

The Strategic Air Show Partnership: Generating Data Analytics AND Ticket Sales

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Welcome to the big leagues. The Strategic Air Show Partnership Program (SASP) has grown up. A program that started from a simple, yet powerful idea has the potential to become a driving force in the air show industry. Not just because of its unique charge, but because the members of the program, both current and future, see the potential for it to ultimately affect the success of air show marketing and awareness for years to come.

At this point, you've likely heard about it multiple times, but then again, maybe you haven't. So, let's break it down a little bit. At its core, the current iteration of SASP aims to increase air show awareness across North America, produce data-driven marketing assumptions, and discover new digital marketing opportunities. All while generating significant ticketing revenue for the shows that become SASP partners. And often doing it without costing a dollar of an air show's bottom line.

But this is NOT a replacement for your primary marketing channels, campaigns, and strategy. SASP was specifically created to complement the marketing programs of the individual air shows it supports. It's not built as

a standalone program for your show, rather one that serves to bolster and support the overall efforts of partner events.

Officially launched by ICAS in 2021 and with roots going back to 2015, SASP represents a pioneering approach to marketing within the air show industry. This program's significance cannot be overstated, as it provides a blueprint for success for its partners, leveraging collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and targeted marketing strategies to help propel the industry forward.

Transforming Marketing in the Air Show Industry

The SASP program marks a strategic shift in air show marketing by utilizing social media and digital platforms to engage broader audiences. While utilizing social media advertising is not a new concept for our industry, where the program shines is its ability to do what many shows won't, or simply can't with the budgets they have to work with.

This collaborative social media marketing strategy utilizes precision, ensuring high visibility and conversion (ticket sales). The initiative has demonstrated a significant return on investment

(ROI), with targeted campaigns in SASP partner markets generating substantial revenue from those ticket sales. All the while producing key insights that help both SASP partner shows and all ICAS member shows to be more successful with their digital marketing efforts through shared knowledge.

Strategic Insights and Incremental Success

Breaking it down even further, SASP runs digital marketing campaigns on both seasoned (think Facebook and Google) and relatively unused for advertising social media channels like Reddit, Pinterest, and others. These campaigns are run with tactics that some shows haven't even thought about, much less have the time and energy to test, like a video with narration versus a video without narration. Or an ad with video versus an ad with still images. Essentially the program is testing to find what works and what doesn't, and to come up with detailed insights on how to be more effective with your marketing, while being successful.

The SASP program's commitment to continuous improvement is evident in its strategic testing and learning approach.

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By A/B testing various advertising strategies and employing a “Confidence Level” scoring system for partners in our internal reporting, the program optimizes current campaigns and provides SASP partners with actionable insights for future digital advertising efforts. This structured approach to analysis ensures that learnings from these campaigns are reliable and applicable across many different markets.

A Closer Look

In 2022, ICAS executed 12 localized air show awareness campaigns, achieving over 7.9 million impressions, and generating significant ticket sales, with a noteworthy return on ad spend (ROAS) of nearly 7 to 1 and total ticketing revenue of just over \$600,000. The detailed outcomes of the 2022 campaigns, shared with SASP partner shows,

provided a close look at how targeted marketing strategies can yield significant returns.

The program’s success continued in 2023, with more individual air show promotions further showcasing SASP’s impact. These campaigns demonstrated exceptional cost efficiency and profitability with over \$900,000 in ticket sales, and a total return of nearly 20 to 1 for every dollar spent: a statistic that underscores and highlights the extreme value of the program’s digital advertising efforts.

Funding the Program

SASP partner shows, for the most part, utilize a simple per-ticket fee that’s added on to each ticket sold for an air show. At the end of the event, those dollars are added up and sent to the SASP program for use the following year. With this strategy, in essence, a partner event doesn’t need to budget a dime to the program, since it’s fully funded by the audiences themselves.

So, for example, if a show in 2023 collected a \$.50 per ticket fee and generated \$5,000, that money would be spent completely on that individual show’s SASP marketing in 2024.

Conversely, there have been a few events that choose to simply dedicate a portion of their budget to the program because they believe and understand the power of the information SASP brings and would prefer to not

charge an additional fee on tickets. Either method works.

For SASP, financial success is calculated at the annual level looking at overall ROI, so ultimately big or small, each individual show’s contribution is important. But, because of the scalability of SASP, a larger investment often results in a much bigger return.

The 2024 Horizon: Refinements and Guarantees

Looking forward, refinements were recently announced. Those announcements included the introduction of a new guarantee that eliminates all risk for shows participating or considering participation by offering a minimum of 3 to 1 return on all digital advertising.

The guarantee marks a significant evolution of the initiative. SASP is a program actively seeking ways to enhance its value to the air show community. It offers air show organizers a risk-free opportunity to leverage the marketing data gathered and knowledge gained.

Impact on the Air Show Industry

Ultimately SASP reflects a broader trend towards a digital transformation within the industry, highlighting the importance of adopting innovative marketing strategies to remain competitive when marketing to audiences and selling tickets. By demonstrating the power

of collaborative, data-driven marketing, SASP sets a new standard for how ICAS members can engage with their audiences and offers valuable lessons in audience targeting, advertising optimization, and analytics-driven marketing decisions.

The Strategic Air Show Partnership program has established itself as an indispensable asset to the air show industry in the past few years. SASP not only helps to ensure the financial viability of air shows, but also serves as a vital catalyst for innovation and growth. The program’s achievements, alongside its strategic insights and prospects, underscore its critical role within the ICAS community in driving the air show industry into a new era of success and sustainability.✈️



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