



PSIA/AASI Research Review

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Overview

This paper summarizes findings from previous membership and marketing research conducted on behalf of PSIA/AASI. The goal of this review is to assess research highlights, summarize actions taken as a result of research findings and to identify research gaps. This report reviews eight research programs conducted since 1999. These programs were executed using in-house resources as well as research vendors (Heimbach Research, Peak Exposure, Acxiom and MarketSpark.) The research initiatives reviewed in this summary include:

- (1) 1999 PSIA Membership Acceptance of New Ski technology and Equipment Use Summary
- (2) 2001 Survey of Heads of Ski and Snowboard Instructional Programs- PSIA/AASI
- (3) 2001 Consumer Data Profile Analysis of PSIA/AASI Membership (Acxiom Research)
- (4) 2002 Survey of PSIA Membership Motivations and Satisfaction
- (5) 2002 Review of Membership Database PSIA/AASI
- (6) 2002 PSIA Assessment of On-Line Publications
- (7) 2002 Secret Shop for Becoming an Instructor and Joining PSIA/AASI
- (8) 2003 Sponsorship Research- PSIA/AASI

Membership Experience

Qualitative studies¹ suggest the experience of being a member is a very rewarding and valuable experience. While respondents say that their experience has lived up to their expectations, these respondents do not have very well formed expectations from the outset, thereby making this statement a bit hollow. Relatively few respondents say that their experience had exceeded their expectations. While this could be due to weakly formed expectations in the first place, it is necessary for a significantly greater number of members to report that the experience had exceeded expectations for an organization to thrive. Certainly, PSIA/AASI needs to identify the factors contributing to satisfaction with the membership experience, and work to help members and prospective members define expectations.

The variance in motivation to participate in PSIA/AASI appears to be related to the extent to which the snowsports school director actively participates/values PSIA/AASI and uses membership and accomplishment (i.e., certifications) in awarding pay increases, level of classes, and increased status (i.e. becoming a trainer). People also enjoy (even thrive on) having goals and definitive points of progress, which is core feature of what PSIA/AASI offers. Unfortunately, the research suggests that there are too few milestones provided in PSIA/AASI and that those offered are too narrowly defined.

The qualitative *Membership Motivations and Satisfaction Research 2002* and the qualitative *Heads of Ski and Snowboard Instructional Programs Research* suggest that while these members and snowsports school directors are aware of the association and some understand the overall mission, they don't feel informed on all that the association does for them. This may result in members undervaluing membership. Their contact with the association is most frequently at the regional level. If communication from the association is infrequent, contradictory with messages from other sources such as the different levels of the association, or unclear, then members' understanding of the association is negatively biased. Members and area managers appear to receive information about PSIA/AASI primarily from current members, friends, and colleagues, which likely propagates incorrect information about the association.

Motivation to Join or Maintain Membership

In order to continue to increase membership in the association it is critical to be able to identify the motivation and driving factors behind membership decisions. In the absence of more sophisticated data, it is easy to default to price (i.e. the dollar cost of membership) as the determining factor. The qualitative *Membership Motivations and Satisfaction Research 2002* suggests that membership in PSIA/AASI is primarily driven by a resort requirement to join as a

¹ Qualitative research consists of data gathered from a small sample of the population. The purpose of qualitative research is to provide directional information, not statistical facts or analysis. It is important to note that only quantitative research consists of data gathered from a statistically significant sample of the population. The findings from quantitative research can be assumed to apply to the entire population within the stated range of statistical confidence.

condition for long-term employment as an instructor. As such, becoming an instructor is the key driver to membership, and losing or quitting a job as an instructor is a key reason to dropping membership. Therefore to truly understand why people join, renew or drop out of PSIA/AASI, it is critical to understand the motivation behind beginning or leaving a career as an instructor. It is also important to understand the similarities and differences in motivations between part-time instructors (the majority of members) and full-time instructors.

