

Putting Fans First

**The New Imperative Coming
Out of the Coronavirus Crisis**



Rick Jones

- Captain of FishBait Marketing – a sponsorship sales and activation agency
- Clients include ESPN Events, College Football Hall of Fame, Capital One, Dollar General and Werner Ladder
- FishBait
 - Fish or Cut Bait – A Bias for Action
 - Bait the Hook to Suit the Fish and Not the Fisherman – A Bias for Customization



Rick Jones

- Managing Partner at EngageMint – a customer experience design firm
 - We help organizations design experiences that create emotional connections for the people they serve
- Clients include Penn State, Purdue, Charleston Southern, Tulane, DePaul, Florida International, University of Louisiana



I've Been Where You Are

- Student-Athlete at Georgia Southern
- College Soccer and Basketball Coach at Sewanee
- Assistant Coach at Georgia State
- Marketing Director at Georgia Tech
- Sports Marketing Professor at Georgia State and South Carolina
- Sports Marketing Agency Executive
- Consultant to SEC and ACC and numerous universities



Facts, Opinions & Recommendations

The New Normal

It Will Be New

It Won't Be Normal



Insanity is doing the same things over and over and hoping for different results

- We don't see things as they are.
We see things as we are (as individuals and as institutions).
- We must change the way we think.
- We need to reconsider and reengineer everything we do



$$\mathbf{D+V+P<C}$$

A Formula for Change

- Dissatisfaction - (A Need for Change)
- + Vision - (Future Scenario based on Circumstance)
- + Process - (To Get You From Here to There)
- < Cost of the Change
- Cost of the Change is always Emotional (“we’ve always done it this way” or “it won’t work here” or “that’s how everyone else in our industry does it” or “we don’t have the resources”)



Change is a Process

JUST

DO IT



DO IT

- Decide – to change the way we think, prepare, serve, sell and service
 - The old way is over
- Observe – the world around us (deal with Reality)
 - New Learnings & Implementation
- Ideate – Think/Collaborate/Play/Innovate
 - TEAM Participation (All Hands on Deck)
- Trial – Test/Tweak/Try Again
 - Failure gets you closer to Success



A Leader's Job is to Identify REALITY



The Current Situation

- You're NOT getting back the money you've lost
 - March Madness shares
 - Spring sports revenues
 - Interest income from pre-paid football season tickets
- There are more Unknowns than Knowns going forward

Let's Deal with Knowns



Fact One

Fans Pay for Everything

In Good Times and In Bad Times



Fans Pay For

- Television Rights Fees
- Corporate Sponsor Support
- Donations
- Tickets
- Concessions/Parking/Licensed Products
- Special Events
- State Income Taxes
- Student Activity Fees



Fans are the Bank of College Athletics



Opinion One

- Very few of your Athletic Departments have Fans at or near the Top of their Priorities in your Strategic Plan

Recommendation One

- Fans must go to the top of your priority list
- You must have a plan to engage with fans, communicate with fans, listen to fans, thank fans and love on fans
- If you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with



Recommendation One

- Fans are going to EXPECT you to do everything to keep them safe and free of the Coronavirus
- What that actually means, we don't yet know.
- But we do know it's going to cost more

Fact Two

- Most of your athletic departments depend on third party revenues
 - State tax money
 - TV rights money
 - MMR company guarantees
 - Donations (individuals/foundations/institutions)
 - Student activity fees

Opinion Two

- You're either on Institutional Welfare or Institutional Cocaine or Both
- And you have neither saved in reserves
- You spend all your money
- Many of you are or will be Broke

Fact Three

- Government (federal, state, local) budgets cannot and will not be large enough to pay for all of our bills and their bills coming out of this for a long, long time

Opinion Three

- There will be little to zero government money for athletic departments
 - States are now or soon will be BROKE
 - And the Federal government cannot continue to both print and borrow money

Fact Four

- Corporate sponsors are NOT paying your MMR partner
 - Working through Make Goods for loss of spring assets
 - Not sure about when or if college sports will return
 - Have other financial priorities
 - Canceling all expenditures they can



