



Marketing Basics for Events Organisers

The Language of Marketing

The terms marketing, promotion, advertising and public relations are commonly used as if they are interchangeable – there are however some very basic differences.

Promotion and advertising are, in fact, tools of marketing. They are communication methods for getting messages out to your target audiences.

Public relations relate to activities, usually free, designed and conducted to ensure that a strong positive public image is projected. They are often conducted through the media via media releases, interviews, articles or through hosting sponsor and media representatives at event launches or opening night functions.

Let's put it another way:

"... the circus is coming to town and you paint a sign saying 'Circus Coming to the Fairground Saturday', that's advertising. If you put the sign on the back of an elephant and walk it into town, that's promotion. If the elephant walks through the mayor's flower bed, that's publicity. And if you get the mayor to laugh about it, that's public relations." If the town's citizens go to the circus, you show them the many entertainment booths, explain how much fun they'll have spending money at the booths, answer their questions and ultimately, they spend a lot at the circus, that's sales."

- Attributed: M Booth and Associates, Public Relations Council www.mbooth.com

Know Your Audience

Think about who you would like to attend your event. Identify those who are most likely to come – perhaps those who have attended previous events, special interest groups, people who go to other similar events or attend the event venue for other reasons. This can make it easier to promote the event to them in an appropriate way.

Consider how people get to know about events in the area? What do they read? Where do they shop or socialise? Remember you can't hope to appeal to and attract everybody.

Marketing Plans

To develop a strategic marketing plan and avoid wasting time, money and energy, it is essential to:

- Identify who has overall responsibility for marketing and authority for speaking on behalf of the event

- Determine the available budget
- Have a strategic marketing plan
- Evaluate the marketing plan post event to learn what does or doesn't work

A community organisation presenting an event will more than likely have a high level strategic business plan, especially if the organisation is in receipt of public funding as it is usually a requirement of the funding body.

Such a plan includes the vision, philosophy and values, goals or objectives of the organisation. It should also include implementation strategies over a defined period designed to achieve the goals.

In turn, a strategic marketing plan should translate the organisation's goals into marketing goals and identify the strategies by which the marketing goals can be achieved, along with budget allocation, timeframes and the person/s or groups who are responsible for implementing the strategies.

While the nature of the "product" – the arts activity – will vary, there are some basic components of a marketing plan, regardless of the type, size or scope of the activity. The plan will need to clearly identify what many call the "P's" approach:

- Product - what you are planning to "sell" and why
- Price - cost of admission
- Place - where is it being staged
- People - the target markets
- Promotion - how you are going to communicate with your market

Unless you have a clear objective you won't communicate the right message to the right people in the right way at the right time i.e. you won't be able to make effective use of marketing and your resources.

Evaluating your Marketing Plan

Evaluation of your marketing plan and its implementation is a valuable learning process. Gathering evidence before, during and after a project can assist you to make judgments about what happened, which in turn will help you to improve what you are doing both during the process and in planning for what you do next time.

Evaluation takes time and resources and your approach (how formal and detailed or informal and flexible) will depend on the nature of the event. The following questions may assist you in this regard:

- Will the evaluation be external or in-house?
- Who will be involved from the organisation?
- What level of resourcing can be allocated?
- What level of reporting/measuring/written feedback is required?
- How will the results be used?

Summary Checklist

Have you:

- Identified who has overall responsibility for marketing and authority for speaking on behalf of the event?
- Determined your marketing budget?
- Identified your target audience?
- Decided on appropriate promotional tools – costing and free of charge?
- Prepared a marketing plan?
- Included a process of evaluation?

Marketing Tools

Once you have identified the target market you need to consider the most appropriate marketing tools to get your message across to them.

The available budget will influence the communication methods selected and the timing and frequency of the implementation you choose to adopt. As in the example above, some will be one-off and strategic; others will be ongoing, such as your relationship with your regional newspapers.

The most common methods used by the not-for-profit community sector are:

- Print media and radio advertising
- Leaflets and posters – (remember to check whether flyer posting is legal in your area)
- Banners
- Direct mail
- Cooperative marketing with other like minded organisations or the event venues

There are usually costs involved with producing publicity materials. Be realistic about what you can afford and closely monitor expenditure. Whilst you may have negotiated sponsorship or contra deals for some of the promotional activity, don't forget to also look for other opportunities for free advertising and publicity, such as:

- Event calendars
- Community newsletters
- Media releases/interviews
- Word of mouth
- email newsletters
- web listings

Working with the Media

Competition for editorial space or radio/TV air time is very fierce. In order to capture the editor's interest you should provide a story that is newsworthy, i.e. look for angles of interest to the general public or unique selling points. Where possible, provide a relevant, high quality and captioned photographic image. Make sure you have permission of the photographer and anyone in the photo to use the image. Always acknowledge the photographer.

Ideally, a media release:

- should be limited to one page – if the news outlet wants more they will ask;
- has 1.5 or double-spaced typed copy on one side of A4 headed notepaper identifying the name of the organisation;
- has short concise paragraphs – think in terms of who, what, where, when, why, how – with facts;
- sets out information in descending order of importance – if used, the copy may be edited and is usually cut from the bottom up;
- should provide a contact name, telephone number and date at the end of the release;
- should attach additional background information, e.g. biographies of performers; and
- makes sure that any funding is acknowledged. The funding body will provide the correct wording and logos to use.

Remember when preparing written material:

- be clear, concise and accurate
- always check the source of all material, and
- don't rely on the computer spell-check!

Media contacts

You should develop a list of relevant local media contacts and keep their email addresses in a file where you can make contact with them as a group when you need to. Where possible get to know key people in the industry and invite them to events or create an event especially for them to brief them about your project. Check deadlines and make sure that your release reaches the journalist or broadcaster in time.

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