Membership Motivations and Satisfaction Research 2002 suggests that full-time instructors perceive, on average, the most value of membership. This appears to be related to their ability to take advantage of more clinics and perhaps the deeper day-to-day immersion in the instructing culture, thereby keeping them more “in-the-loop” of the benefits and how to access and appreciate them. Part-timers, by their nature of only appearing for instructing intermittently, are less able to partake in clinics, less able to train enough to pass exams beyond Level I, and less exposed to the locker-room communications that could inform them about the benefits and how to access and take value from them. Again, quantitative research is required to determine the extent to which these themes may or may not resonate across the entire membership.

The *Membership Motivations and Satisfaction Research 2002* also suggests that the decision to become an instructor varies depending on the life stage of the person. Singles/newly married people become instructors for inexpensive access to their favorite sport, full and empty nesters become instructors for self-esteem, and retirees for socialization and self-actualization. Reasons for leaving instruction center on the inability to make a living (economics), difficulty scheduling the activity with all other family activities, and perception that ski/snowboard instructor is not a “real” career. In addition to no longer being an instructor, reasons for leaving PSIA/AASI include a lost sense of value (i.e. pay does not increase as levels of certification increase), or a lack of interest in pursuing a higher level of certification. Reasons for renewal appear to be primarily due to a desire for a higher level of certification.

In concrete terms, dominant determinants for choosing to become an instructor appear to be:

- A family member or friend is a member
- A desire to improve one’s own abilities
- A desire to be part of snowsports industry and be with snowsports people
- A desire to reduce cost of frequent participation in the sport
- A desire to “share the passion” and interact with people in a teaching manner
- A desire to have a structured mechanism for getting outdoor activity during the winter

From the snowsports schools directors’ standpoint, a roughly equal number of managers participating in the qualitative study feel the task of recruiting employees is easy or difficult. Variations in perceptions are diverse and no systematic relationships are clear at this point.

Explanations for why recruiting is easy or getting easier:

- Aftermath of 9-11-2001: safety perspective of moving to mountains to get away from the potentially more dangerous cities (“I’d rather get hurt and die on a ski slope than from a bomb or tainted letter.”)

- Lifestyle: perspective of an increased perception/recognition of the value of being outdoors and doing something that feels good and/or builds relationships amongst family and friends.
- Economic Impact: increased availability of people looking for work
- Lower pressures to hire now due to lower expectations of visitor counts

Explanations for why recruiting is difficult or getting harder:

- Remote Location: at or beyond 1.5 hours from a metro area seems to increase difficulties if no towns are nearby
- Prospects are too young
- If boomers are not actually or perceived to be available, the result is a feeling that it is hard to find people who like to deal with people rather than just want a free pass
- Benefits are too low: trend of inexpensive season passes reduces the value of this previously strong benefit
- Misperceptions of requirements: people do not apply due to expectations that required skill level is higher than what it actually is
- The weather: the volume of applications is directly related to the amount of snow

Barriers to Membership

A prerequisite for joining PSIA or AASI is to become aware of the organization, and for most new instructors, awareness of PSIA/AASI appears to occur in an uncontrolled, very haphazard and essentially, accidental manner. Primary methods for becoming aware of PSIA/AASI include:

- Informal interaction with other instructors or supervisors once they became an instructor.
- Friends and/or family who are members
- Prior experience in another part of the industry (e.g. patrol, shop employee, race coach, ski/ride club)

Expectations of PSIA/AASI as an organization or the expectations of the individual member are unclear.

- Except for people with prior experience in the industry or with friends or family who are already members, there is virtually no understanding of the association. As such, one way to think about this situation is that the new instructor's respect is PSIA/AASI's to lose.
- For those with prior experience in the industry or who have friends or family who are already members, the most frequent expectation is that membership will provide them with a good source for training and education.
- There appears to be no clear understanding of the costs and benefits for membership in general, and costs related to exams in particular.

Interviews suggest an unclear understanding of, or at best an inconsistent policy on, the proper timing for joining PSIA/AASI, thus complicating the decision to join.

- Some feel there is no reason for joining upon becoming an instructor as they believe the benefits are not available until after they pass their Level 1 exam.
- Some feel they must become a member in order to take the Level 1 test whereas others believe that they cannot join until after they have passed the Level 1 exam.

