



Getting started with your marketing and publicity

If you want people to take part in your activities, 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 – weeks, months or years – 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 members 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 or even joining you as a helper.



Competitive marketing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe



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Planning a marketing campaign

This briefing will explain in 10 steps, how to plan such a campaign to get the most out of the money and time you spend promoting your activities.

It will take you through preparing your plan step-by-step, to help you think about what you are promoting, who you are promoting to and what marketing activities you should use. Your answers will vary depending upon what you are promoting, the size and type of activity, the geographic area you work in and the resources you have.

What works for one activity may not work for another – some things will change and you may need to adjust your campaign accordingly. We will use 'activity' as a general term to describe what you are promoting.

1. Your 'product'

Your product might be a person, an exhibition, an artwork, an idea, a performance, a fundraising event, a workshop, membership of your organisation, your new website or even your organisation itself. Research the product carefully, so you can start collecting information that will help you create your 'marketing messages' / 'key selling points' by asking the 'creators':

- Why are you doing this work now?
- What inspired you to create the work?
- What's the central idea?
- Is it different to things you (or others) have done before or are doing now?
- How do you want the audience to feel when they leave the event/theatre/gallery etc?

The key selling points (sometimes known as 'USPs' – Unique Selling Points)

a) Decide what is going to attract the most people to your 'activity'

Possible selling points could include:

- **Rarity:** has it ever been seen before? What makes it unusual (e.g. location)?
- **Scale:** a spectacular/one off/unique attraction on a large scale? Or small and intimate?
- **Appeal:** is it funny, entertaining, escapist, family
- **entertainment?**
- **Topicality:** does the event hit the nerve of hot issues/popular pastimes?
- **Need:** will it help people in their lives, at work, with problems?
- **Known credentials:** previous success, familiar performers/ painter/writer etc.

b) Find out what your members or audience enjoy about your 'activity'.

What makes you or one of your colleagues want to take part, go along, do whatever it is you do? Make a list of all the things that make your activity worthwhile. Often things you might not have thought about are important: e.g. social factors – coming along with family, making new friends, and sharing an interest with others.

c) Consider all the things that could act as barriers, no matter how small.

We've all experienced lack of car parking, inadequate box office facilities and poor refreshments spoiling an otherwise wonderful time. To help you consider specific disability access issues – see *Creative Lives Briefing 128: Events checklist - disability and access*

d) Think about the future

If you intend to make this a regular event, then try to get things right the first time. You will only sell a poor service once – people just won't come back next time. Having done this you can then decide what to say about your activity in your publicity material i.e. your leaflets, press releases, social media etc.

It will also enable you to do something about overcoming the problems you might encounter. For example, if car parking is a problem, tell people so they can arrive early, or give information about public transport options.

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'. 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 – create a collaboration rather than competition.

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.

Ask yourself how old your core audience is likely to be. Will they have young children, be grandparents or students? Are they likely to work in similar jobs or professions? With many of the activities you run your target audience is likely to share similar characteristics to yourself and the people already taking part – so perhaps do some 'market research' and examine your current audience. Look at your mailing list to identify where most of your participants live, what the proportion of men, women and children is, how old they are etc.

If you don't already have a mailing list, you can gather one together by having a simple registration form or mailing list card available at events, or taking information at the box office. (See Data Protection Tips below)

TIPS: Mailing lists & Data Protection issues

If you keep mailing lists and other information electronically or otherwise, remember that your organisation will need to be registered with the Information Commissioner.

The Data Protection Act (1998) means that you **MUST** tell the people whose details you are keeping who you are (the legal name of your organisation), how you'll use their personal information, who you'll be sharing it with (or not), and how they have the right to see their information and correct it – if it's wrong.

Make sure your list is up to date, as sometimes they are old and inaccurate, and kept securely held. For more information see the Information Commissioner's Office website, or have a look at *Creative Lives Briefing 46: The Data Protection Act*.



Your message

Look to develop an image, name or slogan which will become identified with your product or activity. For a short-term campaign, this usually means coming up with a great logo, photo and/ or name which sums up the activity, will be noticed and will encourage people to buy, visit, give, become a member and so on. Repeating this 'concept' helps get 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. If you need or want to create your own images, suggestions for how to take good photographs can be found in *Creative Lives Briefing 151: Using photography*.

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. Often a mix of print and online activity is a good way to reach a wider range of people, though sometimes your focus may be narrow enough to just use one channel.

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.

This exercise also works for any promotion you may do through social media though you potentially have a greater range of options available, such as geographic location, work, education, interests, age and gender.

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.

