

# Marketing Positive Fan Behavior at The Pennsylvania State University

Presidential Leadership Academy

Spring 2011

Researched, written and presented by:

Sara Battikh, Angelo Cerimele, Sarah Dafilou, Bagas Dhanurendra,  
Sean Gillooly, Jared Marshall, Alyssa Wasserman and Sean Znachko

## **I. Introduction**

The two questions that began the policy discussion were: who is this program made for and how can that information get to them? The Penn State fan base is made of a diverse group of people: from freshman to seniors, recent graduates to “I’ve never missed a game in 60 years” alumni, from college friends visiting their peers, to parents visiting their children in addition to the fans of the visiting team. There are hundreds of thousands of sports fans that come to Penn State each weekend to support their teams. But are they supporting their team in the right way? Is making racial slurs towards a couple being a good Penn State fan? Is throwing beer cans at a visiting student from the other school being a good Penn State fan? In response to these incidents, fan behavior at Penn State needs to be addressed. This proposal comes in two parts. The first shows ways to promote what it means to be a good Penn State fans to the various audiences described above. The second part of the proposal is a marketing strategy for the text-a-tip program, a way to combat negative fan behavior that may occur at games.

## **II. The Campaign to Promote Positive Fan Behavior**

### *The Slogan*

Improving fan behavior is an extremely broad topic; mostly due to the fact that Penn State's fan base is one of the largest in the world. Penn State fans total in the thousands, and the population encompasses a wide variety of audiences. One of the goals is to create a slogan, a summation of the overall message behind improving fan behavior at Penn State. Similar to the Athletic Department's use of "Success with Honor," the positive fan behavior effort will use its slogan to make itself known throughout the Penn

State community.

The importance of a promotional slogan is instrumental to having any tangible success with this project. Establishing a slogan to umbrella the entire campaign will generate better results because it makes our mission that much easier to understand and will increase retention rate and desire to act on it. No matter what the slogan may be, incorporating a word or phrase that is catchy, relatable, and memorable will not only increase the chances of better fan behavior, but it will also create a positive reputation for the entire endeavor. For example, if we look toward Ohio State, they fashioned a large initiative to increase positive fan behavior, much like what the Presidential Leadership Academy is trying to accomplish here at Penn State. The OSU initiative is labeled “The Best Fans in the Land” campaign, a slogan which not only gives them national recognition, but a sense of pride that has Buckeye fans wanting to follow the ideas of the campaign. Circumscribing this project with a slogan will also significantly increase the ability of the movement to be talked about and become more prevalent on campus and in the media, utilizing the ideas of viral marketing. Some suggestions for possible campaign slogans are “the Greatest Fans for the Greatest Show” (since Penn State football is referred to as the greatest show in college football), “This is the Penn State Way,” or, to allude to the alma matter, “May No Act of Ours Bring Shame.”

#### *Magnets and T-shirts*

Creation of the slogan is only the first step, however. In order to increase awareness of the fan behavior messages, two pieces of merchandise, t-shirts and magnets will be used.

During an interview with Bridgett Carrier, President of Penn State PRIDE, one of

the main points she made was that students need constant reminders as to how their behavior affects those around them and the university's reputation as a whole. In order for these reminders to be effective, they must be visible and a part of the student's every day life without the student having to put in much effort to see them. Fan behavior magnets would target Penn State students living on-campus. Every Penn State dorm room is equipped with a mini-refrigerator, an item that can easily be decorated by magnets. We propose that a magnet bearing the fan behavior slogan be placed on every mini-fridge in the Penn State residence halls prior to move-in day. Pre-placement of the magnets requires no effort on the part of the student and might increase the chances that the student will not remove the magnet. The mini-fridge is an ideal location because it has a high level of interactivity with the student, and it is a staple in Penn State dorm rooms, therefore allowing us to access a large amount of the Penn State student population.

Dorm room magnets are also useful in targeting Penn State freshman. If the message of positive fan behavior is introduced to a student when he or she is a freshman, the student will be more likely to take its message to heart; because many freshmen have had little to no experience being a Penn State student fan, they may be less likely to disregard the magnet message as unworthy of attention.