When looking to join PSIA/AASI, the “secret shopper” study showed that the process of navigating the website and/or acquiring any type of information was extremely difficult. Divisional information was highly variable in terms of accessibility and communication about the process/expense of joining. The primary source of information for a prospective instructor was the ski school to which they inquired and the information presented about PSIA was incomplete at best. Significant differences in hiring practices appear to be dependent upon the size and/or geographic location of the hiring area.

Membership Profile

The membership profile for PSIA/AASI shows an active, forward thinking, motivated group that is willing to invest in their chosen lifestyle. Together the quantitative studies *1999 PSIA Membership Acceptance of New Ski Technologies/Equipment*, *The Consumer Data Profile Analysis of PSIA/AASI Membership* and the *Assessment of On-Line Publications* paint a fairly comprehensive picture of the type of people who are members of the association. Members are:

- Early adopters and promoters of ski technology and equipment
- Comfortable with the Internet and online learning
- Older (baby boomers 46-55), have completed grad school, own their own home, have a household income of \$75,000-\$99,999 or \$125,000 and are professional or self-employed
- Include outdoor recreation, wildlife and ecology, sports among their other interests.
- Mail order buyers, who own their own truck/SUV/motorcycle and/or RV

Effects of Disconnect Between Divisional and National Stakeholders

The qualitative research reports *Membership Motivations and Satisfaction 2002*, *Heads of Ski and Snowboard Instructional Programs Survey* and the *2003 Sponsorship Research* all revealed that the national and the divisional levels are not always “in sync.” They appear to have different objectives and messages.

From the ski and snowboard school directors point-of-view, this results in them not understanding the purpose of the association. This creates confusion and frustration for area managers. From sponsors’ point-of-view this creates confusion, hampering their ability to fully take advantage of their sponsorship as they are working with national and each division individually, with varying degrees of professional follow up. From the member point-of-view, this results in an undervaluing of the national services as they participate in activities on divisional level and an unclear understanding of the value of services at all levels.

Any lack of clarity on the offer to join or maintain membership and its costs (financial as well as opportunity) significantly compromise the perception of the value of the service and create false impressions that are far more expensive to correct than the costs for correct communication the first time around. Given the members' generally low level of differentiation between the services and functions provided by their division and the national organization, there exists a strong possibility that any dissatisfaction (as well as satisfaction) encountered in the interaction with services from one level of the association will be generalized to both levels.

Awareness of PSIA/AASI Outside of Membership

“Awareness”, as an issue, means different things to different audiences. Ask any group about the awareness of AASI/PSIA among others, and they will most likely say it is low. Nearly everyone will say that increased awareness is needed. However, when pressed to articulate how best to measure increased awareness, how to translate increased awareness into specific benefits to the association and its membership, and how much resource should be spent to increase awareness, one finds few answers. Further, concrete meaningful measures of awareness are difficult to come by. Finally, while respondents are familiar with the organization, their perception of the associations' depth and breadth of image is based exclusively on anecdote.

The qualitative *2003 Sponsorship Research* suggest sponsors and suppliers believe that awareness of PSIA/AASI within the snowsports industry (outside of themselves) is low, and awareness with end consumers (the skiing public) is low. Some suppliers believe they could do a better job helping to promote instruction to consumers, though are at a loss as to how to achieve this objective given the current economic climate. It is also fair to say that sponsoring manufacturers are minimally aware of association activities conducted with NSAA.

The qualitative study, *Membership Motivation and Satisfaction Survey 2002*, supports this as it revealed that most members were not familiar with PSIA/AASI prior to joining the organization or inquiring for work as an instructor at a resort. Prospective members of PSIA/AASI learn about the organization primarily from word-of-mouth from their resorts and fellow instructors. Both research studies indicate that low awareness could potentially be hindering the growth of the association and the power it yields in the industry to affect change and accomplish its mission.

