

## Implementing Effective Airport Marketing Approaches to Tenants and the Community

To successfully manage and operate an airport, many believe that consistent and manageable marketing methods must be implemented to promote facility use and develop strong, lasting community connections. Airport managers utilize marketing in various ways to attract passengers and businesses, keep existing tenants, and rally general community support for the facility. For small airports, the task of marketing may be daunting due to limited funding and lack of dedicated staff for these specific purposes, requiring the development of tailored and effective marketing plans.

*ACRP Report 28: Marketing Guidebook for Small Airports* (2010) provides managers

at small airports with a guidebook on marketing approaches. *ACRP Report 28* includes an introduction to marketing basics; seven steps on how to develop a marketing plan; and descriptions of various public relations, advertising, and networking tools. Additional resources such as worksheets, case studies, a glossary, and frequently asked questions also are provided in the guidebook.

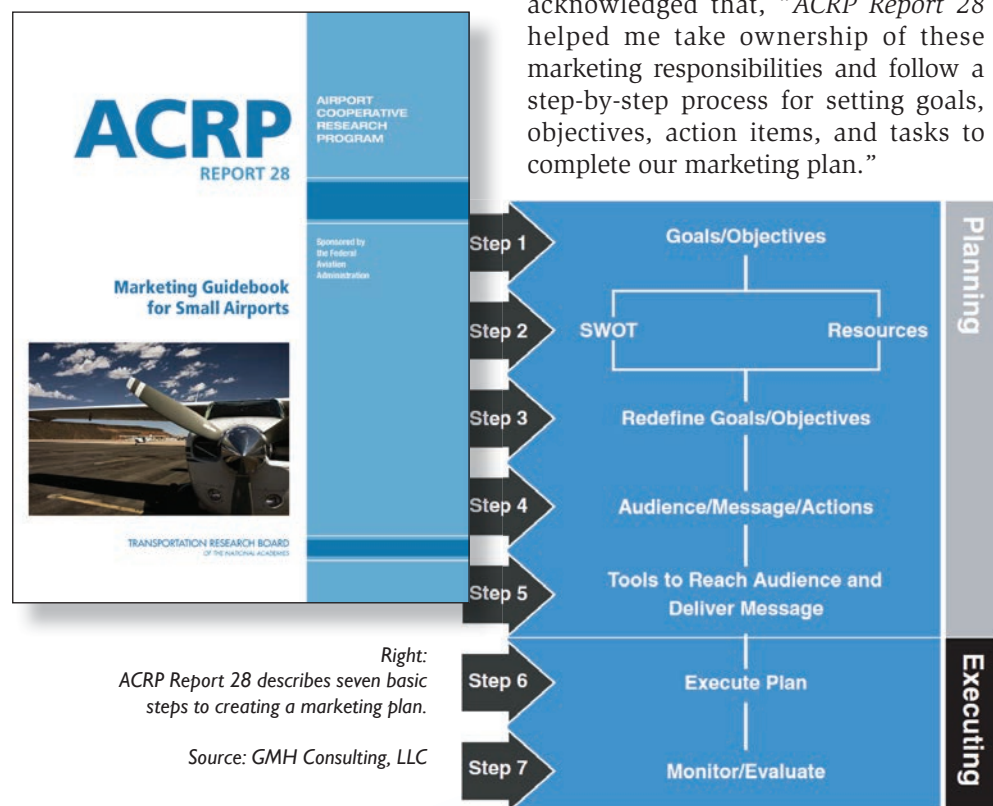
Kim Fuhrmann, marketing and administration manager at Fort Wayne International Airport (FWA) in Indiana, utilized *ACRP Report 28* for the facility's marketing purposes. She was able to successfully implement the guidebook's seven easy-to-follow steps to create a marketing plan. Ms. Fuhrmann acknowledged that, "*ACRP Report 28* helped me take ownership of these marketing responsibilities and follow a step-by-step process for setting goals, objectives, action items, and tasks to complete our marketing plan."

FWA's marketing plan was developed in accordance with *ACRP Report 28* guidelines. Prior to developing its plan, FWA first utilized the guidebook's suggestions for selecting marketing planning team members, which aided FWA in defining skill sets and writing job descriptions for new positions in the airport's recently formed marketing department. *ACRP Report 28* suggests that planning team members should represent key stakeholders, be willing to invest the effort and time, and serve as good contributors. The details available in the guidebook helped FWA appropriately advertise and interview for the positions, leading to the successful hiring of two employees.

The FWA marketing department then followed the guidebook's seven basic steps to create a marketing plan. Initial marketing goals and objectives were defined in Step 1. The marketing team next conducted an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT); revised the goals and objectives based on the SWOT analysis; identified specific marketing actions; and then selected marketing tools as outlined in Steps 2 through 5 in *ACRP Report 28*.

The department answered the report's questions and filled out the various worksheets to complete each step. For example, to evaluate proposed marketing activities, the report asks questions such as, "Can the activity be undertaken in the timeframe needed?" and "How much will it cost to complete the activity?"

The end product, a tangible marketing plan, was created by the FWA marketing



**Effective Airport Marketing**—continued

Since 2006, an industry-driven, applied research program that develops near-term, practical solutions to problems faced by airport operators.

department in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. The plan was soon executed in accordance with Step 6 in the guidebook. The marketing plan is now a living document, possessing the capability to evolve with FWA needs and demands in accord with Step 7, which advises continual monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

*ACRP Report 28* defines several different types of marketing, public relations, and advertising tools and assesses their costs and effectiveness. Although the report does not specifically refer to social media as an advertising tool, it suggests the utilization of Internet resources to provide airport location,

contact information, and updated facility information. Stemming from this suggestion, FWA opened Facebook and Twitter accounts to offer the public status updates along with relevant pictures, videos, and event links. Also with the report's guidance, FWA marketing staff launched a media campaign consisting of new print, television, and radio advertisements.

Section 7.4 of *ACRP Report 28* emphasizes community support as an important marketing opportunity for small airports, which became a key initiative in FWA's marketing plan. The report encourages airports to foster community relationships to combine resources and expertise through common marketing alliances. To increase community involvement, airport employees participated in a local parade. The FWA marketing department also reached out to the local media by orchestrating a Media Day at the airport.

In addition, the marketing team reached out to local travel agencies, which are characterized in the guidebook as strategic marketing allies for their ability to communicate to their clients the benefits of local airport use. The FWA marketing department held a roundtable discussion with local travel agents at the airport. Airport staff were able to

**“Airports today must market effectively to attract activity and achieve financial self-sufficiency. If you are managing a general aviation airport, you must let your customers and potential customers know how the airport excels and why they should visit or base their aircraft at the airport. If you are managing a small commercial service airport, you must obtain community support in order to attract and retain the best possible air service.”**

*ACRP Report 28:  
Marketing Guidebook for Small Airports*

share new airport developments and travel agents were able to convey their customers' needs. Due to its success, these roundtable discussions are now held every six months.

Instituting a successful marketing plan for any business can be an overwhelming task, especially for small airports that are pressured to prove their contribution to the community and maintain low expenses. *ACRP Report 28*, which was successfully utilized by Kim Fuhrmann and the marketing department at FWA, can help guide airports through this task by explaining marketing basics, providing suggestions and assessments for various marketing tools, and outlining clear steps for developing and implementing an effective marketing plan.



Above:  
Example of  
Fort Wayne International Airport  
marketing materials.

Right:  
Media Day at Fort Wayne  
International Airport.

Photos courtesy of Kim Fuhrmann.



**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SPONSORSHIP:** This work was sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration and was conducted in the Airport Cooperative Research Program, which is administered by the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies.

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