

# Planning a marketing campaign

If you want people to take part in your activities or support you, marketing is an essential and inherent part of what you do. It is about communicating with people who are interested in what you are doing, giving them access to something they want, and building a closer relationship with them.

Planned promotional activity over a period of time is usually called a marketing campaign. Marketing campaigns are designed to generate a response i.e. getting people to come to a performance or an exhibition, having new member sign up, attracting donations, enlisting volunteers or changing how people think about your organisation. If you do this well, in the future they will feel comfortable about getting in touch and participating in your activities again.

## 1. Your product

Your product might be a person, an exhibition, an artwork, an idea, a performance, a fundraising event, a workshop, encouraging membership of your organisation, your new website or even your organisation itself.

## 2. The key selling points

(These are also sometimes known as 'USPs' – Unique Selling Points)

### ***Decide what is going to attract the most people to your 'activity'.***

Possible selling points could include:

- Has it ever been seen before?
- Is it unusual?
- Is it a one off/unique attraction?
- Appeal: is it funny, entertaining, escapist, family entertainment?
- Is it topical?
- Will it help people in their lives, at work, with problems?

### **Similarly consider all the things that could act as barriers, for example:**

- Lack of car parking
- Inadequate box office facilities
- Poor refreshments

## 3. The competition

It is worth finding out who you are competing with. If you are going to attract and keep your audience, you need to make your product not just 'as good as' whatever else is out there, but 'the best'. It is important to not have two similar events running within a close proximity of each other which may force people to make a choice.

Try to discover:

- What they are offering
- What similar events charge for admission
- How your product differs from theirs
- What gives you the edge
- If you could perhaps run a joint promotion

## 4. Your target audience

The next stage is to identify the people who are most likely to participate in your activity – your ‘target audience’. Your activity will probably attract different kinds of people but it is most important to identify who you think the main audience will be, so you can target the right people.

## 5. Your message

By developing a creative concept – usually an image or a slogan – you can create a central reference point which will become identified with your product. For a short-term campaign, this means coming up with a great idea which sums up the activity, will be noticed and will encourage people to buy, visit, give, become a member and so on. Repeating the concept gets recognition for your activity quickly and if you get the right message to your target audience they will then spread the word for you to people with similar interests. The best concepts are simple, powerful and evocative. They relate strongly to their target audience and the product they are selling and show people what it will feel like to be involved. Be creative – brainstorm as many ideas as possible. Go through all the images you have of the show/event. Talk to the whole team involved. Trawl through magazines, leaflets and design books to get ideas.

## 6. Ways of reaching people

Once you know who you are targeting and where you are likely to find them, you can decide which marketing activity will be most appropriate. List your target audiences and think about the different ways of reaching them. Your target audience may include people working in similar jobs and if so, get information to their places of work or education (e.g. local hospital, college/school, factory or office). Or alternatively they may not work (such as older people) in which case you will need to consider where they go for leisure activities (e.g. adult education centres, leisure centres, bowls or golf clubs). In larger buildings, good places for leaflets and posters are entrance halls, rest rooms and cafeterias.

### a) Flyers, leaflets and brochures

These are some of the most flexible marketing tools as they can be used in a variety of ways.

Leaflets can be distributed:

- Door to door
- In small bundles (bulk distribution) to places of work, leisure or entertainment
- With local magazines, newspapers and newsletters
- Along with a letter posted direct to people on your mailing list
- Placed on seats or handed out at similar activities

Make sure you include your contact details so they can respond

### b) Posters

Posters are good for displays in and around your venue and promoting your activity to people visiting similar events. Draw up a list of places to distribute them to and get volunteers to take them out and display them. Posters rely on good design, strong images and concise copy to get your message over effectively.

### **c) Publicity**

Press and media stories are an effective means of reaching a wide group of people. Feature articles in local newspapers, magazines and on radio are more likely to reach target groups.

### **d) Advertising**

Advertisements are particularly useful when you want to contact a wide population – e.g. if you are promoting a large scale event. However it can be expensive and space may be limited so only include the basic information (who, what, where and when), and choose the publication carefully – for example, advertising in arts programmes and brochures is worth considering if you are trying to reach people who attend arts events.

### **e) Word of mouth**

Personal recommendation is an effective means of getting people to participate in your activities. However it doesn't happen spontaneously. Word of mouth is generated by your marketing being so successful that you get people wanting to talk about you.

### **f) Websites**

The web is becoming more and more important in many aspects of marketing. It can be a very useful tool with the ability to reach a wide range of people – but can also be time-consuming, needing frequent updating to remain current.

Web users can bypass your website in seconds if it doesn't grab their attention, and may never find it again – so to hold onto your visitors and make sure your website is informative, easy to find on the net, quick to download, well organised and accessible.

## **7. The timeframe**

It is important to plan your marketing well in advance because of the time it takes – to compile mailing lists, place advertisements, and prepare leaflets. For example, if you were to produce a leaflet using a professional designer and printer, you would need to allow time for:

- Writing the copy
- Layout by the designer
- Proofing
- Printing
- Distribution

Find out about press deadlines and think about how far in advance you want to reach your audience – giving them enough time to plan to come to the event, but not so much that they forget all about it by the time it rolls around.

## **8. Your budget**

Whatever marketing you do it will cost either time, money or goodwill (and probably all three). So before you finally decide which marketing activities to use you will have to consider whether you have the equipment, time and money you need to carry out your marketing campaign. At the very least you will need access to computers and up to date mailing lists for direct mail, word processing for press releases, money to pay designers and printers, volunteers for stuffing envelopes, distributing print and selling tickets. It will pay to think and plan carefully, and spend your time and money on a few well-selected marketing activities which you carry out well, using good quality material, rather than trying to do everything you can think of and

doing none of it properly. If money is really tight, concentrate your budget on attracting media coverage and personal contact. This will still require a small budget to cover the costs of stamps, phone calls, person hours, photographs etc.

## **9. How to monitor your campaign**

Keep records of:

- The number of responses (each day/week during the campaign)
- Booking forms (from leaflets and direct mail) returned
- Telephone enquiries/bookings

Ask people, when they book or attend, where they heard about your activity and record the responses. Use this information to assess which parts of your campaign were most successful.