This raises two issues for PSIA/AASI. First, there is a need to improve awareness in the snowsports industry in order to more smoothly recruit new members and to gain support for PSIA/AASI education initiatives. Raising awareness within the industry appears to be a lofty, yet potentially reachable goal for the association. Second, there is a belief that PSIA/AASI will be perceived to be more valuable to ski areas, members and sponsors if the general skiing public is aware of PSIA/AASI and requests lessons from only certified instructors, though no one is certain how this is universally valuable and how this would be realistically evaluated. Raising awareness among the skiing public would require significant resource investment and therefore should be evaluated carefully before any such initiatives are launched.

The variables and inconsistencies among divisions, and between the divisions and the national level (e.g. communication, pricing structure, clinics) are key inhibitors to clear understanding of the association mission and benefits, members, areas, and the general public.

The Association is Known for Education and Training

The qualitative *2003 Sponsorship Research* study showed that sponsors clearly understand that PSIA/AASI is an organization focused on education. For them, PSIA/AASI has an important role to play in the industry; to grow participation in snow sports. PSIA/AASI exists to promote clear, concise education standards in the instruction of skiing, (alpine, nordic, and adaptive) and snowboarding. This, in turn, results in consumers having a better experience when they are learning the sport, increases the likelihood they will participate again and thus grows the sport.

Additional qualitative research with the *Heads of Ski and Snowboard Instructional Programs* showed a similar understanding of the mission for PSIA/AASI, but only on a limited basis. Some directors were unclear about the mission of PSIA/AASI. The extent to which area managers are clear regarding AASI's mission is unknown.

The Key Benefit to Sponsors is Access to the Membership

The qualitative *2003 Sponsorship Research* revealed that National Demo team, while still an important element of the sponsorship program, is no longer the key benefit to sponsors. The true value in the sponsorship of the association is in access to its members, not publicity resulting from sponsorship of the Demo Team. The main benefits that the PSIA/AASI sponsorship program offers partners is a communication channel with lead users and influencers in the industry, and an opportunity to help drive industry growth. Given this perception, concern arose about the objective/mission of the demo team. Sponsors would like to see PSIA/AASI view the demo team as a group of expert instructors who help promote snowsport instruction, not as a group of pro athletes looking for publicity, exposure and sponsorship.

Actions Initiated From Key Findings

Based on research findings to date, several initiatives have been put in place to address identified issues. While these initiatives are all related to marketing, they vary from product/service improvement, to sponsorship and advertising sales, to marketing communication programs, to public relations efforts to event planning. Some of the key initiatives that have resulted directly from research findings are:

- Improvement of web site for PSIA/AASI members: Easier access to information about the association, available resources and direct links to division resources. Aims to address low awareness among prospective members and increase accuracy of information to members.
- Availability of training materials and study guides online: Aims to address members' current acceptance and use of online technology.
- Industry education programs: Heads Up, Lids on Kids, participation in the Growth Initiative. Aims to address low awareness within the industry and increase connection to key industry partners.
- Industry Trade Show Participation: NSAA Fall Seminar participation, attendance at Transworld, and the SIA show. Aims to address low awareness within the industry.
- Creation of membership E-news: Regular e-mail communication to members. Aimed at increasing frequency of communication. Also aimed at giving the membership more opportunities to hear directly from PSIA/AASI (not word-of-mouth). Increases opportunities to promote association news and benefits.
- Increased sponsorship sales: Better understanding of membership profile increases ability to expand the list of potential sponsors.
- Ability for sponsors to sell product behind member section of web-site: Improves access to membership and increases value. Also provides additional benefit to membership who likes to purchase products useful in their lifestyle and who are Internet savvy.
- Articles in ski/snowboard industry press: Designed to improve awareness and help position the association

Additionally, several initiatives are planned for 2004 FY calendar:

- How to Pick a Pro Initiative: An industry educational campaign aimed at raising awareness of PSIA/AASI with area management, consumers, and the industry.

- Informational brochure on PSIA/AASI: For members, sponsors, area management, media and industry. Aimed at providing more clear communication to all stakeholders.
- Continued publicity efforts with industry press and at industry events. Aims to address low awareness within the industry.
- Sponsor handbooks for PSIA/AASI: To clear up communication with sponsors about what is available to them and increase the perceived value of sponsorship, will also aid in sales process.
- Demo Team training regarding how to work with PSIA/AASI sponsors: To improve value of sponsorship program and give Demo Team more focus.
- State of the Community Assessment (SOCA) research: Planned for both NSP and PSIA/AASI, this is a quantitative tool that will assess member satisfaction and provide additional demographic information for member profiling.

