

## Compliments of



### A Blueprint for Planning & Promoting Successful Summer Camps

I've been running a successful summer camp for over 15 years now and it's an essential part of my business strategy ... a chance to grow my school, invigorate my student base, and increase my bottom line.

If done right, camps can generate close to a year's worth of income! Imagine that: a little extra work and one year's income ... it kind of takes the edge off your overhead and stress, right?

This report was created to give you a starting point in developing your own camp. As with any event, the keys to success lie within the details and planning. It's important to strategically organize your thoughts and goals and effectively market your camp to optimize your results.

So let's get started. Here's your launch pad to enrolling a bunch of happy campers and hosting a successful program.

#### Setting Goals and Planning

- **The first step to setting up a camp is determining its length.** I run an 8-week summer camp, 7 in house and one Sleep Away Camp. You can choose any duration – short-term or long-term...the choice is yours.

If you've never hosted a camp, my suggestion is to start off small ... maybe hold a one-week camp, then work your way up. Your camp doesn't need to take up the entire summer. You can obtain a good turnout no matter what the length.

- **Set your price point.** Do some research on camps in your area to see what other camps are charging. I run my camp Monday through Friday from 9 am to 3:30 pm and charge \$189 per week. My area typically charges about \$50 per day and this is considered inexpensive by most.

There are other camps out there that charge between \$400 to \$500 per week, or \$90 to \$100 a day. My goal is to make my camp affordable to everyone and to enroll as many campers as possible. A full camp is a happy camp.

As another example, a friend of mine has been running 1-week camps for years now. He charges \$299 for the week and has had about 80 kids attend the camp. Do the math and that's pretty incredible ... \$23,920.00! Not bad for a week's work, right? He continues to hold these camps with amazing success.

Bottom line, the price point is up to you. Remember though that a safe bet is to keep the price comparable to other programs in your area. Price does matter. Keep it affordable and reasonable, and within range of other local programs, and you're bound to get a good number of sign-ups.

- **Determine the program - what services and activities you'll provide.** When determining your summer camp theme, you must figure out what is going to set your camp apart from the rest. While most of us may look at summer camps as a glorified way of promoting their Martial Arts schools, I look at camps as a way of not only promoting my school and making extra money, but also as a chance to put together a program that is truly life-changing and memorable for all campers.

My summer adventure camp includes the usual Martial Arts training sessions, but also adds in activities to keep the program diverse and exciting. Some of our non-Martial Arts activities include going to the movies, visiting a local town pool, taking trips to local beaches, and touring local police and fire departments.

- **Set up your online registration page.** After you've determined your price, length and program activities, you are almost set to market your program. One last step is to create an online registration form ... in other words, your sign-up vehicle.

I know, some of you may be uncomfortable with going from paper to online, but hear me out ...

Online camp registration makes signing up easy for your campers and their parents, and super easy on you. Most online registration systems process payments right then and there, eliminating any concerns about exposing personal financial information. You also don't have to worry about gathering and storing paper forms or collecting money from parents. They can easily pay by credit card online through an online registration form.

I use Member Solutions' **Event Manager** program to promote and register my campers. It takes all the payment processing out of my hands and gives me a great marketing machine for promoting my camp. Through Event Manager, I can set special discounts, promotional codes, split payments options and unique payment plans. I've found this to be of great value to my campers' parents since a lot of working adults may not have all the camp money up front. I open my registration for summer camp in XXXX and offer the split payment option if they register by a certain date.

**L.I. Ninjutsu Centers**

**Summer Camp**  
Summer Adventure Camp!

Our school offers a full day camp experience for your child that is equally educational as it is exciting and fun! It is sure to be a safe, positive, and motivational camp adventure where your child is guaranteed to obtain physical, mental, and moral fitness.

Children ages 4-15 welcome.

\$189.00 per weekly session  
\$159.00 2-3 weeks  
\$129.00 4-5 weeks  
\$119.00 6-7 weeks.

Sign up more than one child and receive 50% off your second child. For more than one please register directly at school or call 1 631 321-5432  
If you register early, you can split your payments up. So, register today!

Event Date: July 1 - September 1, 2011  
Registration Deadline: August 26, 2011 12:01am (Eastern Time)  
Venue: 35 Hawthorn Ave  
East Islip, NY 11730  
1 800 Nininja

Once you have an online registration page, I suggest connecting the page to your website. Having the camp sign-up form on your website will increase your web traffic, plus expose your members and website visitors to your camp program.

