, III) divisions in 1973.

Division I: The competitive athletics programs of member institutions are designed to be a vital part of the educational system. A basic purpose of this Association is to maintain intercollegiate athletics as an integral part of the educational program and the athlete as an integral part of the student body and, by so doing, retain a clear line of demarcation between intercollegiate athletics and professional sports³. Division II: The emphasis for the student-athlete experience in Division II is a comprehensive program of learning and development in a personal setting. The approach in Division II provides growth opportunities through academic achievement, learning in high-level athletics competition, and development of societal attitudes in service to community⁴. Division III: Colleges and universities in NCAA Division III place highest priority on the overall quality of the educational experience and on the successful completion of all students' academic programs⁵.

¹ Cite:<http://ksuowls.cstv.com/history/kenn-history.html>

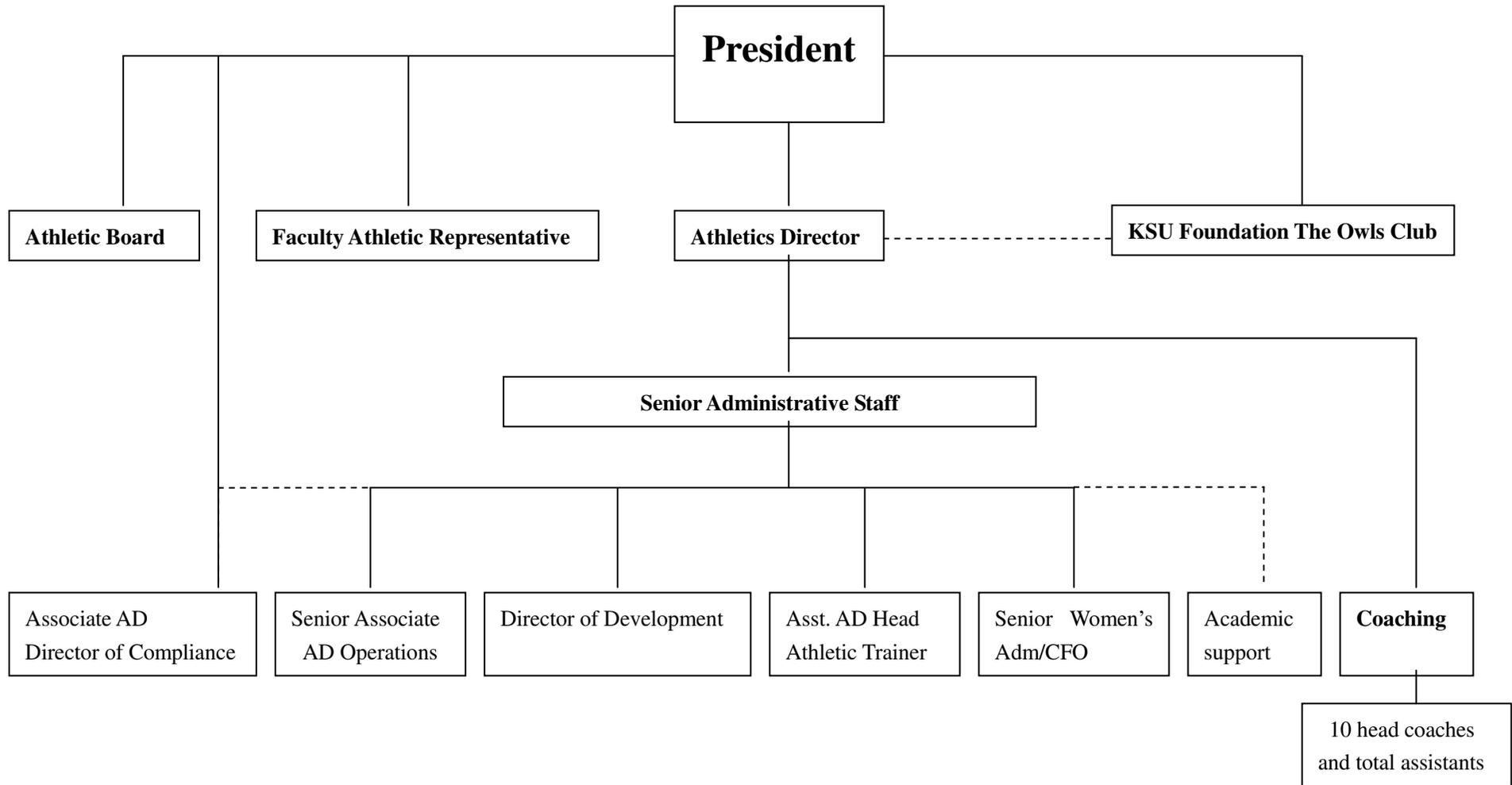
² Cite: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kennesaw_State_University#Athletics

³ Cite: Page 1, 1.3.1 Basic Purpose, 2008-2009 NCAA DIVISION I MANUAL

⁴ Cite: <http://www.ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?ContentID=23>

⁵ Cite: <http://www.ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?ContentID=24>

Figure 1: The structure of Athletic Department



The structure of Athletic Department

As a NCAA school, Athletics play a an important role for the development of KSU, includes responsible for Student-Athlete to balance between athletics and academic excellence; improve the reputation of college; any activity need to follow the rules and regulations of NCAA and provide a high quality level of intercollegiate athletic competition. Based on its role and responsibilities, it must have an appropriate structure to ensure effective operation.

Dr. Dave Waple, Director of Athletic Department is controlled by President of KSU and has the responsibility to make regular report to President of KSU. He has the responsibility to plan, direct, administer, supervise and control all aspects of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at KSU. And he is also responsible for setting departmental goals and objectives and the delegation of duties⁶. Dr. Dave Waple supervises all aspects of Athletic Department as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in a Company.