Summary of 1999 PSIA Membership Acceptance of New Ski Technology/ Equipment Ownership

Description: A Quantitative mail survey to every member of PSIA. Response rate was 37%.

Objective: To assess whether or not instructors were supporters and promoters of new ski technology, specifically shaped skis.

This research was sparked by repeated comments from industry manufacturers that ski instructors were slowing the adoption of shaped skis by consumers because they did not recommend or support the innovation.

Key Findings:

- Members are great advocates of shaped skis evidences by high levels of usage and ownership as well as positive attitudes and opinions of the technology.
- Member instructors do recommend use of shaped skis to lesson takers and therefore are not barriers to the use of shaped skis, but are encouragers of the use of shaped skis.
- Members are generally supportive of other new ski technologies (research specifically asked about graduated side cut skis and snow skates) although they are wary of technologies they don't feel well educated on. When innovations are less well known, there is some hesitation in recommending usage to friends and lesson-takers.
- Members are comfortable with the rate of innovation in ski technology.
- Members would like to be better educated on new technological advancements and are thus seeking more information to assist in decision making.

2001 Survey of Heads of Ski and Snowboard Instructional Programs

Description: Qualitative research consisting of executive interviews with 19 heads of ski and snowboard schools at area resorts in geographic regions across the U.S.

Objective: To begin to understand the challenges that face the directors of ski and snowboard schools and to see how PSIA/AASI is perceived as a resource to deal with these challenges. Interviews were focused on hiring and retention of staff.

Key Findings:

- PSIA/AASI maintains strong ties with very few resorts. Directors who have strong ties with PSIA/AASI are those who had been involved with the demo team. Those that don't have strong ties tend to see less value in the offerings of PSIA/AASI.
- School directors need easier, proactive contact with regional and national resources.
- Directors project that there is much confusion about the purpose and role of PSIA/AASI among members.
- Directors project that there is much misunderstanding of cost, processes and certification levels of PSIA/AASI.
- Lack of communication by PSIA/AASI to members about mission and purpose of organization leaves the perception of the organization open to what members' peers tell them, not official word from PSIA/AASI. This creates false perceptions and compromises the organization's value proposition.
- Instructor training seems stagnant and needs to change with the times. Directors requested more modules that discuss "how" to teach, not just "what" to teach. Directors also expressed a desire for more onsite training at areas, not just divisional clinics.
- Instructor testing appears inconsistent and varies from region to region.
- PSIA/AASI should explore expanding membership benefits to include things like credit unions and insurance.
- Directors expressed a desire to raise the level of professionalism in snowboard instruction and assistance with "making lessons cooler" to snowboarders.
- There is great need for business training among directors. Most have little to none and therefore have difficulty with business measure metrics (rate of return, customer satisfaction measurements, staff retention etc), operations and sales projections (most guessed at revenue increases) and marketing tactics.
- Instructor retention is a major concern for directors. Retention seems to be due to economics (not paid a living wage) and transience of youth ("ski instructor is just a 'post college' job until I get a real job.")

2001 Consumer Data Profile Analysis of Membership (Acxiom Research)

Description: Completed by a national data house, Acxiom, this report compares the PSIA/AASI membership households (HH) to the U.S. population HH on demographic and lifestyle/interest characteristics.

Objective: To create a detailed profile of the membership of PSIA/AASI in terms of demographics lifestyle/interests so that PSIA/AASI management may better understand member interests and better sell the organization to potential sponsors, suppliers and advertisers.

