Abstract

As a member of the Sport Administration Program at Ball State University, I was required to complete an internship with an organization related to the sport administration field in order to gain as much hands-on experience as possible prior to seeking full-time employment. The main objectives of this internship experience were to 1) gain practical experience in a specific area in the sport industry under professional supervision and guidance and 2) to apply theories and principles from my formal education to specific situations within the sports industry. I choose to intern with the Joliet Slammers Professional Baseball Team and over the course of my internship, I critically analyzed and evaluated the organization’s policies, procedures, and overall business strategy. Based on my personal experience and research, I conducted a SWOT analysis; which examined the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; identified seven recommendations for the organization based on this analysis; and then devised a comprehensive business proposal to implement one of the specific recommendations. My business proposal focuses on ways that the Joliet Slammers can increase brand awareness and information dissemination in local and surrounding communities.
Acknowledgements

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I would also like to thank Kyle Wicks, Joliet Slammers Director of Ticket Sales and Service and my supervisor during my time as an intern with the Slammers. He remains a great mentor and friend and I appreciate his dedication in ensuring that I had the most beneficial experience possible while interning with the Slammers organization.
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Author's Statement

During the summer of 2013, I worked as a Ticket Sales and Service Intern with the Joliet Slammers Professional Baseball Team of the Frontier League under the supervision of Kyle Wicks, the Director of Ticket Sales and Service. Being from the south suburbs of Chicago, my goal was to find an internship opportunity close to home in either the baseball or hockey industries and after applying for numerous internships, and interviewing for only a handful, I accepted this internship opportunity with the Joliet Slammers. This internship allowed me to gain valuable experience in an industry I am very passionate and knowledgeable.

I was very satisfied knowing that I would be working as a Ticket Sales and Service Intern, despite applying for internships in many different departments, primarily in sales, marketing, and operations. I felt that an internship in sales would be the most beneficial to my career moving forward because a majority of entry-level positions in the sports industry are in the sales department. The sport administration program had already provided me with a fundamental understanding of ticket sales and during an immersive learning course within the program, I was given the opportunity to partner with Ball State Athletics in an outbound-call campaign to sell tickets for Ball State Men’s and Women’s Basketball, as well as Ball State Football. Knowing that I had this prior experience in ticket sales, I was excited to compare the two experiences and apply my knowledge in a professional setting. I still was unsure if a sales job was something I would be interested in, but I hoped that interning with a minor league baseball team would expose me to all aspects of the organization, not just sales, and allow me to establish a better understanding for how the different departments of a sports organization operate.

My decision to create a proposal to increase brand awareness and information dissemination in Joliet and its surrounding communities was based on my evaluation of the team’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). Many of the team’s strengths were associated with game-day operations and the ballpark amenities. These strengths will help with fan retention but
are not beneficial in increasing new business. Currently, the Slammers are focused on creating new ticket packages that add more value to a fan's ticket. These new "Slammers Elite" packages and "Beer Garden" tickets offer great value but fans need to be aware that these options are available.

This lack of general awareness is the Slammers' greatness weakness and reason for this proposal. The Slammers are located in the historic district of downtown Joliet, which is not the most popular area of the city. The team's not-so-ideal location combined with their lack of marketing are the reason that many Joliet residents, as well as those individuals in the surrounding communities, are not aware the team exists. Slammers' management needs to focus on generating new business because fans can only take advantage of the great ticket prices and packages if they are aware of the team.

While some of my recommendations focus on adding value to the ticket and improving the game-day experience, the most important recommendations center on increasing brand awareness and information dissemination. The Slammers provide an affordable, family-fun experience but need to do a better job at promoting these two aspects of the experience in the community. My SWOT analysis, list of recommendations, and business proposal are all based on my personal experience throughout my almost four months as an intern with the Slammers.

The first week of the internship gave me a basic feel of the Slammers' organization. I met my supervisor and the rest of the small front office staff, as well as the other interns who would work for the Slammers' for the summer. After taking a tour of the stadium and meeting the owners of the team, I learned what my first big task as a Ticket Sales and Service Intern would be: distributing pocket schedules to local businesses in the Joliet area. While this task was more of a marketing initiative, pocket schedules were one of the most important resources that the Slammers used to promote their brand in the community, and all interns, including sales interns, partook in distributing the schedules. Slammers' pocket schedules were small, foldable brochures that contained basic team information including their full-season game and promotional schedule, ticket prices, venue and contact information,
as well as sponsorship advertising. While distributing these pocket schedules, I first realized the
Slammers’ need to increase their brand awareness throughout the community.

For the first three weeks of the internship, another intern and I drove around Joliet and its
neighboring towns for approximately 3-4 hours a day and dropped off boxes of pocket schedules at
every business that was willing to display them. These small boxes were only about 4”x2”, held nearly
200 schedules each, and easily fit on a front desk, table, or counter in any office building, retail store, or
restaurant. I assumed that many of the businesses in the area would be receptive to idea of putting a
small box of schedules on display, especially since the box took up such little space and the business
itself did not have to actively promote the team; the customer would have to be the one to take a
schedule on their own. I quickly learned that this task would be more difficult than I imagined. While
some businesses were not allowed to display the schedules because of company policy, many
businesses were reluctant to display the schedules because they were not aware of who the Joliet
Slammers were, despite their businesses being located less than 15 minutes away from the Slammers’
stadium. I had to consistently explain to store employees that the Joliet Slammers were an independent
baseball team located in downtown Joliet. After explaining who the Slammers were and where they
were located, many employees were intrigued as to why they had never heard of the Slammers. Many
of the employees that had at least heard of the Slammers had never been to a game before, and many
of these people still referred to the team as the “Joliet Jackhammers,” the previous name of the team
until it folded in 2010. After delivering schedules every day for nearly three weeks, I concluded that an
overwhelming majority of individuals in the community were only vaguely aware that a baseball team
existed in Joliet. How were the Slammers supposed to sell tickets if their core geographic market was
not aware that attending a Slammers’ game was even an option? Delivering these schedules and talking
with store employees and other people along the way was a very enlightening experience and was the
first proof that the Slammers’ needed to increase their brand awareness, especially in their own community.