NCAA school requires a Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR), who represents the faculties.(Conversation with Dr. Waple) NCAA Bylaw 6.1.3 requires that each NCAA member institution to appoint a FAR and stipulates that the duties of the FAR are determined locally. The FAR is a principal advisor to the Dr. Waple on all matters related to intercollegiate athletics, and it responsible for supervising all aspects the department whether the work process follows the rules and regulations of NCAA. The FAR is referred to as it called “Watch Dog” for short. (Conversation with Dr. Waple)

⁶ POLICY AND PROCEDURES, KSU Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, Page 15

Athletics Board is also required as a NCAA school is composed of 20 officers. (Conversation with Dr. Waple) Athletics Board has Committee on Minority, Gender & Life Skill Program Office; Athletic Grievance Committee Office; Academic Support Committee Office; Admissions Advisory Committee Office, respectively. They work together with FAR and Dr. Waple (Conversation with Dr. Waple) and has the responsibility to assist President of KSU with: a) Maintaining Institutional Control of Athletics; b) Assuring the Academic Integrity of Athletics' policies and practices; c) Ensuring Compliance with NCAA Rules. They also have some key policies as a benchmark to supervise whole situation of Athletic Department, for example, Student First Policy, Missed Class Policies, Scheduling of Competitions Policies and Exam Blackout Dates⁷.

Founding is, of course, is a critical element to the success of any activity. The University has approved increases in student fees during the last three years which has resulted in significantly more funding for all 16 varsity sports (\$8 for 2006-07; \$11 for 2007-08; \$25 for 2008-09). Other revenue sources include ticket sales, sponsorships, marketing rights, game guarantees, etc. As I know besides the regular budget, the KSU Foundation, The Owls Club serves as an umbrella organization for the individual team booster clubs which is approved by Dr. Waple. (Conversation with Waple) Contributions to the Owls Club assist in providing funds for equipment needs, scholarships, general operational, and travel support to KSU's varsity athletic programs as well as the cheer and dance teams base on their interest⁸. Those boosters

⁷ Cite: <http://www.kennesaw.edu/athleticsboard/index.shtml>

⁸ Cite: <http://ksuowls.cstv.com/boosters/kenn-boosters.html>

obtain some benefits base on how much they donated, for example, special parking, private seats or VIP seats for each home game and so on. I believe this is a good policy to improve the competitive powers for each team as well as a motivation for each team member. Besides those individual supports, some companies support KSU to different parts of Athletic, for instance, Golden Corral Restaurant give us food support for each home game; Russell Company provides uniform support for us, etc.(Conversation with Dr. Waple) For those events, KSU established all support groups within the rules and regulations of the Institution, Board of Regents and the NCAA. All group activities will be approved by KSU Athletic Department. These activities include: cultivation and solicitation of potential donors, event planning and promotion, recognition awards etc..., and Head Coaches are responsible for establishing and maintaining a support group for their programs. Boosters and booster organizations are one of the strongest parts of the Kennesaw State Athletics Department. Each booster has a deep commitment to the success of the Kennesaw State Owls and are in the spirit of generosity⁹.

Start from marketing aspect, those supports is the win-win situation for both sports team and supporters. Those companies can advertise their product during the competition in order to enhance the reputation of the product in the public. Obviously, those supports will reduce the financial burden of Athletic Department, and it is a motivation for those varsity teams to enhance the competitive power for them who wants to gain more contributions. However, strictly and systematically manage those

⁹ Cite: <http://ksuowls.cstv.com/boosters/kenn-boosters.html>

founding is necessary for an organization, otherwise, it will lead to corruption and waste, so that the boosters will lost the confidence for us.

As can be seen from Figure 1.1, Athletic Director, Faculty Athletic Representative, Athletics Board and The Owls Club are on the same level for the aspect of management and supervision. They take on an important responsibility for keep Athletic Department running well.

Academic Support Division is controlled by Director Waple. Since fall 2005, the University employed a full-time Director of the Academic Center for the enrichment and success of student-athlete, with several part-time individual also serving in the academic support area. As an important department, it gives academic support to student-athlete in order to let them graduate smoothly. As the student-athlete, they have the same regulation with regular student on academic aspect. Student Athlete Success Services will provide tutoring services, advising services, counseling services, life skills training, a computer lab, lap top computers for athletes to access while at away games and much more¹⁰. As student athletes, they are the face of KSU when they played the game at other institutions. This program will help to prepare athletes academically and personally. And Athletic Department is committed to nurturing a partnership and keeping balance between athletic and academic excellence.

In the organization structure of Athletic Department, KSU has an excellent coaching team which is controlled and approved by Director Waple. It includes Men's and Women's Basketball, Softball, Women's Soccer and so on, total ten sport teams.

¹⁰ Cite: <http://ksuowls.cstv.com/academics/kenn-academics.html>

Each team has Head Coach and several Assistant Coaches, according to Policy and Procedure manual of Department of Intercollegiate Athletics of KSU, as a Head Coach, their major functions are recruit, coaching and graduation of the Student-Athlete, and main focus should be the welfare of their Student-Athlete. However, as an Assistant Coach of each team, they are part of a team, and must be totally loyal and take direction from the Head Coach to assist Head Coach complete all kinds of tasks. It is to be noted that the requirement of Annual Certification is necessary for only those coaches who have been certified may contract or evaluate any prospective student-athletes off campus. Certification must occur on an annual basis¹¹. As a condition of employment all coaches must pass the Annual NCAA Coach's Certification test for recruitment¹². The test is given on line, coaches have 1 hour and 20 minutes to answer 40 questions. The test format is multiple choice and true/false. The passing score is 80% or higher (i.e., at least 32 of the 40 questions must be answered correctly). Anyone who does not pass the test must wait 30 days before retaking the test¹³. Compare with China, the coaches of collegiate sport team do not require such these certifications for the coaches. However, I believe that qualification for a Coach is very important. In any organization, enhance the quality of employees will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of that organization. This is worthy of study for Chinese Collegiate Coach to improve the professional qualities of ourselves.

