

# Delivering Your Marketing Message

## Planning Productive Promotions

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### Introduction

Effective marketing messages build awareness and interest in an organization's programs, products, and services. Promotion and marketing connect an audience to the program's benefits using different delivery methods. Successful promotions begin with a promotion plan, and the purpose of that plan is to deliver the right message to the right people for greatest participation and impact.

### Plan Target Audience Messages

The marketing plan begins by identifying target audiences. The promotion plan moves a step further by listing characteristics of the audiences and the potential benefits each could receive. Does the plan target retirees who rise early or own pets? Families who have limited time but want green spaces?

Construct messages that connect specific program benefits to audience interests and needs. Use words describing the benefits to the target audience. The project/event name, descriptive bylines, graphics, and supporting photos together make up a picture of potential benefits available to the target audience. The descriptive sentences, graphics, and photos of the marketing message can be used in other promotional tools, creating continuity with repeat connections. Two formats that are particularly effective are press releases and brochures.

### Press Releases

Press releases provide a quick written overview of the who, what, when, where,

why and how of programs and their benefits. A catchy lead statement should pique interest; follow with statements describing benefits to the audience. Use a testimonial quotation from an organization leader or past program participant describing the benefits they received. Outline the processes of participation. Clearly direct interested people to a website for more information. Include the program leader's contact information. Send the press release to local media outlets and post it on the organization's website. Include the website link in social media posts.

### Brochures

Brochure formats provide more detail than a press release, utilizing graphics, photos, bulleted project benefits, and registration specifics in a fun, interesting layout. Activities involving people should show people doing those things.

Elements of the brochure can be expanded into a flyer or poster format. A visually attractive piece will attract attention to the event. Brochure formatting should be mobile device friendly. The brochure can be posted on the organization's website to allow continuous access and may also be printed for distribution. Flyers and posters can be posted in public indoor places, such as community bulletin boards. The format can be enlarged for outdoor billboards.

### Press Packets

A press packet should include all promotion pieces, additional related items, and a cover letter. Items in the packet should pique the interest of an editor or reporter



*“Without promotion something terrible happens... Nothing!” –P.T. Barnum*



for additional interviews and news coverage of the event. For example, an organization that markets cookbooks may take an approach that involves interesting packaging and hand delivery. Wrap the press packet in a muslin kitchen towel, and include a sample cookbook with promotional bookmarks highlighting favorite recipes. Packets can be hand delivered, mailed or emailed to media representatives.

For more specifics on how to construct a press release or brochure, see the Kentucky Extension Leadership Curriculum's publication *Building your Marketing Tool Kit* (CLD3-3).

## Select and Develop the Promotional Mix

Once promotional messages have been developed to appeal to target audiences, research and select effective delivery tools. Multiple delivery tools should be used for maximum connection and exposure; this approach is referred to as the "promotional mix." For an event to landscape a rundown neighborhood park, the organization should target people with knowledge and time to help choose and plant trees, as well as people with a strong sense of community pride. Use direct mail to garden club members, and run early-morning radio ads to reach civic-minded retirees. Choosing the right combination of successful tools requires an understanding of each tool's benefits.

## Power Up Internet Websites

It is important to offer online communication options for searching information. Create a specific project website, or set up promotional links on your organization's general website. Websites should create an enthusiastic impression for your organization and its projects. Repeat press release language, brochure graphics, and event photos to provide continuity. Upload additional pictures or videos of participant testimonial interviews and link to social media sites. Create websites that are mobile device friendly to easily download and search.

## Target Social Media

No promotion plan is complete without a social media presence for mass personalization and interaction with participants. Real-time interaction and continuous discussion can occur with followers re-posting to others. Social media can be utilized (especially blog sites) to conduct market research about target audiences. Social media sites use forum discussions to help organizations build relationships. Create a site page for the event or use an organizational page to allow follow-up interaction. Think through the following steps for using social media successfully.

**Listen and respond.** Evaluate the organization's current online presence as well as other organizational websites for the ability to make an emotional connection; address positive or negative comments objectively to make your page stand out above others.

**Understand the goals of the organization.** Who is the market audience? What market are you competing in for participation? What is the goal of a social media page?

**Understand the audience.** Brand the organization to appeal to the audience. Make promotional messages short and interesting. Does the message sound stimulating and give followers a reason to search the website and interact.

**Research popular social media sites for target audiences.** Start with Facebook, Blogger, Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn, or pinterest.com. Focus on two or three platforms at a time; become effective at utilizing a few rather than being mediocre on many sites. Understand the language of each site and how applications work before you do or say something wrong and end up making a poor impression for your organization.