After weeks of traveling around Joliet and dropping off schedules, I realized using pocket schedules as a primary means of advertising was not a successful strategy. While I knew that the Slammers needed to increase their brand awareness, I was not aware of what specific advertising opportunities were available to the Slammers until after my third week when I was assigned a special project by the team owners. The owners of the team approached me and asked if I would be interested in helping them find a way to get the Slammers better represented at the local mall. They were interested in increasing the team’s presence in the community and wanted to turn the mall into a point of sale for the team. Over the next few weeks, I spoke with the mall marketing director multiple times about different advertising opportunities and visited different retail stores in the mall to inquire about the possibility of selling Slammers’ merchandise. The mall marketing director outlined all of the potential advertising options in a PowerPoint presentation, which I then presented to Slammers’ owners and GM. They found the different price quotes too steep for their advertising budget but still wanted me to remain in contact with her and explore any other options the mall had available.

Despite management’s opposition to these advertising opportunities, I still felt that the mall was a relatively good place to advertise. While I was unaware of the Slammers’ actual advertising budget, I felt that if the mall could come down just a tad on their original quotes, these opportunities could be a great way to generate team awareness in the community. The first section of the implementation phase of my business proposal to increase brand awareness and information dissemination focuses on specific mall advertising opportunities with the original quotes provided to me by the mall marketing director.

During the fourth week of the internship, I discovered another potential advertising partner for the Slammers: the Joliet Park District. Along with putting boxes of pocket schedules inside businesses, management also wanted the interns to hang up flyers promoting specific theme nights around the
community as well. While another intern and I attempted to hang up promotional flyers in the Joliet Park District’s baseball/softball complex, we were approached by a police officer who informed us that unless we had permission by the park district manager, we were not allowed to hang anything on the premises. The park district manager was very accommodating and allowed us to hang the flyers up throughout the complex and also gave me the contact information of the park district’s corporate relations director. I emailed this individual about potential partnership opportunities and later that week I received a brochure in the mail describing all the available advertising and sponsorship opportunities. I passed this brochure along to the Slammers’ GM and after briefly skimming through the pages, he concluded that most of the opportunities were out of their price range. Again, I felt that their prices were more than reasonable and that a few of the partnership opportunities would be a great opportunity to generate brand awareness in the community to a key demographic. The second section of the implementation phase of my proposal to increase brand awareness and information dissemination centers on the partnership opportunities with the park district with all prices and terms coming from the brochure mailed to me by the Joliet Park District’s corporate relations director.

During the internship, I also learned that the city of Joliet has free advertising slots on the new city-owned digital billboards. The Slammers have a great relationship with the city and even have established the “City Center Partnership” in which fans can exchange receipts from downtown Joliet businesses for Slammers’ tickets. In previous seasons, the Slammers have even advertised on these billboards. The current management was unaware that the Slammers had advertised on these billboards in the past and while they were not opposed to this opportunity, they did look into this opportunity any further. If the Slammers are able to use these billboards for free or at a discounted rate because of their relationship with the city of Joliet, they definitely need to do so.

As the internship progressed, I realized that Slammers’ management opposed many of the potential advertising opportunities because of the associated cost. The Slammers needed to take
advantage of the free army of interns to help promote the team in community through guerilla
marketing initiatives. Towards the end of the internship, and after some persuasion by the interns,
management allowed us to make random appearances around town with the team’s mascot. We only
did this a handful of times because by the time we coordinated the appearances, the internship was
coming to an end. Combine these appearances with a creative social media campaign (another free
option) and the Slammers can create a stronger community presence without spending any money.
These guerilla marketing techniques and social media initiatives are outlined in the “creative marketing”
section of my proposal to increase brand awareness and information dissemination in the community.

While the Slammers need to take advantage of these “free” options, they also have the ability to
generate additional revenue, primarily in three different ways: in-game promotions, auxiliary events,
and sponsorships. On game days during the season, my main responsibility was to staff the “sales table”
on the concourse of the stadium. While at the sales table, I was to promote the team’s different ticket
packages as well as sell tennis balls for “Throw For Dough,” an in-game promotion in which fans attempt
to throw the tennis balls into buckets placed on the infield to win different prizes. While these tennis
balls only cost a dollar, many fans did not take part in the game because the balls were only sold from
the sales table, an area which not every fan walked past. As the season progressed, I began to actively
promote the game and sell the tennis balls from different locations. In doing so, I was able to increase
tennis ball sales from approximately $50, to upwards of $100 on a daily basis, depending on the size of
the crowd. The revenue generated from this increase in sales can be used to fund new marketing
initiatives.

The Slammers can also generate revenue through non-baseball related events such as “movie
nights” at the ballpark. Movie nights were first introduced during the summer of 2013 and were much
more popular than expected. For only $1 each, parents and their children could watch a movie on the
outfield video board from the outfield grass. While helping supervise two of the movie nights and talking
with those in attendance, I learned that fans would be open to an increase in price as long as the cost remained relatively low. By simply increasing the price of movie nights to $2 per person, the Slammers can double the revenue generated from these events.

Another option the Slammers have to raise revenue is sponsorship sales. The Slammers have a variety of signage and promotional opportunities available but do not actively have a staff member dedicated to selling sponsorships. If the Slammers were able to sell even a small number of low-cost sponsorships, this additional revenue would be able to help fund a more expansive marketing effort to increase the Slammers' brand awareness.

This proposal outlines an ideal situation in which the Slammers initiate a sizable marketing initiative to increase brand awareness and information dissemination. While the Slammers may not need to initiate all of the proposed elements, based on the size of their annual marketing budget and their ability to additional revenue through new sponsorships, auxiliary events, and in-game promotions, a combination of at least some of these elements is necessary to help increase awareness which will lead to new business and increased attendance. Since the Slammers greatest strengths revolve around game-day operations, finding ways to get new individuals into the ballpark should be management’s top priority. Executing this proposal will help the Slammers increase brand awareness and information dissemination in local and surrounding communities.
SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- New, motivated management and ownership
- Location
- Affordable
- Beautiful ballpark and facilities (suites and 360 degree concourse)
- Miracle Field
- Free parking
- Lots of alcohol options
- “Early Bird” food specials
- Popular mascots
- Some previous national recognition
- Metra/Amtrak nearby
- Recent league championship