In addition to magnets, t-shirts can serve as walking advertisements for positive fan behavior here at Penn State. With the development of a fan code of conduct and slogan to tie together the policies, a t-shirt would be able to bring it all together with a simple two sided print. On the front of the shirt, it would feature the slogan and potentially a Penn State logo. On the back of the shirt, it would feature the fan code of conduct. Whether these shirts are sold for profit or not (or even produced) is ultimately

up to the athletic department, but there are plenty of ways to market this product. First, since we are advocating fans to sign the code of conduct as they purchase their tickets, a readily available shirt featuring the code would have instant marketability. All the while, imagine if these shirts were “free” with the signing of the fan code of conduct. Nothing hits home like a free shirt, and these “free” shirts could easily be covered by a \$3-\$4 increase in ticket prices for the entire year. Considering that upwards of 18,000 shirts could be sold if this was marketed towards students only (assuming a 90% participation rate of the 20,000 students), Penn State’s leverage in ordering such mass quantity could drive costs per shirt down to around \$3-\$4 a shirt.

Within the marketing group, the focus has been on implementing the policies the class has developed. Through interviews with leaders on campus, in the athletic department, and in the State college community, we believe that these are the best physical reminders in terms of merchandise/paraphernalia for positive fan behavior here at Penn State. For the student about to get a drink out of their refrigerator, they will be reminded of positive fan behavior with the slogan-bearing magnet. For the student fan in a tie game in the fourth quarter in the student section, they can look to the row in front of them for a student wearing the shirt with the code of conduct on the back, and turn around to the row behind them to see the slogan of positive fan behavior on the shirts of others.

### *Posters*

Penn State students are exposed to hundreds of print advertisements every day. Whether it be handbills on bulletin boards, posters in windows, ads in a newspaper or magazine, or signs in common areas (just to name a few), there is massive potential to

raise the awareness of our mission to promote better sportsmanship through print.

Harnessing this resource can be simplified into four steps. The first is to create a flier and poster. The flier should be simple and right to the point, as the retention rates of a flier are typically no more than a quick glance. If a campaign slogan is established, that should be the most prominent message on the flier to remind people of the mission. Posters are better when flashy and memorable; something pleasing to look at and analyzed. Also, having only one poster designed and copied will be more effective than many so that it may establish uniformity and recognition.

The second step is distributing the flier and poster. Giving out the fliers in common areas and buildings (such as the HUB-Robeson Center) and at the gates of athletic events will be substantial. As for the poster, hanging it in high foot-traffic areas such as in dorms, cafeterias and common buildings couple with giving away a poster for signing the new Code of Conduct will suffice on campus. Asking stores and restaurants in State College to display the poster on their windows will help with the off-campus community as well.

The next step is to advertise this program in areas where students will see the message. This can be done by creating ads for newspapers and Stall Stories. Both of these mediums are read by numerous students on a daily basis.

Finally, post handbills in dorms, especially freshman dorms. The dorms represent the housing for a significant portion of Penn State students, including all freshmen, who must live on campus. Not to mention freshmen are the most susceptible to learn from our new endeavor since they are just starting to observe and understand the Penn State traditions. Following these four simple guidelines will be an excellent start to raising the

awareness of our goal and spreading the benefits of good sportsmanship.

*The Penn State Way Video Series*

There are ways in which media can be used to positively affect fan behavior while creating a more comfortable environment inside and outside the stadium. This part of the research is focused on video-communication (broadcast) and how the implementation of a video series can help in improving Penn State's fan behavior.

Videos readily provide available information, making the learning process faster and more comfortable, than reading books or attending long lectures. On the other hand, the effectiveness of learning how to behave from books depends, in large, of our own mental capacity. "More intelligent people can perfectly acquire the knowledge from only a written theme, but a spectacular presentation can stand the less intelligent people in good stead", thinks Rene Webber, media researcher at Santa Barbara University in California. Based on this and on other studies and universities' research, the Presidential Leadership Academy's marketing focus group, has reached the conclusion that creating a video, which can be projected during games - in and outside the stadium - is a good idea for helping our students to behave in the "*Penn State Way*."

Our proposal is inspired by Ohio State's Best Fans in the Land video series. We propose that for the next season, Penn State's Sportsmanship Council should produce a series of videos and announcements, highlighting good sportsmanship education at Penn State. The videos should be shown at different sporting events each season, not only inside stadiums, but also around the town in broadcast stations. Through this, Penn State University can increase sportsmanship education throughout the state and reach various audiences, not just students. The message would be simple: Just behave in a truly Penn

State Way! The idea for “the Penn State Way” came from a poster published some years ago by the Penn State Alumni Association, in which they stated how should PSU students and fans behave during games. The advertisement used the following quotation:

The Penn State Way/ It’s the way a player hands the ball to the ref after scoring. /It’s the white uniform and the black shoes. / It’s the nameless jerseys. /It’s the colorless helmets, save for the scuffmarks from the other team. /The Penn State name stands for something— /Something good and decent. /Something proud and honorable. /So let’s stand for the Penn State Way. /Let’s stand for civility and graciousness. / Let’s stand for the visiting team/ As they enter the field, and /Let’s show them the Penn State Way.