Key Findings:

- After analyzing the characteristics of Professional Ski Instructors of America members, these households can be summarized in the following manner:

"Typical" Member Household (compared to National Reference Population)

- Truck, Motorcycle, Station Wagon and/or Recreational Vehicle Owner
 - Income of \$75,000-\$99,999 or \$125,000 or More
 - Age First Individual 46-55; Adults Age 45-54 Years Present
 - Premium Gold, T&E, and Bank Credit Card Holder
 - Single Family Dwelling
 - Professional/Technical Occupation
 - Home Value of \$200,000-\$300,000
 - Mail Order Buyer
 - Mail Responsive Household
 - Completed Graduate School
 - Self Employed
 - Interests include Snow Skiing, Sailing, Bicycling, Boating/Sailing, Camping/Hiking, and Running/Jogging
- PSIA/AASI can pursue sponsor agreements with companies that represent product or services in outdoor recreation/environment, sports, self-employment, home ownership, and vehicle ownership. PSIA/AASI can also safely pursue additional member benefits that fall within these categories.

2002 Survey of Membership Motivations and Satisfaction

Description: Qualitative interviews with 94 current and past PSIA/AASI members

Objective: To assess motives for-joining PSIA/AASI, level of satisfaction and decision criteria for non-renewal.

Key Findings:

- Findings of factors for joining and non-renewal were classified as controllable or uncontrollable. Uncontrollable factors were out of the industry's control (e.g. child birth, injury, move to different location) and were not discussed at length. Report focused on controllable factors.
- Reasons for becoming a snowboard or ski instructor vary depending on life stage. Singles/newly married people became instructors for cheap access to their favorite sport, full and empty nesters become instructors for self-esteem, and retirees for socialization and self-actualization
- The main reason for joining PSIA/AASI is that it is required by the resort. People are not usually aware of PSIA/AASI prior to talking to a resort about becoming an instructor. Awareness is haphazard and accidental.
- Reasons for leaving the profession cent on the inability to make a living (economics), difficulty scheduling the activity with all other family activities, and perception that instructor is not a "real" career.
- Reasons for leaving PSIA/AASI are that they are no longer instructors, or a lost sense of value- their pay does not increase as levels of certification increase, or a lack of interest in pursuing a higher level of certification.
- Full time instructors see more value in PSIA/AASI membership than do volunteers and part-timers. This is due to having more access to, and awareness of, membership resources.

2002 Review of Membership Database

Description: Review of data available in current member database

Objective: To evaluate the strategic value of membership data collected by PSIA in assisting with sponsorship sales and providing insight into members needs.

Key Findings:

- File contained 28,801 members and for each member there was a possibility of having 250 pieces of information. This information consists of data collected through submissions to divisions and information gathered in the Acxiom Infobase match.
- Over 80% of the data had some level of basic information beyond contact information.
- The File contains good demographic data (name contact, professional status, marital status, family size) and psychographic data on lifestyle and hobbies, product ownership and buying habits.
- The File has limitations on the use of data due to data entry error, missing data under-representation in appended data.
- File clean up was recommended to remove data entry errors and to enter missing information
- In addition to current usage, database could be used for retention and recruitment modeling which could lead to acquisition and retention marketing programs, and for product improvement (changes in services offered/membership benefits to better appeal to membership.)

2002 Assessment of On-Line Publications

Description: A combination of primary (qualitative and quantitative) and secondary research. The primary qualitative research consisted of executive interviews (5 total, with ski and snowboard school directors, and PSIA management) and the quantitative research consisted of a 2,000 sample membership survey which generated a response rate of 37%. Secondary research consisted of literature review on online learning, and review of existing PSIA/AASI training manual sales and financial data.

Objective: To examine the implications of offering instructor study guides in an online format as a substitute for hard copy format. Secondary objectives were to assess distribution channels, evaluate buyer behavior relative to print and online formats and assess pricing and revenue impacts on any recommended changes.

Key Findings:

- Research revealed that substitution of online study guide for hard copy manuals would not be preferable or financially viable for PSIA/AASI
- It was recommended that the organization offer a combination of online and print manuals and study guides that complemented one another.
- If online options were offered, PSIA/AASI could expect a 50% uptake of the online materials
- Members are regular users of the Internet
- The cost of converting all manuals from print to online would generate a loss as only about a third of members would support an increase in dues to offset the cost of offering online study guides
- 60% of manual sales came from divisions
- Overall, members are satisfied with educational materials offered to them from PSIA/AASI. Level I instructors had the highest satisfaction and Level III were less satisfied than others suggesting that PSIA/AASI look for opportunities to improve the materials for members seeking a higher level of certification.