The Slammers are led by a group of individuals that genuinely want the organization to succeed. Despite changing ownership three times over the past three seasons, the entire staff insists that the new management group is one like they have never seen before. The owners are very hand-on and try to be a part of the organization's day-to-day activities. Joliet is the fourth largest city in Illinois and is located only about 40 miles south of Chicago. The Metra/Amtrak train station also stops directly across the street from the stadium providing residents easy access to and from Chicago and the southwest suburbs. Attending a Slammers game is extremely affordable. With basic ticket prices ranging from only $5-$12, free parking, discounted food for the first 30 minutes, and other daily specials, a family of four can attend a game for less than $40 and leave the stadium completely satisfied. The venue also boasts a large variety alcohol options with eight different beers on draft and a variety of liquor options, which is rare for a minor league enterprise. The ballpark itself is only 11 years old and is one of the largest in the entire Frontier League. Silver Cross Field offers 11 climate-controlled suites with indoor/outdoor seating as well as a 360 degree concourse that allows fans to walk around the entire stadium. A Miracle Field is also located within the stadium’s boundary which offers a unique opportunity for disable individuals to take part in a baseball game of their own. The unveiling of their mascots (J.L. Bird and Spikes) received national recognition and the infamous “Tarpocalypse 2012” video has over 700,000 views on YouTube, and was featured on ESPN and covered by other national news outlets. The Slammers also won the league championship in their inaugural 2011 season.
WEAKNESSES

- Lack of awareness both outside and within the city
- Lack of player recognition
- High player turnover
- Parking
- Location
- New management/front office staff
- Small staff
- Bad reputation
- Weak marketing/promotion initiatives
- Limited revenue streams

Despite the optimism surrounding the new management team, changing ownership three times in three years is a difficult task. No sense of consistency has been established and the ownership and staff are still trying to establish a clear direction for the organization. The Slammers were previously known as the Joliet Jackhammers but after many successful seasons, the Jackhammers found themselves in a hole financially. As the organization began to falter, the Jackhammers continued to spend money on unnecessary expenditures and left a bad taste in the community's mouth when the team finally "disappeared" without any prior notice. The Jackhammer's did not repay season ticket holder who purchased tickets for the next season and did not honor many of their sponsorship deals after the team folded. Many people in the community still associate the many wrongdoings of the Jackhammers with the Slammers organization, even though the two are completely different teams. Many local residents are not even sure what the Slammers are and the Slammers have thus far failed to attract many fans from outside the Joliet and its nearby towns. While the Slammers are located in a rather large city, the stadium itself is not located in the best of areas and parking is difficult because the organization does not have its own parking lot. Fans are forced to endure a "Wrigley Field" type parking situation as they have to park lots owned by the courthouse, local schools and banks, as well as parking garages which are located a few blocks from the stadium. The structure of the league results in high player turnover which means that player recognition is not very high. Fans are not able to attach themselves to specific players, which is one of the many reasons fans attend major league games. Minor league baseball has two basic revenue streams: tickets sales and sponsorship. If a team cannot bring fans to the games, sponsorship sales will decrease and the organization will struggle financially.
OPPORTUNITIES

- Increase marketing initiatives in regions farther from stadium
- More aggressive advertising campaigns
- Better relationship with hotels/casino
- Create family ticket package
- Use facilities for more than just baseball games
- Better relationship with local businesses
- Increase presence in Joliet Mall and other shopping centers
- Increase presence within the Joliet Park District

The Slammers main objective should be to increase its awareness both within the city of Joliet and some of the larger cities located 15-20 minutes away. The organization does not spend any money of billboards or signage and its only form of advertising are advertisements in the local paper and radio station. Creating more awareness and building a larger fan base that stretches farther into the region should be the most important initiative for the Slammers moving forward. The team also needs to establish better relationship with the local businesses, hotels, and the casino located only 5 blocks from the stadium. Developing some kind of partnership with the casino would be a great way to reach a large amount of potential fans. Also, the Slammers do not have a family ticket package, despite having many mini-packages and other group ticket deals. Developing a family ticket package would be a great way to bring in more families to the ballpark. Also, the organization is just starting to use the ballpark for more than just baseball. Hosting concerts, conventions, and other community events at the ballpark is a great way expose the community to the venue and create a larger fan base.
THREATS

- Weather
- Economy
- Other local baseball/sports teams (Windy City Thunderbolts, Kane County Cougars)
- Other entertainment options (movie theaters, concerts, restaurants etc.)

The weather is a major threat to any form of baseball. Minor league baseball is especially affected by the weather because teams rely heavily on walk-up ticket sales. Any threat of bad weather keeps fans away and with the limited number presold tickets, a rainy day can drastically keep attendance figures down. Even though single game tickets are quite affordable, season tickets, mini-packages, and suite/exclusive area sales can be somewhat pricy. The economy has affected the sales of suites and season ticket packages, which are some of the few guaranteed revenue streams available to the Slammers. Other Frontier League teams such as the Windy City Thunderbolts (25 minutes away) and the Kane County Cougars, as well as Chicago’s professional teams also compete with the Slammers to attract the local sports fan. The Slammers also compete with other entertainment options, such as concerts and movie theaters. People have a limited discretionary income and with the many options available, the Slammers need to find a way to differentiate themselves from other forms of entertainment and become a priority in the minds their fans.
Recommendation 1

Create a family ticket package

The Slammers pride themselves in being an affordable, family-friendly option for fans to spend their time, however they offer no specific package that targets a traditional family. To qualify for a “group rate”, a group must consist of 10 or more which means the traditional family of four or five does not qualify. Many fans call the stadium asking what kinds of “family discounts” are available. I typically sidestep the question and respond by saying that we have “Early Bird” specials available every game, even though these are available to everyone, not just families. Many minor league baseball teams have some sort of “family discount” that includes a ticket as well as a hot dog and/or fountain drink for each member of the family. Our director or ticket sales proposed a similar package before the season but it was not put into effect for reasons unbeknownst to me. However, the low attendance figures this season have prompted some new ideas and I believe that we may begin using some sort of “family discount” sometime in the near future.