¹¹ 2008-2009 NCAA DIVISION I MANUAL, P52

¹² POLICY AND PROCEDURES, KSU Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, P17

¹³ Cite: www.msbillings.edu/BusinessFaculty/Harris/NCAA/NCAA_Test_Info.htm

Financial Budget and Human Resources

Chief Financial Officer will oversee all aspects of the internal accounting of fiscal matters for the Department of Athletics in coordination with University's Business Services office. It also responsible for establishes budget plans, forecasting staffing requirement and formulating policies and procedures Supervises Athletic Business Office staff¹⁴. Chief Financial Officer has accountability to reports to Dr. Waple, provides budget development, tracking and monitoring; and also accountable for attaining revenue goals, and adhering to budgets, ensures financial integrity of the Department of Athletics. Chief Financial Officer authority to authorized expenditures; formulates, interprets, and enforces policies/procedures, Determines personnel actions;

Athletic Department has an independent and complete human resource system, include hiring, retention, promotion, and dismissal. The structure of staff is diversified; include part-time and full-time job, student assistant and internship student. The personnel will conform to the policies and procedures of both the Board of Regent and Kennesaw State University. For the contract of employ, the Department of Human Resource provides basic regulation for hiring, retention and dismissal of KSU employees, furthermore as a NCAA school, the personnel contract must be followed the rules and regulation of NCAA.

Mission and Responsibility of Athletic Department

No matter which divisions in the Athletic Department, they must work together and strive for achieve their mission and responsibility. KSU as a NCAA school aspires to provide the best service to collegiate student, and highest level of competitive

¹⁴ POLICY AND PROCEDURES, KSU Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, P27

opportunities and learning experience in its' intercollegiate athletics program. The mission of the athletic program is in line with the University's. Athletic Department is committed to nurturing a partnership and proper balance between athletic and academic excellence¹⁵. KSU through its intercollegiate athletic program seeks to prepare student-athletes for productive, fulfilling and responsible lives. The experience of the entire student population will be enhanced through various intercollegiate athletics program, by developing school spirit and creating a sense of community on the campus. In addition, the University recognizes the far reaching appeal of spectator sports and embraces the opportunity to enhance its outreach to surrounding communities through positive impressions embodied in the efforts of student-athletes. KSU strives to attract a diverse and talented group of participants, coaches and administrators who have a strong commitment to academic and athletic excellence, integrity, diversity, ethical conduct, and compliance with University, NCAA and conference policy, rules and regulations. This commitment to excellence shall be embodied in the University's intercollegiate athletic program and reflected in its student-athletes¹⁶.

Daily work in Men's Basketball Office

During my internship, I mainly communicate and cooperate with the Coaches of Men's Basketball Team. Men's Basketball Team has a Head Coach and Three Assistant Coaches, two Directors of Basketball operations, one Strength and Conditioning Coach and one Assistant Athletic Trainer.

Men's basketball is an excellent sports team in KSU, and play Division I basketball in the new expansive Convocation Center on the campus of KSU. The

¹⁵ POLICY AND PROCEDURES, KSU Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, P11

¹⁶ FY2008-FY2012 Strategic Plan, Page8

teams played in the legendary Spec Landrum Center before, which is the home floor when the men's basketball team won the National Championship of NCAA Division II in 2004. Men's basketball team has strict management rules for each team member in their daily practice and daily life, include fixed practice time, regular meeting and absolutely comply college regulations and so on. Those rules are the guarantee for keep the sports team running well.

Every activity includes recruitment, contest and daily management; we must be followed the rules and regulations of NCAA. As an assistant of all Coaches, I am responsible for information transfer between each Coach and other office as well as assist Coaches complete some daily work. Fortunately, I have experienced recruiting of new players for next new season during my intern, for this recruitment, I mainly sent out the letter to the Head Coaches of different high school in the area of GA. It is good way to communicate with public to advertise our college as well as enhance the reputation of KSU, and hopefully, those high school coaches can recommend some excellent basketball players to KSU from their school in order to improve competitive power of KSU's basketball team in next season of NCAA. In addition, those who want to play for KSU in future, they need to visit Coach Ingle, and take a testing to check their skill. Men's Basketball office as a part of Athletic Department, all members sufficiently recognize the goals and value of the organization. They are a united coach group, regular meeting and sharing the goal, object and sense with each other is the key way for success.

Leadership plays a very important role in the management of an organization like the school (Leveriza, 1983). An organization will not running well without a leader to direct organizational goals. Coach Ingle, as a Head Coach of Men's Basketball is a leader with goal-oriented and relationship-oriented. He knows his responsibility very

clear and has great achievement in his Career, and also, he has a good relationship with those Assistant Coaches. He created a harmonious work environment and atmosphere in their daily work. In addition, as a leader, he has high quality training competence for his sports team; he is not merely coaches and directs those student-athletes keep athletic and academic excellence but also direct those assistant coaches how to improve their skill day to day. In my daily work, I thought that Coach Ingle is an approachable leader with participative leadership style. A participative leader consults with subordinates, obtains their ideas and opinions, and integrates their suggestions into the decisions about how the group or organization will proceed¹⁷. Teamwork is effective way for a coach group of basketball; however efficient meeting is a good method to share the idea with each other, as we know that two heads are better than one. To absorb the advices and suggestions from the partners and subordinates comprehensively will improve the quality of the decision. Although he has strong power and authority among those coaches, but he is not a single one in the combat in this organization, they have collaboration and division of work as well; every coach has specific work responsibility to this sports team. In contrast, in China, power and authority are the symbol for a high position or a leader; everyone wants to hold his/her power to control the subordinates. I believe two forms of management method both have strength and weakness, just depends on what situation we face.