2002 Secret Shopper for Becoming an Instructor and Joining PSIA/AASI

Description: Peak Exposure conducted “secretive” qualitative research with ski area management and with PSIA/AASI to determine the appropriate path for becoming an instructor. The research was conducted under the guise of a person looking into becoming a professional instructor.

Objective: To assess how easy/difficult it is for interested parties to apply for positions as ski instructors and to join PSIA/AASI. Secondly, the research sought to assess how well the career path is defined for instructors in terms of progression through PSIA certification levels.

Key Findings:

- Research revealed that each resort has a different process and qualifications requirements for those looking to become an instructor.
- In terms of processes, some areas would not hire until some level of PSIA certification was achieved, others would not hire without prior experience at a resort and others would hire on the condition that PSIA certification was pursued.
- In terms of qualifications for hire, some resorts looked only for an interest “if you can breathe we can teach you to ski,” others recommended teaching or instruction experience, and still others looked for a certain skill level in skiing.
- When looking to join PSIA, research showed that the process of navigating the website and/or acquiring any type of information was extremely difficult. Divisional information was highly variable in terms of accessibility and communication about the process/expense of joining.
- The primary source of information for a prospective instructor was the ski school to which they inquired and the information presented about PSIA was incomplete at best.
- Peak Exposure recommended:
 1. Changes to the web site to make information more readily accessible
 2. A marketing campaign directed at providing general information about PSIA/AASI to ski schools
 3. A template process created by PSIA suggesting the best practice for hiring instructors (qualifications and required steps) in an effort to help standardize the process.

2003 Sponsorship Research

Description: MarketSpark conducted qualitative interviews with a sample of 66 prospective and current sponsors and suppliers of PSIA. Sponsors consisted of hard and soft goods manufacturers. Response rate was 66%.

Objective: To assess the perceptions of AASI/PSIA and to determine ways to improve the sponsorship program. Specifically, to assess: Understanding of PSIA and AASI mission/goals, PSIA/AASI strengths and weaknesses, key elements of the sponsorship program, benefit of team and individual athlete sponsorship, perceived value of sponsorship program, and ideas for improvement of sponsorship program.

Key Findings:

- All but one of the current sponsors are satisfied overall with the sponsorship program and the value it brings.
- Sponsors understand well that PSIA/AASI is an organization focused on education. For them, PSIA/AASI has an important role to play in the industry; to grow participation in snow sports. PSIA/AASI exists to promote clear, concise education standards in the instruction of skiing, (alpine, nordic and adaptive) and snowboarding. This, in turn, results in consumers having a better experience when they are learning the sport, increases the likelihood they will participate again and thus grows the sport.
- The perceived strength for both PSIA and AASI is the ability to get beginners into the sport.
- The perceived weaknesses of PSIA/AASI focus primarily on the lack of awareness of the organization within the industry and among consumers.
- Additionally, sponsors expressed concern about the objective/mission of the demo team. Sponsors would like to see PSIA/AASI view the demo team as a group of expert instructors, not as a group of pro athletes.
- Other perceived weaknesses included dissention between regional and the national office, too much focus on alpine and not enough on nordic and snowboard, and a board that is slow to embrace new trends.
- The main benefits that the PSIA/AASI sponsorship program offers partners is a communication channel with lead users and influencers in the industry, and an opportunity to help drive industry growth.
- Five key elements of the sponsorship program were identified: Pro form sales to membership, individual demo team member sponsorship, sponsorship of the entire demo team, direct marketing to membership and event marketing.
- Satisfaction with the sponsorship program was heavily correlated with involvement in online pro deal sales and access to Mark Dorsey.
- Marketspark recommends that PSIA/AASI look into the following:
 - Implementing a sponsorship Account Manager
 - Refining/defining the role of demo team

- Publicizing email marketing opportunities among sponsors
- Publicizing event opportunities among sponsors
- Marketing efforts aimed at increasing awareness in industry
- Helping sponsors develop ways to track and police pro deal sales