Recommendation 2

More advertising in the city of Joliet, especially in the mall, park district, and other high-traffic areas

Joliet is the fourth largest town in Illinois and is located only 40 minutes southwest of Chicago, one of the greatest sports cities in the nation. With such a large pool of potential fans, low attendance figures should not be acceptable. The city of Joliet provides many great opportunities for the Slammers’ to promote itself, but the team fails to take advantage of the most common form of marketing: typical advertising. One of my first jobs as an intern was to gather information about advertising opportunities available at the Joliet mall. Many of these options seemed more than reasonable, despite the team’s small advertising budget, but the GM seemed to just brush this idea to the side. I have also been in contact with the Joliet Park District about possible advertising opportunities. Again, many of these opportunities were pushed to the side despite being very reasonable. Also, through some research I noticed that the city owns a few electronic signs on certain intersections that are used to promote different events happening in Joliet. Being that the stadium is owned by the city, advertising on these signs might be free. The team has a decent relationship with members of the city council but our GM has yet to contact him about the possibility of advertising on these signs. The Slammers are located in downtown Joliet, an area that is secluded from the residential areas and is more of a business district so generating awareness through typical advertising is a great way to promote the Slammers’ brand.
**Recommendation 3**

*Increase marketing campaigns in cities/towns that are 15-25 minutes away*

Despite being in an isolated business district, some Joliet residents, as well as those in neighboring towns, have at least heard of the Slammers and only need subtle reminders (typical advertising) in order to spark their interest in a game. However, many of the larger, wealthier cities that are located about 15-20 minutes away have yet to even be exposed to the Slammers'. I find it baffling that our front office has yet to promote the Slammers in Naperville, Orland Park, and Bolingbrook, all of which are rather large cities with plenty of potential fans whose nearest sporting option is either a professional team in Chicago or another minor league team (one of which is just about the same distance away and has worse facilities than the Slammers). The interns have continued to put pocket schedules in businesses located in Joliet or towns that border Joliet, many of which are extremely small. The Slammers’ need to extend their reach into the larger towns that are only slightly farther away, even if that means simply putting a box of schedules in the restaurants or the mall, because without this, these residents do not even know that the Slammers exist.

**Recommendation 4**

*Host concerts, clinics, movies, and other non-baseball related events in the stadium*

The best way to introduce non-baseball fans to our beautiful stadium and facilities is to host a variety of other entertainment options the ballpark. Minor league baseball is more about the entertainment that occurs in between innings, as well as a barrage of other off-field promotions, instead of the actual game anyway, so what better way to bring fans into the stadium than to host a concert or movie night. These events can attract both the sports enthusiast as well as the non-sports fan, both of which the Slammers’ are trying to draw to games. Minor league baseball is more of an entertainment experience than a baseball game and the Slammers’ need to show the versatility of the venue. While these extra events have the potential to create their own revenue, they are also creating awareness about the Slammers which will hopefully generate future ticket sales as well.
Recommendation 5

Promote the specific aspects of the experience that are affordable and unique: parking, Early Bird specials, variety of beer options, etc.

Attending a Slammers’ game is a more than affordable experience, especially compared to other sport events and entertainment options but many fans do not realize the many discounts and options that are available on a day-to-day basis. Parking is almost always a cost that is inevitable when attending a sporting event, but parking is free at a Slammers game. Also, many of our food options are discounted for the first half hour of the game as well due to our Early Bird Specials. Also on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, the Slammers offer a “Blue Collar Buffet” ticket which includes an all you can eat buffet as well as a reserved seat for only $20. Many of these great deals are not promoted as much as they should be in the community and are only visible on signage at the ballpark or on our website. Cost-conscious consumers should greatly appreciate the many ways to save at a Slammers’ game if only they knew that discounts that were available. Also, we have a variety of different alcohol options including 13 different beer options, with 7 different beers on tap, malts, and margaritas, all of which are reasonably priced. Many minor league stadiums are restricted to only a few different alcohol options, most notably our two local competitors.

Recommendation 6

Turn “Mayor Art Schultz Drive” into a tailgating area before each game

Mayor Art Schultz Drive is a street that runs parallel to the west side of the stadium and is basically only used for employee parking, box office parking, and limited local traffic. During games, all cars must be removed from the street and the street itself is shut down from all traffic. This area provides the perfect location for some sort of pre-game festivities. The Slammers should utilize this space to create a “tailgate” atmosphere before each game. The Slammers could have live local music, serve food and beverages, provide different games (bags, beer pong, bozo buckets, etc...), and set up other activities for fans to enjoy before the game. We tried a small variation of this “street party” during our “Mardi Gras Night” which was not very successful because the event was not promoted very well, but with the proper promotion I feel that a tailgating area has the potential to be very popular.
Recommendation 7

Make each "theme night" something special

Minor league baseball is the king of promotion nights. The Slammers have a variety of theme nights scheduled including "80's Night", "Mardi Gras Night", as well as the always popular "Star Wars Night" and "Disney Night". While these theme nights sound great in theory, one can hardly tell that certain nights are "themed" if it were not announced over the PA or flashed on the video board. For example, on "Superhero Night" fans were told that they could dress as their favorite superhero for the game. Besides the costumes, the only other superhero themed activities were the occasional superhero movie scene on the video board and superhero theme song played in between innings on the sound system. These different theme nights can definitely be more developed and include things such as a scavenger hunt, themed food specials, themed mid-inning promotions, themed concourse games, pre/post game activities as well as any other relevant promotions. If I was a fan, I would be very disappointed in our theme nights and a more elaborate presentation would make the night much more memorable.
**Proposed Recommendation**

**A Proposal To Increase Brand Awareness And Information Dissemination In Local And Surrounding Communities**

The Joliet Slammers offer an affordable, family-fun experience for everyone in the greater Joliet area, but the organization's low attendance figures reveal that despite the staff's best efforts to put fans in the seats, something more needs to be done. Both traditional and creative marketing initiatives that emphasize brand awareness and information dissemination need to be utilized in the city of Joliet itself, as well as the surrounding communities, in order to establish the Slammers as a viable entertainment option alongside other avenues including concerts, movies, fests, as well as other sporting events in the area. Increasing brand awareness and improving the way the important information is distributed to the public are two key factors that can lead to improved attendance and will ultimately increase the well-being of the organization.
Executive Summary

As described on the Joliet Slammer’s Official Website, “The City of Joliet is the fourth largest city in the state of Illinois, located just 45 miles southwest of Chicago’s Loop. Home to over 147,000 residents, in addition to thriving businesses and attractions, the City of Joliet is easily accessible by rail, auto and bus transit. A perfect place to live, work and play, Joliet is constantly striving to promote growth and diversity.”