SWOT Analysis of Athletic Department

The analysis of Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat for an organization is called SWOT Analysis for short. The technique is devised by Albert Humphrey, a SWOT Analysis is a strategic planning method used to evaluate the Strengths,

¹⁷ Peter G. Northhouse, Leadership Theory and practice, Fourth Edition, P130

Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in a project or in a business venture¹⁸.

Strengths and Weaknesses are internal value creating or destroying factors such as assets, skills or resources an organization has at its disposal relatively to its competitors. They can be measured using internal assessments or external benchmarking. However, Opportunities and Threats are external value creating or destroying factors an organization cannot control, but usually come from either the competitive dynamics of the organization or from economic, demographic, technical, political, social, legal or cultural factors.

KSU, as a fast growing and changing state university in the University System of GA, the Athletic Department of KSU has much strength, and also has some weaknesses, but at the same time, it enjoys some opportunities and also faces several threats. This analysis will specifically indicate what they are.

Strength:

Firstly, KSU is a third largest University in the state of Georgia and has a high profile and good reputation because of it has a high quality group of faculty. Furthermore, it has a complete management system with excellent history in Athletic Department, for instance, the Owls are proud to have produced 51 First Team All-Americans while members of both the NAIA and NCAA. Again, Dr. Dave Waple is in his 22nd year as the head of the Owls athletic department as the second Athletic Director in the history of KSU. A wealth of management experience and high personal competence are the successful condition for this organization.

Secondly, as a Division I school in NCAA, KSU has many achievements including a number of National Championships on Athletic aspect, they are Baseball

¹⁸ Cite: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_Analysis

-1996; Men's Basketball-2004; Cheer- leading-2004, 2005; Women's Soccer-2003; Softball-1995, 1996¹⁹; And it has good reputation in the Atlanta area. That will attract more excellent student-athlete come here for their further education, and improve the image in public, increasingly.

Thirdly, excellent athletic facility is required for a Division school. KSU commit to provide the state-of-the-art facilities to the student-athletic in their daily study, training and competition in A-Sun Conference and NCAA. The development team of KSU continuous learning and improving the quality of facility and provide the best service to our student-athletes and fans in the next several years. Convocation Center and Bobbie Bailey Athletics Complex have been built in the last four years, and soccer and baseball complex program is planed.

Finally, the location is also strength for any student of KSU, because it is convenient to the other Universities, businesses, organizations and entertainment activities in the Atlanta area.

Weaknesses:

Lack of media coverage and fewer people pay attention to women's sport in this region. The various sports team is necessary for a Division I school of NCAA. Football is one of most popular sport in US, however, KSU does not have football team and football filed yet, so that, many students who interest in football have transferred to the other school in order to enjoy football sport or go out to play for other school. (Conversation with Dr. Waple) 6050 students of KSU answered the question about do you support bringing football to KSU? And then, 77.6% students said "yes" and 22.5% said "no". (Provided by Dr. Waple) So, as a public school with the goal of provides the best service to the publics, there is a weakness for KSU and

¹⁹ Cite: <http://ksuowls.cstv.com/history/kenn-championships.html>

has influenced the development and reputation of Athletic Department.

In addition, for the aspect of human resource, lower faculty and staff salaried, heavier workloads and imbalance ratio of student-to-faculty and student-to-staff²⁰. It is also a problem that leads to more difficult to hiring and retaining those high quality faculties and staff to work for KSU, so that influenced the quality of service we provided to student. Other weaknesses include shortage of scholarship funds and low student graduation rates²¹.

Opportunity:

As a new member of Division I in NCAA since 2005-2006 Season, KSU has many opportunity for its development in future: a) it has the potential to accomplish higher objective and the championship of Division I of NCAA; b) improving the reputation of Athletic aspect and attract more excellent student-athletes to study in KSU and more high quality faculty and staff to work for KSU. c) Attracting more support groups and boosters to aid the development of Athletic Department. In addition, basketball is a most popular game in KSU, so, it is an opportunity for KSU to through market with men's basketball to promote KSU as basketball school.

Finally, the change in the Athletic Department from Division II go into Division I has become a new starting point for all employees and will increase the employees' confidence to motivate the faculty and staff to work harder.

Our Threats:

During my internship, I found that almost each of the women's games are played before the men's game at the same day, thus, making it difficult to attract people to come to both games, and it will influence the attendance rate of women's game. Georgia Tech. and University of Georgia are the famous colleges with good reputation

²⁰ KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2007-2012, P6

²¹ KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2007-2012, P6

in southern part of United State; they are the biggest competitor for KSU. Furthermore, no matter which organization and sports team, they need a group of high professional skill Head Coach, Assistant Coach and related workers in order to achieve the goal of the organization. But low salaries will be the threat for KSU to recruit those faculties and staff who have high competent in competitive job market²².

Finally, the shortage of scholarships is also a threat for the college sports teams to recruit those higher skill players to play for KSU. Also, the environment of campus is an important condition to attract the student-athlete to study here, for example, the traffic, housing, parking and infrastructure and so on. Those are threats for athletic development, even the entire college.

²² KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2007-2012, P 8

The analysis of current situation of attendance rate of Basketball game

The Attendance Rate as an important factor and has many influences on different aspects of sports events. High attendance rate will make an impassioned atmosphere for a game to enhance the positivity of player. It is found that the impassioned audiences usually increase the passion and skill of the player; High attendance rate will increase the revenue for the Athletic Department and reduce the burden of budget. Many surrounding residents who interesting in sports will purchase ticket to watch the game in KSU, and that will help to deal with the shortage of budget on financial aspect; High attendance rate will enhance the reputation of KSU, and shape an important sports culture among the student, and increase the students' confident.

Where is KSU's Athletics?

Sun Tzu said: "Know the enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles with no danger of defeat." Thereby, any organization should know where they are and what situation they are. It is important for how to deal with the problem when we face a challenge in future. As we know, Basketball is the most popular sport in KSU and it has created many excellent achievements in the past, but compare with other University in A-SUN Conference, the issue is that basketball home game has low Attendance Rate in Convocation Center in KSU. As can be seen from Table 1, in the season of 2006-2007, the average of Attendance of Men's Basketball is 963 in thirteen home games, total attendance is 12,515 and it rank 8th place among 10 teams in A-SUN Conference, however, the total average attendance of A-SUN Conference is 1,680, it is higher than KSU.

Table 1: Statistical Data of Attendance of Men's Basketball----2006-2007

Team	HOME GAMES	TOTAL	AVG.	Prev. Year
Belmont	11	14,055	1,278	down
Campbell	15	13,246	883	down
ETSU	15	68,038	4,536	up
Gardner-Webb	12	23,615	1,968	down
Jacksonville	13	24,807	1,908	up
Kennesaw State	13	12,515	963	up
Lipscomb	14	20,581	1,470	down
Mercer	14	15,898	1,136	up
Stetson	13	21,769	1,675	down
UNF	14	10,618	758	down
A-SUN Totals	134	225,142	1,680	down

Data source: Brian LeHeup Assistant Director of Marketing and promotions

As can be seen from Table 2, in the season of 2008-2009, the situation is better than the season 2006-2007, the average of attendance is higher as 1,044, the total attendance is 14,620 in fourteen home games and it rank 9th place among 11 teams, but compare with the total average attendance of A-SUN Conference, the average attendance of KSU is low.

Table 2: Statistical Data of Attendance of Men's Basketball----2008-2009

Team	HOME GAMES	TOTAL	AVG.	Prev. Year
Belmont	13	24,136	1,857	up
Campbell	14	22,661	1,619	up
ETSU	13	44,532	3,426	down
FGCU	17	22,882	1,346	down
Jacksonville	15	25,798	2,387	down
Kennesaw State	14	14,620	1,044	up
Lipscomb	16	24,464	1,529	down
Mercer	12	20,483	1,707	up
Stetson	14	19,507	1,393	down
UNF	12	9,650	804	down
USC Upstate	11	9,723	884	down
A-SUN Totals	151	248,456	1,645	down

Data source: Brian LeHeup Assistant Director of Marketing and promotions

Nowadays, Attendance Rate of sports events have become a threat for the development and reputation of KSU. As a NCAA Division I school with the basketball occupy an important position, Attendant Rate for basketball home game has become a consideration for the management level of Athletic Department. During my intern, I found some key issues influence on Attendance Rate: 1. As nontraditional College, the students of KUS composed of different age group, many students have kids and family need to take care, (Conversation with assistant Director Brian) so, they will not have free time to attend the game; 2. Arrangement of sequence of home game, as can be seen from table 3, if Men's basketball team and Women's basketball team played the home game on the same day, usually, Women's basketball played

before Men's basketball, and Women's basketball played at 4:30 in the afternoon and Men's basket played at 7:30 at night. Besides that, Women's basketball game usually began at the dinner time during 5 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. It is found that less audiences willing to watch both games for a long time, even if they very interesting in basketball game, without question, they will choose either one to watch, and almost every audiences will pick Men's basketball game to watch, because it is more wonderful; 3. The arrangement of the schedule is also a critical factor. The Attendance on weekend will be higher than weekday, and will be higher at the night than in the afternoon. There are many conflicts between time and work; 4. The quality of the games and the achievements of the team in this season will influence the Attendance Rate. Wonderful game and excellent achievement should increase Attendance Rate in this season; otherwise will has a low Attendance Rate; 5. The coverage of the information for the home game is deemed that will bring some effects to Attendance Rate. During my intern I found that many students and staff do not know what the time is for the basketball home game, although those audiences interesting in basketball game but they will miss the game because they do not know specific schedule. In Athletic Department, Men's basketball office is a path to release the game schedule to the audience, also the little board put outside, email and flyers.(Conversation with assistant Director Brian) 6. The design of side activity during the game, no matter which game, we have Interactive Game during the half time break. As we know that each game or special events in National Basketball Association (NBA) include many colorful Interactive Games to mobilize the atmosphere of the game scene. So, the design of activity during the game is a key link to increase the Attendance Rate and it will encourage audience to join the game. 7. The degree of satisfaction for audience, according my experience, although some games have the high Attendance Rate, but,

actually, the audiences are unsatisfied to this game, they just sit there or some audiences do not concentrate on the game at all, instead of chat with each other, and cause they will not attend next time. So, how to attract the attention of Audience is a important strategy for increase the attendance. 8. Geographical location of KSU, the traffic is a problem in the weekend and commuter time around of KSU, the shortage of parking lot is also need to deal with for especially athletic events. 9. The influence of local basketball culture. This is the external factor to influence the Attendance Rate for the basketball game. Chicago has rich basketball cultural deposit, special during the Michael Jordan period; the basketball team of Chicago is use to win six national championships of NBA, Statistics shows that Chicago has the highest Attendance Rate in 2007, the total audiences and the average audiences for each game are 1,656,640 and 20,202 respectively in 82 games. However in 2008, Chicago still has high Attendance Rate, the total audiences and the average audiences for each game are 1,612,996 and 19,670 respectively in 82 games with ranked second. So, it is found that local basketball culture has the influence on Attendance Rate. All above are some key elements to influence the Attendance Rate for basketball game. 10. The other influence includes “star power”, audience willing to watch those players who have high basketball skill to play. For example, in NBA, the audiences are willing to watch Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Ming Yao, LeBron James and so on. Furthermore, we are the small University, George Tech, University of George, Auburn University and Tennessee University those famous Universities are the biggest competitors for us and will influence our attendance rate. (Conversation with assistant Director Brian)