Make sure you provide relevant information on your online registration page, such as the age group served, activities provided, dates, location, and price, plus the all-important benefits of attending your camp.

So that's my list of major planning steps. Remember to also enlist the help of your instructors and team members, even parents in your area, to participate and help run the actual camp.

## Promoting

After you've nailed down the basics (your camp activities, price points, camp dates, schedule and sign-up vehicle), it's time to promote your camp to the best of your ability. Remember that every contact and communication outlet you can think of will help bring you one step closer to reaching your goals.

- **If you've run a camp before, kick off your marketing by promoting your camp to former campers.** Consider last year's campers as the champions of your camp marketing. Give them a special incentive to sign up early (i.e. a special price break) and ask them to help spread the word to their friends and family members.
- **Consider special friend and/or family member promotions.** Most of your campers know a person or two that would take part in your camp. Incentivize your former campers to register a friend and/or family member. Offer a special 2-for-1 discount or gift such as a T-shirt for the camper and his/her buddy. I offer the deal that if you sign up more than one camper, you receive 50% off your second sign-up.
- **Determine your camp benefits.** While the camp is fun for participants, remember that you are also marketing to parents. In addition to keeping camp affordable, I offer early drop-off and late pick-up for working parents. Sometimes parents are looking at camp as a way to keep their kids active over the summer, but also as a child-care option. A sitter is more expensive, as child care can cost \$400 per week or more. Remember, parents can actually *save money* by having their children attend camp, and at the same time, their kids get the chance to make friends and have fun.
- **Promote through e-mail.** E-mail is a great way to get the word out about your camp. I recommend including notices about your camp in your e-newsletter if you have one. I also suggest sending special e-mails to your past event participants. Member Solutions' Event Manager program includes e-mail marketing capabilities. You simply select your e-mail list (such as your past tournament participants, former buddy day registrants), create some e-mail text, and include the registration link. You also have the option of including snazzy web ads to paste on your website or use in your e-mail. Through Event Manager, you can easily connect your registration link to the web ad.



- **Create a flyer.** Flyers are still a great way to notify others about your camp. Post your flyers around your school, give flyers to parents to hang up at their workplace, and ask local businesses to pass out flyers for you.
- **Utilize social media outlets like Facebook.** Depending on your camper age group, once someone signs up, ask your campers to circulate your camp website address via Facebook.

- **Create a Signup Sheet and a Look Who's Going Board.** This simple item is a very powerful tool in getting people to ease into something they possibly never have done before, through subtle peer pressure. It is our ultimate goal for others to see what all the buzz is about and create a synergy within our schools.
- You can even go so far as to create a Facebook page for your camp. If you do, encourage campers to "like" your camp page and contribute comments regularly about the fun they had at last year's camp to help build an online camp community. Summer Camp Facebook pages are an excellent resource for getting people to talk about the camp, but most important once the camp has started this a great way to get the stragglers to come on board. Once they see all the fun they have been missing, they are going to hate themselves for not jumping on board.

Keep in mind that this is only the tip of the iceberg with marketing your camp. Wherever or however you decide to market, remember testimonials and pictures of your campers add life and visual interest to your ads, and help connect with prospective campers and parents.

### **Follow-up**

After you've planned and promoted your camp, it's time to do some follow-up work as camp draws near. People need to be reminded of events and their dates. Even if they've signed up and paid for camp, everyone's busy and could use a little reminder. I suggest sending an e-mail to camp participants a week before the camp start date to remind them of when camp starts. The e-mail can also contain a list of what campers should bring with them, such as snacks, lunch, and a change of clothes.

There are lots of logistics that go into running the actual camp. As I mentioned before, you need a solid planning and execution team. It's a smart practice to gather everyone together in a meeting before camp starts to cover roles and responsibilities as well as assigning everyone their jobs. Remember an organized camp is a happy camp.

### **A final word ...**

Phheww! It may seem like a lot but camp planning and promotion is actually fun and the pay-off is great for you and your business. I hope I've provided a good starting point for you and would love to hear about your camp results. Remember to have fun with it. If you every have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me anytime at **Kyoshi@Lininja.com**.

Here's wishing you a fun, successful summer camp season!