The Slammers need to find a way to attract the attention of Joliet’s large population and its surrounding communities and expose them to the spectacle that is a Joliet Slammer’s baseball game. The Slammer’s home stadium, Silver Cross Field, which holds just over 6,000 people, has 12 luxury suites, as well as two exclusive party patios and a 360 degree concourse, is one of the best stadiums in the Frontier League and is a great venue to watch a ball game.

As of July 15, 2013, the Slammers have drawn 48,217 total fans and have averaged 1,929 fans per game in the 2013 season. The Slammers currently rank 9th out of 12 in the Frontier League in average attendance. The Gateway Grizzlies lead the league in average attendance with 3,500 fans per game, while the Windy City Thunderbolts bottom out the league with an average of 1,524 fans per game. While these numbers are self-reported and are prone to a high amount of error, they provide a basic comparison for teams in the league. In the 2012 season, the Slammers averaged 2,231 fans per game over 47 regular season games.

In order for people to be exposed to the amazing facilities and entertainment that the Slammer’s have to offer, individuals have to know that the Slammers, and Silver Cross Field, exist. Once people are aware of the Slammers brand, they have to understand the affordability and entertainment value that the Slammers offer. Establishing brand awareness and improving information distribution can be achieved in three simple ways:

1. Traditional Marketing (Phase 1)
2. Creative Marketing (Phase 1)
3. Abundant, Clear Messages (Phase 2)
**IMPLEMENTATION- Phase 1- Traditional and Creative Marketing**

### Traditional Marketing
- Signage
  - Mall Billboards
  - Park District Facility Signage
  - City Owned Electronic Signs

### Creative Marketing
- Guerilla Marketing with Interns
- Non-baseball Related Events at Silver Cross Field
  - Concerts
  - Car Shows
  - Movies
  - Campouts
  - Clinics
  - Amateur games
  - Other Fests
- Social Media Campaigns
  - “Where’s the Mascot?”
  - “Like”, “Share”, and “Follow” Contests

**IMPLEMENTATION- Phase 2- Abundant, Clear Messages**

- Billboards
  - General Awareness
  - Specific Promotions
- Social Media
- In-stadium Opportunities
Traditional Marketing

Mall Branding Opportunities-Louis Joliet Mall

Louis Joliet Mall is located in the far Southwest Suburbs of Chicago in the growing area of Joliet, IL. In addition to serving the community of Joliet, surrounding towns in the trade area that frequent the property include: Lockport, Romeoville, Bolingbrook, Shorewood, Plainfield and more. Located only six miles and 20 minutes from Silvercross Field, Joliet Louis Mall provides a great opportunity for the Slammers to reach a mass amount of potential fans.

Basic Demographic Information

- Median Age 32
- Average House Hold Income $41,000
- Total Trade Area Population 231,000
- Annual Traffic Count in Center 7.5 Million
**Exterior Billboard**

**Monthly Rate:** $1,500  
**Annual Rate:** $12,000

This is the only available exterior billboard available at the Louis Joliet Mall. Conveniently located outside the highest trafficked shopper entrance, the Slammers have the opportunity to expose shoppers to the Slammers brand as they enter the movie theater or food court.

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**Food Court Table Tents/Clings**

**Monthly Rate:** $1,000

Table tents and clings have long dwell time with repeat impressions as shoppers dine. These advertisements will be located on all tables in the 8-restaurant food court. One of the most popular aspects of the mall, most shoppers at least walk through this area once per visit.

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**Exterior Door Wrap**

**Monthly Rate:** $1,850

Each set of mall entrance doors will have a minimum of two doors wrapped providing visibility to all shoppers entering mall. These wraps should be in color and double sided to provide maximum exposure to mall shoppers.
**Interior Tombstones**

**Monthly Rate: $750**

Conveniently located in many of the mall's high traffic areas, tombstones provide the perfect opportunity to grab the attention of shoppers at eye-level. These 3 x 5 feet standing advertisements are double sided and allow the Slammers to promote their team in color throughout the entirety of the mall.

To fully take advantage of the advertising opportunities that Joliet Louis Mall has to offer, the Joliet Slammers need to strategically choose which potential opportunities will work best for the organization and when they should be implemented. Since the Slammers season runs from May until August, this four month span is the most effective time period for the Slammers to advertise at the mall. In order to create somewhat of a "Slammer's Advertising Zone," the organization should focus its advertising efforts on the highest traffic area of the mall: the food court and movie theater. This means that only certain advertising options should be utilized: the exterior billboard, the food court/movie theater entrance door wraps, the food court table tents/clings, and the interior tombstone located directly inside the food court/movie theater entrance. These advertisements will leave four separate impressions on shoppers in a matter of seconds. Shoppers will be exposed to this signage when entering the mall, eating at the food court, and exiting the mall. Numerous impressions multiple times will ultimately leave a lasting image in the minds of mall shoppers.
Joliet Splash Station Waterpark

Zero Depth Pool Sponsor

Rate: $5000-Three year commitment

Includes:

- Slammers logo painted on the floor of zero depth pool
- Slammers logo featured on both the Splash Station website and Joliet Park District website
- 50 day passes to Splash Station for each year of the contact

Pelican Pond is a 250,000 gallon zero depth pool located on the east side of Splash Station. This unique area provides young children the opportunity to enjoy themselves in the shallow water as well as gives adults the chance to lie down and catch some rays. This area is the one of the most popular gathering areas within the park. With its unique logo on the pool floor, the Slammers will reach nearly every attendee in the park and generate awareness during the heart of its summer season.