Table 3: Basketball Season 2008-2009

Men's Basketball home game schedule			Women's Basketball home game schedule		
Date	Opponent	Time	Date	Opponent	Time
11/14/08	----	7:30P.M	11/04/08	----	5:30P.M.
11/15/08	----	7:30P.M	11/11/08	----	6:00P.M.
11/18/08	----	7:30P.M	11/22/08	----	2:00P.M.
11/29/08	----	7:30P.M	12/13/08	----	7:00P.M.
12/01/08	----	7:30P.M	12/15/08	----	7:00P.M.
12/23/08	----	7:30P.M	12/18/08	----	7:00P.M.
01/16/09	----	7:00P.M	01/15/09	----	7:00P.M.
01/18/09	----	3:00P.M	01/17/09	----	4:30P.M.
01/31/09	----	7:30P.M	01/31/09	----	4:30P.M.
02/05/09	----	7:30P.M	02/05/09	----	4:30P.M.
02/07/09	----	7:30P.M	02/07/09	----	4:30P.M.
02/09/09	----	7:30P.M	02/09/09	----	4:30P.M.
02/20/09	----	7:30P.M	02/19/09	----	7:00P.M.
02/22/09	----	3:00P.M	02/21/09	----	4:30P.M.

Data source: Men's and Women's Basketball Office

Application of Management by Object (MBO)

A systematic and strategic planning is necessary for an organization; it will prevent haphazard and ineffective communicate with your audiences. Preparing a blueprint of what is to be done and how it will be executed for the organization is useful and makes the project more effective, efficient and improves the public relation more valuable to the organization.

What is an excellent Public Relations project? I thought that should be an effective strategy which will support an organization's business, marketing, and communications objectives. Jim Lukaszewski is experienced public relations counselor said that "Strategy is a unique mixture of mental energy, injected into an organization through communication, which results in behavior that achieves organizational objectives²³."

Management by Objectives (MBO) is a process of agreeing upon objectives within an organization so that management and employees agree to the objectives and understand what they are in the organization²⁴. MBO was first outlined by Peter Drucker in his book of "The Practice of Management" in 1954. This is one model base on Objective-Oriented in practice. MBO provides focus and direction for formulating strategy to achieve specific organizational objectives²⁵. Next, MBO of Public Relation will be applied in planning to increase the Attendance Rate for basketball game in KSU. Robert E. Simmons said that use of MBO in planning ensure the "production of relevant message and establishes criteria against which campaign results can be measured²⁶."

²³ Norman R. Nager and T. Harrell Allen, Public Relations Strategies and Tactics, Ninth Edition, P152

²⁴ Cite: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Management_by_objectives

²⁵ Norman R. Nager and T. Harrell Allen, Public Relations Strategies and Tactics, Ninth Edition, P152

²⁶ Norman R. Nager and T. Harrell Allen, Public Relations Strategies and Tactics, Ninth Edition, P152

The objective of organization

The one of objective in Athletic Department is providing the high quality game to attract more audience come to join the game, thereby, increase the Attendance Rate. In addition, increase the Attendance Rate will also reduce the burden of budget for Athletic Department. Specific objectives such as “to make consumers aware of the product’s high quality” are more meaningful than “to make people aware of the product²⁷,” so, communication as one of important step in public relation process also called execution; it is the most visible part of public relation work. In KSU case, Athletic Department should pay attention to what is the objective for it to distribute the information in the step of communication, while the methods for distribute information for each home game with specific information should be considered, it is a critical way to enhance audiences’ interest, try to understand and meet the needs of wide audiences.

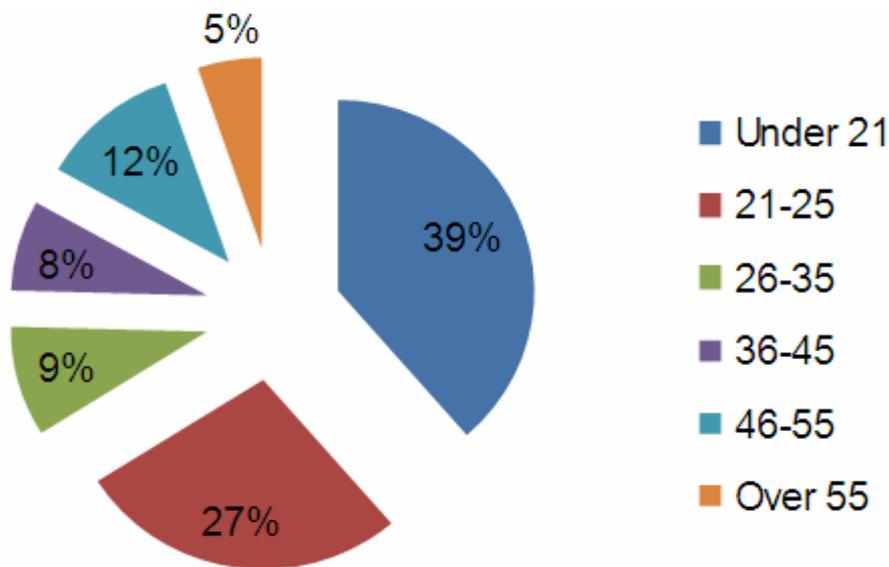
Who are those audiences, objects and publics for Athletic Department?