Opinion Four

- Your MMR will not be able to pay you
- They may not have staff to service the sponsors you have
- You'll have three choices:
 - Keep the one you have with new terms
 - Shop your rights to another third party
 - Take your rights back in-house

Fact Five

- ESPN is the largest broadcast rights holder in college athletics
- ESPN is owned by Disney
- Disney is hemorrhaging money
 - No Parks attendance/No hotel occupancy
 - No movie theatre rentals
 - No cruise ship guests
 - Ads canceled/30% under projections
- Thank Goodness for Disney +



Opinion Five

- Your TV rights holder(s) may seek to re-negotiate these rights, payment schedules and assets they receive
- Especially for non-Power Five conferences

Fact Six

- It's hard to pay donations when you don't have a job or a business or when your investment/retirement fund is in free fall

Opinion Six

- Watch for donors to ask for either or both relief in total or payment terms

Fact Seven

- Most students are going to be having financial difficulties
 - Lost their jobs
 - Parents lost either or both jobs and/or investments income
- Many students may move to on-line attendance and not pay student activity fees

Opinion Seven

- Watch out for a REVOLT by students on student activity fees they perceive as providing little to no value for them

Fact Eight

- Your fans come in a variety of shapes and sizes
- No one model reaches each/all fan segments
- Micro-targeting will be essential for survival
- And every fan will count



Opinion Eight

- Many of you are ill equipped to target fans by segments and fan personas
 - Lack knowledge, skills, resources (money/staff)

**Thanks Rick for sharing all of
this joy with us**



Some GOOD NEWS

- People today will need what we all do more than ever!
 - The desire to connect
 - The need to escape
 - The need to share experiences
 - The desire to give back
 - The desire to be a part of our Tribe
- Your athletic department does this.



Ten Recommendations

1. Accept it's going be really hard

- Everything in life worthwhile in life is always uphill
- The hill just got steeper
- Deal with it
- Attitude and aptitude is everything right now (your Grit + your Gifts)

2. Partner with your Partners

- MMR partner
 - They're hurting, too
 - Be available, be engaged, be helpful, be flexible, be understanding
- TV Partners
 - There's no money tree in Jimmy Pitaro's office
 - Help their advertisers by giving them assets on your campus
- Help each other



3. Sell Fan Services vs. Assets

- Work with sponsors to create new and improved services for fans that they can sponsor and get credit for bringing to fans
- Especially in areas of safety and cleanliness
- Let sponsors take all the credit

4. Use Sponsors like Investment Banks vs. ATM's

- Think about what sponsors can provide or pay for that adds value vs. just writing you a check
- Monetize new things in and out of your stadiums and arenas

5. Use your coaches differently

- As brand ambassadors
- Have them call key season ticket holders, donors and all sponsors and prospects
- Hold constituents Zoom chats daily

6. Use your student-athletes differently

- Are they entitled or thankful?
- Have them call ticket holders to “thank them” and tell them they look forward to seeing them back on campus at our games
- Lead on-line PE classes for kids
- Help “move in” the freshmen students
- Participate in one highly visible community service or charity endeavor



7. Use student labor like never before

- Partner with department heads in key degree majors to identify and utilize student help, then train and empower them and put them to work
- Have students create value and related programming for other students

8. Create ways to help charities

- Use all your constituents (fans, athletes, coaches, sponsors) to help raise money or provide services for local charities
 - Blood drives
 - Collect for food banks
 - Pay charities to provide game day temporary staff

9. Do Everything You Can for Your Fans

- Better Services
- Better Food
- Cleaner Facilities
- A Safer Environment
- Better Recognition
- Love Them More/Thank Them More



10. Be the Best You

- Be Grateful to work in college athletics
- Be Thankful for your Teammates
- Be Humble
- Get Better and Improve every day
- Feed you Faith and not your Fear



EngageMint & FishBait

- We're here to help you
- We have experienced subject matter experts
- We understand various fan segments and personas and journey maps to engage with them
- Follow us on our social and digital sites
- Watch our Podcasts and Seminars
- Put us on your team



God Bless and Stay Safe

Questions?