In order to promote the production of the video series, we have come with two ideas: a video contest or extra credit for film production students. The first is to promote a video “contest” among Film Major Students within the College of Communications. The best video would be chosen by a selection committee and could be shown during games. Its producers could be rewarded with a prize and have their video played at sporting events. This approach will encourage student involvement with sportsmanship and thus will be able to promote positive fan behavior among a wider range of students. Richie Sherman, faculty advisor to the Student Film Organization, is in charge of promoting this kind of contest among students and could help make this approach doable.

Another option for the contest is to contact the Rock Ethics Institute at the Penn State College of Liberal Arts. This institute has been running short video contest for almost 3 years, promoting values across the Campus; a fan behavior promotional video might also be of their interest. The Penn State Alumni Association is also interested in promoting a promotional video contest among PSU students, in order to promote good fans and sportsmanship. Their help and ideas would also generate a support to make the contest a reality.



Another option would be to ask film major professors to encourage their students to create these videos in rewards for extra-credit in their classes. This would be easier and less expensive to do, but it would also reach fewer audiences. Both ideas are good as they both encourage student participation in creating a positive fan behavior message. Additionally, both of the approaches presented above are cost effective options for the Penn State Sportsmanship Council. Paying a producer company for production services is costly and makes no sense if the goal is to reach students audiences. However, if a contest were to be promoted among students, rewards would be relatively cheap and sustainable. Electronic devices are appealing for college students; these can constitute good prizes in rewards for wining this kind of contest.

### **III. The Strategy to Combat Negative Fan Behavior**

#### *Text-A-Tip*

Text-a-Tip is a great program that gives any fan the sense of safety and assurance that they can enjoy their game without the disruption of disrespectful fans. Penn State has already taken a step in the right direction by implementing Text-a-Tip in Beaver Stadium; however it has not been successful in its marketing its new system. After typing “Text-a-Tip at Penn State” on Google, there appeared to be no relevant articles or information on the subject. If it weren’t for a link to an article written back in November, our research would have never stumbled upon information on a “Text-a-Tip” program at Penn State. The article was written about the Michigan fan incident, and police are asking for any leads about the situation that occurred. At the bottom of the article there is a small section that includes several options that are available to report

objectionable behavior while in beaver stadium. The following information was provided about a text program:

Send a discreet text message to the Beaver Stadium fan text system, a new service this season that is also in use at other professional and college sports venues. Text to 69050 followed by the keyword "NITTANY" and a brief description of the issue (customer service, fan behavior, emergency) and its location. Fans will receive a response when the message has been received. Standard text-message rates apply.

This article did not get written until November 23, 2010, which was four days before the last game of the regular football season. Marketing a new program at the end of its first year is not the most effective way to get the word out and utilize the program to its fullest potential. We are proposing a marketing strategy to help Beaver Stadium's text system be as successful as other Text-a-Tip programs and to make sure fans feel as comfortable as they can while attending football games.

There are several different ways to market the text program in Beaver Stadium. The first step should be to create a name for the program. Most stadiums at universities call their program "Text-a-Tip." This simple and self-explanatory name will stand out to fans that are in need of contacting officials during a game. Auburn has named their program "Text-a-Jerk" which is more of a creative and catchy way to encourage fans to look more into what the system is actually about.

The next step is to determine various effective means of marketing the program and getting the words out to all the fans. In an article written on Onwardstate.com titled *Alleged Racism Causes Online Backlash*, Terrel Jones, the Vice Provost of Education Equity talks about Penn State working on a "pro-active" way to address the belligerent behavior that is becoming increasing common at Beaver Stadium. The article continues by saying that "a number will be posted throughout the stadium (even on the jumbo-tron)

that will connect a disturbed fan to stadium security with as little as a text message.”

Even though this system has been around in the past, Jones hopes that with more publicity, this system will be taken advantage of in situations such as this.” The publicity of this program; however, is not adequate if information is not readily available to Penn State’s fan base.