The goal is increase the Attendance Rate for basketball game. We need to analyze those key publics before we make a communication plan, who are those audiences can help us achieve the goal? And who exactly should be reached with the message? In the case of KSU, t as can be seen from the chart 3, the data comes from the research of Dr. Johnson’s 3390 class on December 3rd, 2008, the age group of the main audiences is under21 and 21-25 which occupy 39% and 27% of the whole audiences. So, from those data I know that the main audiences of the home game are those college students, who have more free time and free admission. But, besides the college students, we also need to pay attention to the staff and surrounding

²⁷ Norman R. Nager and T. Harrell Allen, Public Relations Strategies and Tactics, Ninth Edition, P152

communities, because they can increase the revenue of Athletic Department.

Chart 1: Age of Audiences:

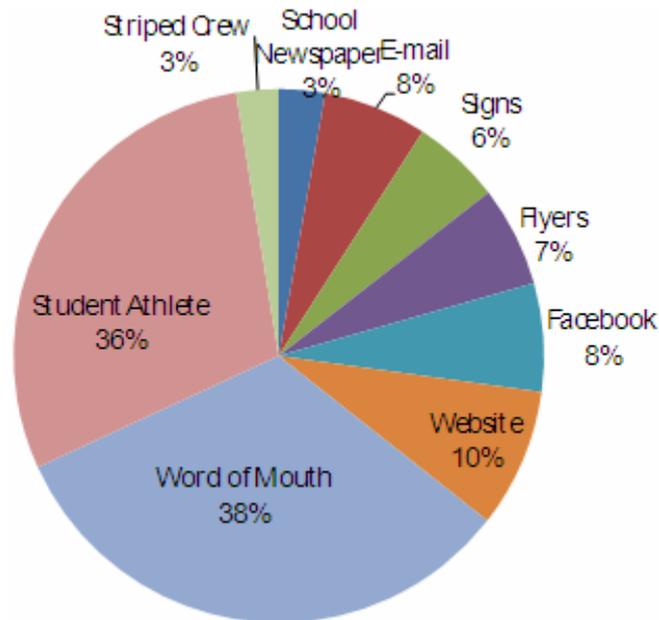


The objectives of the audience

Before we planning do a project to increase the Attendance Rate, we should know what are the purposes of audience to join the game, and what do they want, and how to design the content of the message will attract the attention of audience. For instance, the consumers are more interested in how a new computer will increase their productivity than in how it works. The audiences do care about how wonderful the game will be rather than how much the tickets are even the student has free admission. So, here the objective of the audience is to watch a high quality game and get a fun. The process of the game is more important than the outcome although they lost the game. From Public Relation angle we can focus on the design and distribution of information with different Medias and channels to communicate with our key audiences. Currently, it is very important to give publicity to the basketball team in order to let those audiences know what it is going on, and what the next game is, and what activities will be hold during the game. The large number of college students has

worshipful sports start for themselves, who is the most famous sports start in basketball team, currently, they are the critical character for the publicity, and that information of sports start is easier to attract audiences' attention than any other information.

Chart 2: How the audiences hear about event:



The application of media and channel

Usually, the multiple channels include news media, brochures, special events, direct mail. What is the suitable channel for our publicity to reaching the audience, and what kinds of channel will be used to this publicity for those key audiences? As the audience, they want to get some new and credible information constantly, not just schedule of the game. For this purpose, the choice of the media is very important. During my intern, I found that releasing the information on website of Athletic Department, direct E-mail to student, little board put outside and flyer as a frequently-used channels for distribute the information to reach the audiences. But as can be seen from Chart 2 which comes from the research of Dr. Johnson's 3390 class

on December 3rd, 2008, most of audiences hear the events from Student Athlete and Word of Mouth which occupy 36% and 38% respectively. So, the channels for distributing the message of the game should be considered more effective and efficient. The multi-channel publicity and wide coverage with continuously renewed information is a critical factor to reach our audiences effective and efficient.

The media channel objective

What is the objective of the media? A community newspaper is primarily interested in a story with a local angle. A television station is interested in stories that have good visuals²⁸. Different Media channel has different objective, there are different needs between Athletic Department and Media channel. Athletic Department wants to distribute the information as effectively and efficiently as possible, however, the media company wants to distribute the information with valuable and attractive. From the aspect of Athletic Department, keeping the news factual and credible is the priority.

Sources and questions in our action

We need factual and credible message to distribute to our audience. The expert with rich experience in Public Relation field will be useful for our action. A quote from a project engineer about a new technology is better than a quote from the marketing vice president²⁹. As I know during my intern, Athletic Department does not have the special Public Relation personnel to conduct Public Relation planning. So, choosing the right and experienced advisor is the way to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency for communication with audiences. In addition, different survey and

²⁸ Norman R. Nager and T. Harrell Allen, Public Relations Strategies and Tactics, Ninth Edition, P152

²⁹ Norman R. Nager and T. Harrell Allen, Public Relations Strategies and Tactics, Ninth Edition, P153

data collection will direct us how to design the content of the information or flyer for publicity. Base on the experience, it should figure out what kinds of message is useful, primary and secondary, those are the sources for the message design. Through survey, we know what the interests of audiences are and what the best way is for them to receive the message and guarantee the wide coverage and effective. In the case of KSU, the message for each game should be specific, but avoid excrescent message, it should include the primary and secondary, and distinct gradation of message in order to let those audiences know what is going on. Furthermore, data collection will direct us what is the best way to get the best effect.