Banner

Rate: $1000 per year

Includes:

- Slammers logo featured on a banner on the fence in the concession area
- Slammers logo featured on the Splash Station website

In addition to these signage opportunities, establishing a relationship with the Splash Station will provide potential trade-off opportunities and possibly allow the Slammers to have outside promotional events at the venue as well.
Inwood Sports Complex/Harlow Lockwood Softball Fields

Softball Field Sponsorship

Rate: $2000- Three year commitment

Includes:

- A softball field market sign created and maintained by the park district featuring the Slammers' logo
- The Slammers logo on a 6 x 20 foot banner placed in the outfield
- Slammers name used in summer/fall softball schedules to denote fields

In addition to these signage opportunities, establishing a relationship with the Inwood Sports Complex’s Athletic Coordinator will allow for other potential advertising trade-offs and possibly allow the Slammers to have other promotional events during softball games and other events at the venue. The demographic of people who participate in adult/youth softball are exactly the type of people that Slammers need to attract.
City Owned Digital Billboards

Other potential advertising options are the new, digital billboards located on street level at a variety of intersections and streets throughout the city of Joliet. Obtaining advertisements on the two LED billboards located near the Louis Joliet Mall would be a great step forward for the Slammers’ advertising portfolio.

The first sign measures 6’ x 15’ and is located at the major local intersection of Essington Road and Hennepin Drive, just outside the Louis-Joliet Mall. This unit reaches traffic heading to this regional mall known for great shopping and popular dining areas and restaurants. This sign is only 20 minutes from Silvercross Field and has an estimated 92,269 weekly TAB impressions.

The second sign measure 10’ x 20’ and is located at the major local intersection of Larkin Avenue and Theodore Street, just 10 minutes from Silvercross Field. This unit offers a great two way read to southbound Larkin and eastbound Theodore. Shopping centers, grocery stores, several retail and fast food stores as well as auto dealerships are located within the immediate area of this location. This sign has a Daily Estimated Circulation (DEC) of just over 40,000.

While these signs are operated and owned by Impact Outdoor, LLC, according to the Joliet Patch, "the city [Joliet] also gets free advertising slots." Since the Slammers have a strong partnership with the city of Joliet, the organization might be able to coordinate a tradeoff with the city, or create a clause in their current contract, that secures the Slammers free, or reduced, advertising on these signs.
Creative Marketing

Guerrilla Marketing With Interns

Guerilla marketing is one of the many creative marketing opportunities that the Slammers can capitalize on with the help of the interns. Guerilla marketing is completely free to the organization and can be just as effective as traditional signage and billboards if utilized correctly. With the help of one of the two Slammers' mascots, Spikes or JL Bird, or even an actual gorilla, the interns can make spontaneous appearances at popular locations around the city of Joliet, such as shopping centers, parks, athletic complexes or busy intersections with special discounts or other promotional materials. Timing these random appearances with a popular giveaway or theme night is the most effective way to utilize this type of marketing.

Also, driving around the city in the Slammers' pick-up truck, a Ford F-150 decorated with Slammers' logos and artwork, is a simple way to generate awareness. On game days, driving the truck around the city with a sign or banner promoting the game is a simple, cost efficient way to exposure people to the Slammers brand when they are least expecting it. Even parking the truck in a busy parking lot or intersection the morning of a game with a sign encouraging spectators to come out to the park is an easy way to create game awareness.

If done consistently and timed correctly with a specific home stand, guerilla marketing has the potential to generate a tremendous amount of awareness with little to no cost to the organization.
Non-baseball Related Events at the Stadium

A simple way to expose supposed non-baseball fans to a baseball stadium is to hold an event unrelated to the sport itself. Through this exposure, fans will become aware of the venue and facilities and will undoubtedly be curious about other events that occur within the stadium. With the help of in-stadium signage and other visual/audio elements promoting the Slammers’ brand, attendees will become aware of the affordability and entertainment value of a Slammers game. These extra events also give the Slammers the opportunity to create package deals that include both event tickets and Slammers tickets. Non-baseball events also have the ability to generate extra revenue for the organization as well.

Concerts

Hosting a concert at Silver Cross Field is one popular way to expose a variety of fans to the Slammers brand. Again, this type of creative marketing can be relatively inexpensive if the Slammers are simply trying to expose people to the venue. If the Slammers merely provide the venue at a small cost and let the entertainment act collect all of the profit from tickets and other areas, these events can be a great success. Both the entertainment act and Slammers organization can promote the event. Booking up-and-coming country artists, old-school rock-and-roll bands, or popular cover bands are the three best options for the Slammers given the city of Joliet’s rural, workmanlike characteristics.

The Normal Cornbelters and Florence Freedom of the Frontier League are two teams that already host large scale concerts in their stadiums. According to an article on the Normal Cornbelters’ Official Website, “the organization partnered with S.A.W. Events in 2012 to present a Dierks Bentley, Josh Thompson and Jon Pardi concert. It was the first stand-alone concert at the ballpark, and roughly 5,000 people attended.” The Cornbelters held their second concert on June 29, 2013 which included national acts Darius Rucker, Rodney Atkins and Jana Kramer. The Florence Freedom also have a sponsored summer concert series held at their ballpark which features headliners such as Styx, Grand Funk Railroad, and Night Ranger and John Waite.
**Car Shows**

Another simple, cost efficient way to attract non-baseball fans to the Silver Cross Field is to host a monthly car show. Located only 15 minutes from the Chicagoland Speedway and surrounded by many blue-collar communities, Silver Cross Field provides an ideal opportunity for locals to display their vintage hotrods before a Slammers’ game. Mayor Art Schultz Drive/Michigan Street, located just west of the stadium, provides the perfect location for car owners to display their vehicles and mingle during the pregame festivities. This spectacle has the potential to attract baseball and auto fans alike and has will expose new people to the venue. Also, this event will add to the entertainment value of a Slammers’ game which will also make the experience more memorable and exciting for everyone in attendance. Discounted tickets can also be offered to car enthusiasts as an incentive for them to display their vehicles before the game.

**Other Events**

The Slammers already conduct a variety of other events including two scout campouts, five movie nights, three baseball clinics, amateur events, and other fests including its Hopstring Fest, which is a craft beer and roots rock music festival. While a majority of these events to fail to generate revenue on their own, they do generate awareness and goodwill within the community. Having a strong presence in the community will lead to more awareness and eventually ticket sales. The Slammers need to continue to promote their already established non-baseball events, as well as create new events, to establish Silver Cross Field as a destination in Joliet for baseball games, as well as other forms of entertainment.
Social Media Campaigns

Technology is changing the way the sports organizations communicate with its fans and target audiences. Social media is a simple and free way for an organization to engage with its fans with minimal effort. Through the use of specific social media campaigns, the Slammers can expand their reach in the community and generate more awareness.

"Where’s the Mascot?"