**Use online "personality" to stimulate interaction.** Use marketing messages that reflect the mission of the organization—and be authentic. Post the project benefits that connect to individual interests. Talk about new or interesting features of the product; include discounts or savings if they like or retweet a post or promotion. Post pictures

of clients participating in similar programs or activities. Ask members to tweet about the event or post pictures at the event site

## **Target Mass Media**

### **Television**

Television is generally the most expensive medium, but most stations provide non-profit organization public service announcements, special rates, and promotional opportunities. Consider local cable, public, or regional affiliates' free community calendars, as well as free morning or midday news show interviews. Television offers the widest coverage and the advantages of sight, sound, movement, and color. Use partnerships with other organizations or sponsors to maximize advertisement funding.

### **Radio**

Radio is immediate; virtually all response will come within two or three days of the ad. Avoid announcements too far in advance of the project or event. Consider combining advertisement spots with community calendar listings to maximize airtime and budget. Spots are assigned to run at approximate times like "morning drive" or "midday," each at varying rates. Negotiate; there is a big difference between 7:30 a.m., when everyone is in their cars, and 9:05 a.m., when most are at work. Purchase the best time slot that is affordable; when the target audience is most likely listening. Discourage purchasing "run of station" ads, which allow the station to choose the time. These may be more inexpensive but may not reach your audience, thus defeating your promotion plan. Consider live DJ news or feature shows to host conversations about your project or event; have call-in trivia questions to create enthusiasm for the event.

### **Newspaper**

Always send press releases and press packets to entice editor interest for feature stories. Flyers become ad copy. Small towns with weekly papers may have advantages for promotions with smaller target audi-

ences. Advertisement costs may be lower and relationships with staff may increase the potential of interview features. Explore inexpensive classifieds for basic details. Negotiate good page placement in the both weekly and daily papers. With many daily newspapers, Sundays are not as effective as weekdays for smaller ads. They tend to get lost in the volume. If the target audience is a younger demographic, consider online venues for ads or announcements.

### **Direct Mail**

The secret of direct mail: show the features in the brochure, show the benefits in the letter, and get the reader to call the organization. Personalize the cover letter. Lengthy copy is boring; keep messages short. Do not blindly mail a flyer; include an enthusiastic cover letter and fill it with benefits. Lead with your biggest benefit, and follow with a short bulleted list. Remember to ask the reader to call several times in the cover letter. Target individuals or groups to maximize mailing costs.

### **Magazines**

Explore regional distribution magazines that focus on free community calendar listings. Send a press release or press packet to the editor or feature story reporter in hopes of generating future press. If purchasing advertisements, run a test ad first to evaluate marketing effectiveness.

### **Other Promotional Tools**

There are endless ways to creatively promote products, programs, or events to specific audiences. Consider movie and theater advertising, school newspapers, billboards, transit advertising, coupon/trader books, church bulletins, non-profit newsletters, coupon mailers, event displays, event programs, festival booths, supermarket community boards, and sports team advertisements. Consider the value of word-of-mouth contacts delivered by your organization's members. Make sure they are familiar with the talking points found in the original promotional messages and have adequate access to the brochure for additional information.

## Prepare a Promotions Budget and Action Plan

Finalize a marketing budget and action plan to include a promotion mix, budget, and implementation timeline. Promotion plan budgets help focus the selection of free and/or paid promotion strategies for greatest value. Evaluate potential costs for the best promotional mix to connect with the target audience. The size of the target audiences impacts the cost allocations for each budget item. To stretch every dollar, explore partnerships with other organizations. Consider piggybacking your project or event with other community events for mass promotion.

Structure the plan to include timelines and the person responsible for making each promotion contact, as well as the development and use of promotion tools and dates. Free community calendars need lead time for airing announcements. Television feature interviews may need to be scheduled months in advance of an event. Media advertisements may need to be previewed several times and scheduled for print before registration deadlines.

### Summary

Productive promotions begin with a plan that targets specific audience characteristics, needs, and interests and then provides product or program benefits in messages that make connections. Marketing messages communicate benefits and build enthusiasm for participation.

A promotion budget with an implementation timeline will also focus resources for a productive promotional mix. Promotional tools require careful evaluation in order to best reach the target audience and maximize marketing funds.

To evaluate the effectiveness of promotions, ask the target audience whether they recognized or recall specific advertising messages, what they remember about the message, and how they heard about the product, program, or event. Evaluating client satisfaction and clients' connection to the program will lead to cost-effective promotions in the future. Successful promotions ensure that organizational marketing objectives are met and, more important, that targeted audience benefits have been delivered.

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