Communication strategies

What environmental factor will affect the dissemination and acceptance of the message? Environment for the delivery of information is very important, and environment will influence the effect of delivery of information, so we must understand what the environment is, and base on the environment to design the way to distribute the information in order to have high acceptance rate for this information. For instance, at the very beginning of the basketball season, every audience full of hope for this season, at this time, the design of the information should focus on the specifically introduce the situation of entire team, and give some data to enhance the confident of wide audience. In contrast, at the end of season, the design of the information should be specifically include the key game during this period, the high Attendance Rate of those key games will bring unexpected effect for the player and the whole Athletic Department.

Are the target publics hostile or favorably disposed to the message? During this communication, we need to evaluate the information whether is accepted by those

target audiences. Sometime the audiences will not accept those messages at all and we waste the time and resource for this campaign, so evaluate in the process of communication will improve the effectiveness of communication over time and provides the basis to regulate the communication strategy for administrator.

What other events or pieces of information negate or reinforce the message? Some accessorial events we can apply to distribute the message in order to enhance the effect of distribution. For example, outdoor publicity activity and distribute the flyer to attract audiences' attention, as I know after communicated with Assistant Director Brian, the basketball team players sometimes went to the elementary school and went out to publicize themselves for improve the image of the basketball team. Furthermore, introduce the key activity design during the game base on the interest survey of audiences will enhance the degree of understand for the basketball team and basketball game of KSU. As we know, a campaign to conserve water is more salient if there has been a recent drought. That means the distribution of information need to meet the needs and goals of the audiences. But those negative factors which hinder the distribution of information should be considered, it is found that updating website, posting placard, distributing flyer and so no will influence the acceptance rate for audience.

The essence of the message

What is the impact after we communicate with audience, do we receive any benefit after we distribute those information? Our purpose is not just informing the message to those audiences and let them know what the schedule of the game is, but we want to change the attitude and behavior of audience for our basketball team and attract them to join our game. Base on our purpose, controlling and monitoring is

require in this process. I believe, every student, staff, and surrounding resident they are proud of the success of KSU. Telling them what is the impact of the victory or defeat for this game is easier attract them to join the game than just telling them what the schedule of the game is. So, in the case of KSU, the information should include what the situation is for our team right now, and how important for each game, and what preparation we did for this game, those are the motivation for audience to join us. Just like telling people about the dangers of global warming is different than telling people what they can do about it.

Nonverbal support

What are the supports should be consider for this communication? The photograph, graph, films, and artwork clarify and visually can enhance the written message. I believe that any kinds of method to distribute the information should be included nonverbal support. The excessive nonverbal support for us is unnecessary, but reasonably exercise nonverbal support will easier to attract audiences' eyes, the flyer with nice photograph of the key player, perfectly visual effect and so on will cause people willing to look at the flyer and poster, and generate sympathize so that attract audiences to join the game. So, nonverbal support is an important technique to enhance the effectiveness of information distribution.

Increasing the attendance rate of sports events is a responsibility for Marketing and Promotions office, design flyer, E-mail to the audiences and design the schedule are the typical daily work for them. (Conversation with Assistant Director Brain) But, communication with publics is a critical technique for Marketing and Promotions office, it is the execution of a decision, the process and the means by which objectives are achieve. And the goal of communication is to inform, persuade, motivate, and

achieve mutual understanding, in the case of KSU, though communication with audiences, they not merely receive the information of the basketball team, but more important is the information will motivate the audience to join the game and let them more understanding the basketball game of KSU, thereby increase the reputation of Athletic Department.

Suggestions

During the study of Public Administration, I know that public opinion is a strong pressure to influence on decision making and action for an organization. Communication is a good method to know what are the needs and interests of audience. But in the case of KSU, besides communication with the audiences, the internal management to improve the competitive power of basketball teams also an important factor to increase the Attendance Rate. Audiences are more willing to watch the game with impassioned atmosphere and high quality of competition. So, start from improve the competitive power to increase the Attendance Rate, there are some suggestions: 1) Capacity building of staff. The capacity of staff is important element for the development of an organization, however, the Head Coach and Assistant Coach as a core for the success of the sports team, Athletic Department should pay attention to give more training chance to those key characters in order to improve their skill and better serve the organization. For instance, regular study of professional theory; Visit other excellent college and borrow the successful lesson from them for our development; the experience communion and symposium between partnership school. 2) Capacity building of basketball player. The players with high skill will improve the Winning Percentage of the game, so strictly theoretical study and daily practice of basketball is a good way to improve the personal competitive power, so

that enhance the competitive power of entire basketball game. 3) Improve the quality of recruitment. As we know that KSU plays in NCAA Division I since 2005, the level and reputation has enhanced. Obviously, our rivals with high skill and competitive power is the challenge for us, for instance Georgia Tech, University of Gorgia and so on, we need to attract stronger players to join the team if we want to survive in NCAA Division I. 4) Complete relevant policy for player. As I know that scholarship is an important attraction for those high quality players, shortage of scholarship funds is a weakness for KSU student, so, KSU should consider how to complete the support policy for those players. 5) Improve the General Strength and reputation of KSU. High quality player prefer to go to the college with strong General Strength and high reputation for their academic study. 6) The construction of sports venues and facility. Usually, a magnificent sports venues is a symbol for a college, audiences will be attract to this building and more willing to watch the game in it, and magnificent sports venues will enhance the visual effects, audience will enjoy the game so much.

I believe these suggestions are some factors besides communication technique to improve the Attendance Rate for the sports game in college. Certainly, evaluation is an essential step to evaluate what impact for this action is and whether these actions should be continued or regulate. Nowadays, Attendance Rate is a consideration for any sports game, it is a critical element for the development of the sports team, and it is also a symbol of strength for a sports team. For the professional level, high Attendance Rate is a guarantee for the team to survive in the commercial competition.

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