Similar to the previously mentioned guerrilla marketing techniques, the Slammers can engage in a social media game called “Where’s the Mascot?” Each Wednesday, the Slammers can give clues out on its social media platforms describing a location where the mascot will be appearing at a specific time. Fans will be given a “code word” to say once they find the mascot in order to win a prize. A grand prize will be given out to the first person complete the game with secondary prizes given out to subsequent participants. Prizes can range from suite tickets, reserved seats, to free merchandise but must be something that is in high demand in order to attract the attention of its social media fans. Fan engagement of this kind leaves a lasting impression on people and has the potential to increase the Slammers social media following as the game catches on.

“Like/Share”, and “Retweet/Follow” Contests

One way to induce “Likes” on Facebook and “Follows” on Twitter is to create contests where fans can win prizes. Setting “Like” benchmarks on Facebook is one way to help increase the Slammers’ reach. Once the Slammers reach a certain number of “Likes”, the team will give away a specific prize. This requires fans to share the page, exposing more people to the Slammers’ brand. Also the Slammers can use Facebook to promote specific posts. Holding a “Share” contest where all of the fans that share a specific post are entered to win a prize is another way to increase the Slammers following on Facebook. The same can be done on Twitter. The Slammers can promote specific tweets by rewarding a random fan that retweets a promoted post. These contests have the potential to increase the Slammers reach in the short run and in the long run.
IMPLEMENTATION - Phase 2 - Abundant, Clear Messages

Billboards

Billboards are a great way to expose a mass audience to our organization; however, the proper message needs to be presented on these signs in order to leave a lasting impression and ultimately convince fans to attend a game. The Slammers can use billboards for two different purposes:

1. General awareness
2. Specific promotions

General awareness billboards can best be utilized in areas not, or vaguely, familiar with the Joliet Slammers organization. Signage in malls in or along highways that simply provide basic information about the Slammers and direct individuals to our website where more specific information is available is the best option in cities such as Orland Park, Tinley Park, and Naperville. Residents of these towns need to be aware that the Slammers are a professional baseball team that provides an affordable, family-friendly experience before they are overwhelmed with the specifics of different group packages and other specific promotions.

However, some of the residents of Joliet and its neighboring communities are already at least somewhat familiar with the organization but need the extra push to get them to purchase tickets. Whereas general awareness signage is used only to expose individuals to the Slammers brand, signage that promotes specific deals available at the ballpark give people who are already aware of the Slammers the additional motivation needed to come out to the ballpark. This signage can promote food specials, such as the Early Bird Specials and Blue Collar Buffet, as well as other unique aspects of the stadium such as its free parking and long list of available beer options.
Social Media

The Joliet Slammers use the two most prominent forms of social media to communicate with their fans: Facebook and Twitter. However, the Slammers have just over 6,000 likes on Facebook and nearly 1,500 followers on Twitter. While these numbers are far from overwhelming, the Slammers need to take advantage of its social media following to properly promote the organization.

First off, the Slammers do not actually use Twitter. The organization has its Twitter set up so that everything that is posted to its Facebook is automatically posted on Twitter as well. This is a problem because Twitter is meant for short, specific posts whereas Facebook is meant for longer, more descriptive stories. When viewing the Slammers’ Twitter account, the messages are not easily understood because of their length and are seemingly pointless. The Slammers Facebook/Twitter updates need to be informative and catchy, as well as posted more often.

Also, aside from providing in-game updates, game photos, and the occasional short paragraph describing an upcoming theme night or promotion, the Slammers’ Facebook/Twitter accounts do not provide for much interaction with the fans. Using social media as a platform for player/coach “Q and A's” is one way that allows the fans to connect with the team. Also, allowing a player to manage the team Twitter account for a game provides a fresh perspective that many fans might appreciate.

The Slammers social media is too conservative to attract more than just the typical fan. Through creative social media initiatives, the Slammers can boost their following which allows important team information to reach a larger amount of people.
In-stadium Opportunities

Once fans are in the stadium they need to be aware of all of the unique aspects of the ballpark and special deals that the Slammers offer. The Slammers offer a variety of specials:

1. Early Bird Specials- The first 30 minutes the gates are open five concession items are discounted: hot dogs, soft drinks, hamburgers, pretzels and popcorn.
2. Blue Collar Buffet- For $20, every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday a fan receives a reserved seat as well as a 90-minute all-you-can-eat buffet.
3. Thirty Thursday- Every Thursday, all 16 oz. domestic drafts are $2.00.
4. Firework Fridays: Every Friday the Slammers hold a pots-game firework show
5. Kids Run the Bases: Every day expect Fridays, kids are allowed to run the bases postgame
6. Postgame Autographs: Every Sunday, fans are allowed onto the field where the entire Slammers roster will sign autographs for everyone
7. Birthday Parties
8. Pre-game Picnics
9. Exclusive Party Areas
10. Group Tickets/Luxury Suites

A majority of these specials are only listed in fine print on a pocket schedule or quickly spoken over the PA system. These unique elements of a Slammers game need to be displayed/announced clearly multiple times a game in a variety of different locations. Flyers need to be visible on the box office window, concourse signage needs to be bright and informative, video board graphics need to be clear and occur often, and PA reads need to be understandable and helpful. Getting fans in the stadium is a great start, but getting them to return is more difficult. Using in-stadium signage to create awareness of the affordability and fun that the Slammers have to offer is one way to increase fan retention.
EVALUATION

Measuring the effectiveness of an advertising campaign is difficult due to people's indirect experience and lack of engagement with a sign or billboard. However, two tools can be used to help the Slammers better understand the value of a specific advertising campaign.

Surveys

One way to evaluate the effectiveness of an advertising campaign is through the use of surveys. These surveys will be handed out prior to an advertising campaign in a location close to the advertisement, as well as other specific locations determined by the organization. These surveys will include both general awareness questions (Have you heard of the Joliet Slammers? Have you ever been to a Joliet Slammers game before?) as well as questions regarding specific promotions (Are you aware of the Early Bird Specials? Are you aware that we have $2.00 domestic drafts on Thirsty Thursdays?). These surveys will be administered before, during, and after the advertising campaign to evaluate if the results have changed over the course of the season and if so, by how much. While surveying is tedious work that does not always provide accurate results, it does help the Slammers somewhat evaluate and advertising campaign.

