

Refreshing events hints and tips

The development of an effective marketing and communications plan is essential for the delivery of a successful event. The key is to match your event concept (the theme, programme) with the appropriate audience (those who will attend or participate in your event). In order to do that, you must have a strong idea of what the event actually offers and to whom.

You also need to have an effective plan of action and the necessary resources to implement it. Consider the unique challenges connected with marketing an event as opposed to an ongoing activity or product. Events are, in general, special annual or one-off events that take place in a specific, relatively short time-frame.

Your marketing plan involves taking a step back and having a good look at all the available information that relates to the event before devising a plan to move forward. Establish the event's **'vision'**, **'mission'** and **'key objectives'** also consider strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Then begin to formulate and refine the event's content.

- **Consider the events audience**

(i.e. who comes, where from, how many, level of repeat attendees, level of first time attendees, has the audience profile changed over the years?)

- **Is there any existing research?**

(i.e. do you hold any hard information on your audiences, have you closely examined it, what does it tell you, is it recent, what else do you need to find out?)

- **Are there any previous marketing activity and resources available?**

(i.e. what has worked in the past and what could be developed further?)

- **Available resources**

(i.e. budget, staff, stakeholder support and amount of time available to deliver the plan).

- **Competitor analysis**

(i.e. does the event have any competitors, can you learn from them?)

- **Income targets**

(i.e. if appropriate what level of return does the marketing activity aim to deliver by way of ticket sales, what are the other sources of potential income and can marketing activity influence these?)

- **Convenience**

Make it easy to attend. (i.e. use a city centre location close to major link roads with accessible parking available).

- **Marketing tools**

Consider the use of mailing lists, emails and the internet which are essential. A good event website and emails can offer events a head start when it comes to targeting visitors. Make the most of your own mailing list.

- **Build a media action plan**

Plot intended media activity against a timeline, taking in the pre, 'live' and post event periods. Your plan might include photography and PR.

Keep in mind that event marketing is never a stand alone or rigid activity. It involves working as part of the wider event team and ensuring that the marketing plan is structured yet flexible enough to respond as the event develops.

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A written and developed marketing plan allows those responsible for marketing the event to communicate their plans to the wider event team, funders and partners and to seek feedback and input as appropriate.

When preparing your Marketing and Communications Plan you must keep the available resources front of mind.

There are three key resource factors to consider:

- **Budget** – You need to establish the basic marketing budget at the outset.
- **Time** – You need to be aware of what's actually possible in the time available.
- **Staff** – You need to agree who's responsible for what and identify if there are any sources of additional assistance.

Communicate the positioning of the event and brand through key messages and marketing. Some of the most commonly used event marketing tools include:

- **Print: posters, leaflets, postcards, programmes**
- **Direct mail and print distribution**
- **Media advertising: print, radio and TV**
- **Website/internet/e-bulletins**
- **Outdoor advertising: billboards, bus sides and poster sites**
- **Friends/ambassadors' programmes/clubs**
- **Media releases, promotions and activity**
- **Media sponsorship**
- **Social and business networking groups**

Don't miss a trick and be inventive with your marketing tools

You may be able to raise advertising income by **selling pages in your programme** or **swapping adverts with other appropriate publications**. Bear in mind that a well produced event programme can be helpful when trying to interest future sponsors in your event.

Event tickets are useful communication tools

Think about using the reverse of the ticket to draw attention to key programme elements, health and safety reminders, or consider selling it as advertising space. Think about other ways that the ticket might work for you eg: is it appropriate to incorporate a tear-off 'special offer voucher' or a 'prize draw' opportunity?

Other print or design items may include **VIP, launch or press invitations, headed paper, website, complimentary tickets, carrier bags, entry forms, folders, catalogues, direct mail material, sponsor packs, advert layouts and site maps**. It's important that you think through all the print elements that are required in the planning stages for effective use of time and budget resources.

Think about how event partners can help you

For example are there opportunities to insert leaflets in sponsors' mailings, or do they have any public space where you could create a display or distribute leaflets.

Finally, remember, at the very minimum you should be thinking about where your audience/participants come from – a simple request for a postcode at the time of booking, or via a competition mechanism, can provide essential demographic information in terms of the pull of the event and the success of the marketing.

Need professional help planning and marketing your event?

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