It is important to look to other fan texting programs and their marketing strategies in order to create an appropriating marketing proposal for our own system. Auburn has been working on heavily marketing the “text-a-jerk” program. They have given out cards at games along with sending information in mailings to season ticket holders. They have had signs displayed on the concourses and information about the system posted on the stadium video board. Emails have also been sent to all students alerting them of the new program. The University of Maryland has not been as successful in their marketing plan. This was largely due to the fact that stadium managers were reluctant to use space in the stadium to advertise for the texting program rather than gaining revenue with corporate advertisements. The company, In Stadium Solution, is the one that provides Penn State with its current texting program. It offers the “best ways” to inform fans of how to use the system. Their suggestions include; scoreboard instructions, in-stadium banners and other printed instructions on game day, emails to season ticket-holder database, public service videos in stadium and on television.

With all these marketing solution ideas already available to Penn State, it is important that implementation occurs sooner rather than later. Studies show how successful this program is at decreasing unruly fan behavior, so this program needs to be marketed in order to receive its full benefit. To reach the various audiences, there needs

to be specific programs that target each group. Emails can be sent to all student ticket holders upon receipt of their tickets. A brochure can be sent to alumni and fans as they receive their season tickets. Before the game, signs announcing the texting number can be posted in the tailgating fields to inform game-goers. During the game, a commercial promoting the program can be shown to visitors, alumni and opposing fans. In the visiting section, flyers (mentioned below) can be made to specifically tell the visitors about the text-a-tip program. The greater variety of methods used to reach fans will enhance the awareness of this program in the stadium and truly make it successful in combating negative fan behavior.

### *Brochures*

Brochures are considered as one of the alternatives to inform and encourage spectators in conducting good fan behavior during game-time. By giving away brochures upon purchase of tickets to sports events, we expect an increase in awareness on good fan behavior among fans. We should be able to convey our message of good fan behavior via the brochure to the fans in a concise, understandable and enjoyable way.

The brochure would contain information related to sporting events and welcoming the visiting fans into the stadium. Some key points to include are described below. A welcome message from Penn State that might include details of the game such as the names of players, dates, times and game locations. Details about important locations within the sports complexes i.e. a map indicating the locations of bathrooms. Fan behavior related content that might include sections about how to behave, the code of conduct, and dos and don'ts for Penn State sports. The next section would be safety related procedures & information. This is where information about how to use the text-a-

tip program and where fans can find information about what to do if they are harassed, and emergency contacts. The final section would be a closing statement with an impressive catchphrase that encompasses the positive fan behavior the program is encouraging. Promotions of other fan/sports related ventures such as the fan exchange program, and the fan ambassador program through the PRIDE organization that are supporting positive fan behavior should also be included with the brochure.

### *Visiting section flyers*

The Penn State community should assume the responsibility of making the game-day experience an enjoyable one for the visiting team and fan base. If poor fan conduct does occur, all fans should have immediate access to security through a system such as the “text-a-tip” hotline design or some variant. This can be easily accomplished by something as simple yet effective as a visiting section flyer or handout. We can provide visiting fans with specific information they will find useful. A prototypical flyer might include several key pieces of information, similar to the brochure described above, but with a more welcoming and inclusive message. Important details would include: locations of the nearest restrooms and gate numbers, first aid and security numbers, information about nearby hotels and taxi services, disability access and accommodations, stadium layout, surrounding parking area for easy route determination, general information and fun facts about sporting complexes at Penn State.

Simple information can demonstrate our eagerness to neutralize any situation that may arise before, during, or after game-day. We should allow our implemented security measures to work by deliberately informing away fans of them. Extra information is provided to make the experience at Beaver Stadium as fun and *easy* as possible. Our

understanding is that this experience is predicated upon fans feeling comfortable and having a sense of security; a handout will help underscore this as one of Penn State's priorities. The logic is that any measure taken to inform fans about their options to respond to a poor game day environment will ultimately contribute to a better experience. We should allow our implemented security measures to work by deliberately informing fans of them.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this program has two parts. One part is to promote positive fan behavior and the second is to combat negative fan behavior. Both programs have a variety of audiences that they need to reach. Using multiple methods of communication and publicity, the knowledge of how to be better fans will soon spread through Penn State stadiums. In order to promote positive fan behavior, a slogan needs to be created that summarizes the message and purpose of this program in a unified slogan. This slogan can then be shared with students on dorm room magnets, with fans on the fronts of t-shirts and on posters spread around town and campus. Also, information about how to be a good fan, like a code of conduct, can be shared, publicly signed and promoted on the backs of t-shirts. A video contest could involve students in the creative portion of this project, cutting production costs while creating marketing material for the promotion of positive fan behavior. In order to combat negative fan behavior, the resources already in place to deal with issues, like the text-a-tip program, need to be promoted so that fans know how to get help if it is necessary. Welcoming fans and visitors into Penn State stadium, by creating brochures for season ticket-holders or visiting section flyers, the

action of taking that extra step could make the difference in their sport-viewing experience at Penn State.