Promotion Codes

A more efficient and effective way to evaluate an advertisement campaign is through the use of promotional codes. Specific words or phrases can be used to identify certain advertisements which fans then use when they purchase tickets. For example, if the exterior billboard at the mall states that using promotional code “MALL” gets fans $1.00 off reserved seats, each time a fan uses the code “MALL” to purchase tickets, the ticketing system records the information. At the end of a season, the team will be able to see how many fans used the code “MALL”, which will help the organization evaluate the effective of the sign. These codes can be used for a variety of different specials and should be changed routinely to keep the attention of the public. The use of promotional codes provides a simple, quantitative method to evaluate the effectiveness of specific signs and advertisements.
**BUDGET**

Revenue

- **Movie Nights**
  - Every Friday night during the season that the Slammers do not have a home game, the organization holds a “Movie Night.” On these nights, families are allowed to watch a movie on the video board in left field from the outfield grass and/or stadium seats. Admission to these events is currently only $1.00 and this year the organization plans to have a total of five “movie nights.” The first two movie nights this year have drawn approximately 400 people and brought in roughly a total of $800. If the Slammers raise these ticket prices to $2.00 and have five “movie nights” per season and continue to draw 400 spectators, on average, these events can generate approximately $4,000 in revenue of which a portion will be used to fund sponsorship and advertising opportunities.

- **In-game Promotions**
  - Currently, the Slammers have three in-game promotions that bring in revenue: “Throw for Dough”, the inflatable speed pitch, and the inflatable bounce house.
    1. “Throw for Dough” is a post-game promotion in which fans throw tennis balls onto the field in an attempt to get them into one of four hula hoops on the infield grass or bucket in front of second base to win free tickets or a cash prize, respectively. Tennis balls are purchased throughout the game and cost $1.00 for one ball or $5.00 for six balls.
    2. The inflatable speed pitch is located in the stadium’s “Kid’s Zone”. Fans are charged $1.00 and are allowed to throw three baseball at the target during which the speed of the pitch is recorded.
    3. The massive inflatable bounce house is in our “Kid’s Zone” beyond the left field wall and is in the shape of our mascot “Spikes.” Children are charge $1.00 to jump in the bounce house for up to five minutes.

Combined, these three in-game promotions approximately bring in $100-$400 per game, depending on the attendance. Over the course of the entire 51-games season, these in-game promotions have the potential to bring in approximately $5,000-$20,000 per season. At the midway point of the 2013 season, these promotions have generated roughly $8,000. A portion of this money will be used to help fund sponsorship and advertising opportunities.
• Sponsorships
  - The Slammers offer a variety of different sponsorship/advertising opportunities to
    businesses that wish to promote themselves within the stadium. Below is a complete list of
    the available partnership opportunities. Primarily, revenue generated through
    concourse/field level signage will be used to fund advertising and sponsorship opportunities
    for the Slammers (additional concourse level signage information in Supplement A):

In-Stadium Signage
  1. Concourse Level Signage ($250-$5000)
  2. Field Level Signage ($500-$15,000)
  3. Ballpark/Premium Areas ($7500-$35000)
  4. Exterior Opportunities ($10000-$50000)

Promotional Opportunities
  1. Concourse Tables ($300-$500)
  3. On-Field Promotions ($2500-$5000)
  4. Promotional Giveaway ($2000-$7000)
  5. Sponsored Promotional Night ($1000-$150000)

Expenses
• Mall Branding Opportunities
  o Exterior Billboard
  o Exterior Door Wraps
  o Table Tops/Clings
  o Tombstone

• Park District Sponsorship Opportunities
  o Splash Station Zero Depth Pool Logo
  o Splash Station Banner
  o Softball Field Sponsorship

• Materials
# Balance Sheet

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*Revenue is estimated and is based on a 51-game home schedule

**Expenses are not final and are subject to negotiation
**Summary**

In order to properly increase brand awareness and information dissemination in the Joliet community, the organization must make a conscious effort to market the team and the Slammers brand. Before the Slammers can make the “short list” of possible entertainment options in the Joliet area, individuals need to be aware of what the Slammers are and what they have to offer. Traditional marketing initiatives, if timed correctly and used in specific target markets, are an easy way for the Slammers to create a presence in the community, despite being somewhat costly. Creative marketing initiatives are cost-effective and allow members of the organization to connect with the public on a grassroots level, ultimately leaving a lasting impression that traditional marketing cannot. If these strategies are combined with clear, abundant messages, the Joliet Slammers will mature into a successful baseball franchise and become one of the premier entertainment options in the greater Joliet area.
**Supplement A**

**Concourse Level Signage Options**

**PACKAGE A $500**
- 3' x 3' ballpark concourse signage (first come, first served)
- Includes 4 Reserved tickets

**PACKAGE B $750**
- 3' x 3' ballpark concourse signage (first come, first served)
- Includes one concourse table to distribute your information to our fans (one game).
- Includes 4 Club tickets

**PACKAGE C $1,000**
- 2' x 10' on-field berm signage (first come, first served)
- Includes one concourse table to distribute your information to our fans (one game).
- Includes 4 Club tickets

**PACKAGE D $1,250**
- 2' x 10' on-field berm signage (first come, first served)
- Includes one concourse table to distribute your information to our fans (one game).
- Includes 22 Luxury Suite tickets for a game of your choice

**PACKAGE E $1,500**
- 2' x 10' on-field dugout signage (first come, first served)
- Includes one concourse table to distribute your information to our fans (one game).
- Includes 22 Luxury Suite tickets for a game of your choice

**PACKAGE F $2,000**
- 2' x 10' on-field dugout signage (first come, first served)
- Includes one concourse table to distribute your information to our fans (one game).
- 4 Full season Reserved tickets.

3' x 3' Ballpark Concourse Signage - Only 30 available, various locations in the ballpark.
2' x 10' On-Field Berm Signage - Only 12 available, located at the bottom of each berm area.
2' x 10' On-Field Dugout Signage - Only 12 available, located in front and to side of dugouts.
Bibliography


Impact Outdoor, LLC. *Outdoor Marketing Solutions for the Chicagoland Area*. 20 April 2014.


—. *Outdoor Marketing Solutions for the Chicagoland Area*. 20 April 2014.