The nice thing about leaflets is that people can pick them up and take them away for future reference. But make sure you include your contact details so they can respond. See *Creative Lives Briefing 76: Design Guides* for more advice on producing an effective flyer.

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 (see the checklists on the following page) and get volunteers to take them out and display them or there may be distribution companies that can put these out for you, along with leaflets. Posters rely on good design, strong images and concise copy to get your message over effectively – see *Creative Lives Briefing 76: Guide to Good Design* for useful tips.

Publicity

Press and media stories are an effective means of reaching a wide group of people. Feature articles in local newspapers, magazines and on the radio are more likely to reach target groups. For more details about how to contact the media see *Creative Lives Briefing 74: Publicity Explained*; *Briefing 77: How to write a press release* and the *Making the most of your local Broadcasters Toolkit*.

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!



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. Sometimes you can offer reciprocal advertising in your programme to cut the cost.

Websites

The web has become hugely important in most 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 easy to find, informative, quick to download, well organised and accessible, see *Creative Lives Briefing 73: Writing for the Web* and *Briefing 154 SEO: Getting your website noticed*.



Social Media

This is another way you can have an active presence online without having to create a website, or it can greatly enhance your website with easier ways to keep your content up to date and engage with your online audience. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are probably the best known social media platforms but there are others that can help cater for specific creative interests. For example, Pinterest and Instagram are good options for sharing photos of your creations and activity. Don't forget you can use your header or profile photos as ways to promote an upcoming event or activity.

For more information on social media, see *Creative Lives Briefing 168: Creating engaging content for social media* (plus links to two videos – creating events on Facebook and Using a social media volunteer); *Briefing 143: Creating a Facebook presence*; *Briefing 147: Creating a YouTube presence*; *Briefing 148: Creating a Twitter presence* and *Briefing 164: Social media in policy and practice*.

The timeframe

It is important to plan your marketing well in advance because of the time it takes – to compile mailing lists, place advertisements, organise online content 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.

Your budget - Essential

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 a computer and internet access, and you may also need up to date mailing lists for direct mail and emails, ability to write press releases, create content for social media, money to pay designers and printers, volunteers for stuffing envelopes (or arrange someone else to do it), distributing print and selling tickets.

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, online activity and personal contact. This still requires a small budget to cover the costs of phone calls, person hours, photographs, social media boosts etc. See *Creative Lives Briefing 74: Publicity Explained* for more information.

How to monitor your campaign

If you want to find out which aspects of your campaign work you will need to monitor when and how people respond. Keep records of:

- the number of responses (each day/week during the campaign);
- bookings made (from leaflets, direct mail, advertising and online);
- telephone or email enquiries/bookings.
- social media engagement statistics/ website visit numbers

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 to build what you know about your audience and how it can inform your marketing activity next time.

Celebrate!

Don't forget to take time to thank and acknowledge the work that will have been put into marketing your activity by various people in and outside of your group. It can be useful for them to get feedback on how they assisted as they may be more inclined to help next time.

And if you feel you have done particular interesting or innovative work in your marketing you may want to consider going for awards that acknowledge and help promote your group and its activities to a wider audience such as the Creative Lives Awards. Past nominees have indicated that being part of the shortlist has helped their profile locally which is always useful. For details see *Creative Lives Briefing 162: How to nominate your group for the Creative Lives Awards*.

Or maybe you feel your group would benefit from taking part in the Creative Lives Festival in May each year alongside other creative groups across the UK and Republic of Ireland. See *Creative Lives Briefing 158: How to get involved with Get Creative*.

Checklists

Give a copy of this checklist to all who help with publicity and add your own places as you develop your marketing.

Ways of selling

- Word of mouth
- Posters
- Leaflets
- Flyers
- Events listings
- Adverts
- A-frames
- Local newsletters
- Press releases
- Previews and reviews
- Local radio and TV

Where to place posters and leaflets

- A-frames
- Advice centres
- Arts centres
- Bed & breakfasts
- Bus shelters
- Businesses
- Cafes
- Car windows
- Churches
- Colleges
- Council buildings
- Hoardings (no fly-posting)
- Hospitals
- Hotels & hostels

- Lamp posts and telegraph poles (if allowed and usually needs to be removable)
- Libraries
- Local shops
- Local noticeboards
- Mailing list – postal and electronic
- Museums
- Post Offices
- Private houses: leaflets through the front doors, and posters in windows
- Pubs
- Regional theatres
- Recreation centres
- Schools
- Surgeries: doctors, dentists and vets
- Swimming pools
- The venue
- Tourist Information Centres

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