## **Appendix I**

### ***The Penn State Way Video Series – A Sample Script and Storyboard***

“The Penn State Way” promotional video, featuring Penn State football coach Joe Paterno, Penn State women volleyball coach Russ Rose, Penn State Basketball player Talor Battle, Penn State men basketball Coach Ed DeChellis, former Penn State football player and award winning Evan Royster, Penn State women Volleyball player Fatima Balza, Penn State Interfraternity Council President and student Max Wendkos and Penn State former baton twirler P.J. Maierhofer.

*Sample Script: Based on Penn State Alumni Association phrase “The Penn State Way”*

**Penn State Football Coach Joe Paterno:** The Nittany Lions are working hard to make our University Proud; we need to cheer together to make them proud of us.

**Former Penn State Nittany Lion Evan Royster:** I've have enjoyed playing football for Penn State and I can tell you that a championship team needs championship fans.

**Screaming fan:** O! H!

**Penn State Volleyball Coach Russ Rose:** The Penn State name stands for something—

**Penn State Basketball Player Talor Battle:** Something good and decent.

**Penn State Men’s Basketball Coach Ed DeChellis:** Something proud and honorable.

**(Fans cheering)**

**Penn State women volleyball player Fatima Balza:** So let’s stand for the Penn State Way.

**JoePa:** Let’s stand for civility and graciousness.

**Penn State student PJ Maierhofer:** Let’s stand for the visiting team

**Penn State former student Max Wendkos:** As they enter the field, and

**Evan Royster:** Let’s show them the Penn State Way.

**Talor Battle:** Let’s cheer the Penn State Way

**(Fans Cheering)**

**Coach Rose:** We are...

**Students (Screaming):** Penn State...

**JoePa:** Let’s show the Nation the Penn State Way!

**Students (Screaming):** Let’s go Nittany Lions!



## References:

1. Brady, Christian. "The Penn State Way – Winning with Style & Grace at Schreyer Honors College, Penn State." *Schreyer Honors College, Penn State*. N.p., 03 Jan. 2007. Web. 11 Apr. 2011. <<http://engage.shc.psu.edu/?p=123>>.
2. Beluzsar, Janos. "Visual Media Effects." *Coffee Break*. Web. 9 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.uni-miskolc.hu/~aitmag/contest08/visualmedia.htm>>.
3. *The Best of Brochure Design*. (2001). Minneapolis, MN: Rockport Publishers.
4. Buhler, Andre. (2009). *Relationship Marketing in Sports*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Science & Technology.
5. "In Stadium Solutions". *Welcome to ISS*. Web. 8 Apr. 2011. <[http://www.instadiumsolutions.com/index.php?option=com\\_content](http://www.instadiumsolutions.com/index.php?option=com_content)>.
6. Lavigne, Paula. "Fearing for Your Safety at State U's Big Game? Not to Worry. Security in College Football Stadiums Has Your Back More than Ever This Season. - ESPN." *ESPN: The Worldwide Leader In Sports*. Web. 20 Mar. 2011. <<http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/otl/news/story?id=4603176>>.
7. McDermott, Casey. "Police look into racial slurs." *Daily Collegian* 19 Nov 2010, Print.
8. "Penn State fans abuse tOSU fans." *YouTube*. Web. 17 Apr 2011. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDiRPUiQZHc>>.
9. "The Ohio State University - Best Fans in the Land." *Welcome to Ohio State - The Ohio State University*. Web. 11 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.osu.edu/features/2006/bmw/sportsmanship.php>>.
10. "Penn State Live - Police Seek Leads on Stadium Incidents, Encourage Civil Fan Behavior." *Penn State Live - The University's Official News Source*. Web. 20 Mar. 2011. <<http://live.psu.edu/story/50052>>.
11. Piazza, Kristin. "Alleged Racism Causes Online Backlash - Onward State." *Onward State "Penn State News from PSU Students*. Web. 2 Apr. 2011. <<http://onwardstate.com/2010/11/23/alleged-racism-causes-online-backlash/>>.