

A GUIDE TO...
EVENT
PROMOTION



**A step-by-step guide to
creating an effective
promotion strategy**

So, you've planned an event – congratulations!

**You've secured a venue, lined up a schedule, organised the refreshments...
...now all you need to do is get people to come along.**

It can be hard to know where to start with promoting a community event. Should you pay for an advert in the paper? Should you put posters up, and if so, where? What about Facebook?

The good news is, you don't have to be a professional event promoter to get lots of people to hear about and come to your event. You just need a bit of local knowledge and a good plan!

This step-by-step guide will help you develop a successful promotional strategy for any size or type of community event, by encouraging you to think about WHO you want to attend, WHERE and WHEN to get their attention, and HOW to convince them to come along.

Already feeling overwhelmed? Fear not!

Here's a super-quick summary of the rest of this guide, including the three questions to ask yourself before you get started.

STEP 1: WHO DO YOU WANT TO ATTEND YOUR EVENT?

Write down as much as you can about your target audience. You may find that you have more than one category – if so, great!
Get creative – try to be as specific as possible about each one.

STEP 2: WHERE/WHEN CAN YOU GET THEIR ATTENTION?

Write down what a typical day might look like for your audience(s).
Identify a few points at which you might be able to get their attention.
Think about what they might be doing when they find out about your event.

STEP 3: HOW WILL YOU CONVINCe THEM TO COME ALONG?

You could shout loudly to lots of people (put posters up or pay for advertising).
You could find and talk to specific people (send info via email and social media).
You could ask people to invite you in for a chat (give talks and presentations).

Whatever combination you choose – write it own and you're good to go!

STEP 1: WHO DO YOU WANT TO ATTEND YOUR EVENT?

One common mistake many new event organisers make is to answer this question with “the general public” or, simply, “everyone”.

Usually, what they actually mean by this is “I want my event to be open to everyone!” – which is a perfectly good aim. But your event being open to everyone is not the same thing as it being appealing to everyone. By thinking more carefully (and realistically!) about who your main target audience is, the more likely you will be able to reach and engage them.

Ideally, you’ll have been thinking about your target audience right from the start of your event planning process, so you will already have an idea about the kind of people you want to come. But even if you haven’t given it much thought yet, it’s not too late to begin.

EXERCISE: DEVELOPING YOUR AUDIENCE PROFILE

Close your eyes and imagine your event happening. Who is there?

Choose three people you can ‘see’ in the room and write down as much information as you can about each of them. How old are they? Why have they come? Who are they there with?

Let your imagination go as wild as you like for this exercise – the more details you can fill in about each person, the better! You can even give them a name and draw them, if you like. This might seem a bit silly at first, but it’s actually a helpful way to get you thinking about your audience in real terms, rather than as abstract groups like ‘teenagers’ or ‘older people’.

Once you’ve finished your audience profiles, see if you can come up with some more specific categories to describe your target audience. If your three people are quite similar, you might only need one category – but if they are varied you can choose more than one.

For example, after doing this exercise for a parent and baby group, you might come up with the following categories:

- First-time mums with little or no support networks – either because they live in small villages with few transport options or because they have moved to the area recently.
- Stay-at-home dads with one or more small children, who are struggling to access mainstream support and who don’t have much experience of local parenting groups.

As you can see, approaching people within specific categories like these for your event is likely to be far more effective than trying to reach a very general audience such as ‘parents’.

STEP 2: WHEN/WHERE CAN YOU GET THEIR ATTENTION?

Now that you know who you're targeting, you can start thinking about when and where you are most likely to get their attention.

We live in an information-intensive world, with thousands of different messages competing for our attention every single day. It's impossible to pay attention to all of them, so we filter out much of what we see and hear – including most of what we read, watch and listen to.

While this is great news for our ability to function without being constantly overwhelmed, it also means that 'cutting through the noise' to promote your event is challenging.

A good starting point to think about is what your audience might be doing throughout the day, so you can work out where and when they are likely to be receptive to new messages.

EXERCISE: IDENTIFYING ENGAGEMENT TOUCHPOINTS

Using the characters you imagined during the last exercise, write some 'day in the life' stories. What will they each be doing throughout the day?

Again, be as imaginative as you like – you can describe a non-eventful day if you want, or if you prefer you can give your characters something interesting or fun to do! While this can feel overly specific when you are doing it, you should start to see patterns emerging that will help you identify potential engagement points at which people in each of your audience categories might hear about your event, as well as when they are likely to be most receptive.

For example, perhaps you are planning an open mic night for people who like folk music. You might have imagined one audience member being a woman in her 50s, who lives with her partner and dog in Drybrook, works as a HR manager, and enjoys playing the ukelele.

After doing a 'day in the life' for this audience member, you might identify the following engagements touchpoints:

- FOD based music/arts Facebook groups, early in the morning (before work)
- BBC Radio Gloucestershire, during the morning breakfast show
- Local paper in the staffroom/office, during weekday lunchtimes
- Pubs, cafes and hair salons in and around Coleford, after work and at weekends

These touchpoints will give you a great framework for deciding the answer to your next big question – how are you going to reach each of your audiences?

STEP 3: HOW WILL YOU CONVINCe THEM TO COME?

Now you know who you're talking to and where/when to approach them, it's time to work out how you're going to convince them to come along.

Broadly speaking, there are three main approaches you can take to event promotion.

- **Paid advertising** - for example, taking out an advert in your local paper.
- **Direct marketing** - for example, contacting specific people (or groups of people) via email or social media, or distributing printed posters and flyers for your event.
- **PR and outreach** - for example, by getting a local journalist or blogger to write about your event; writing an article or guest blog post yourself for a relevant publication or platform; or visiting a local community group network and/or deliver a presentation.

However, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to promoting your event - it's likely that you will choose a combination of these approaches based on the resources that you have available.

EXERCISE: ALLOCATING YOUR RESOURCES

Each type of approach has both benefits and costs associated with it.

For example, paid advertising is a great way to reach lots of people while making your event appear more 'official', but it can be expensive (a quarter-page advert in a local newspaper costs around £200) - and it won't necessarily be seen by the type of people you want to reach!

Direct marketing tends to be lower cost (especially digital/social media marketing) and is more likely to reach a specific target audience, but it requires more time/effort to do well.

PR/outreach can be targeted extremely accurately and your audience is much more likely to pay attention to (and trust) your message, but it needs to be planned and started well in advance of your event and requires significant investment of time and effort to set up.

Write down what resources you have available to you for promoting your event, including:

- **Money** - Do you have a promotional budget, and if so, what is it?
- **Time** - How much time do you have until your event happens?
- **People** - Who is available to work on promoting your event?
- **Availability** - What is your/your team's availability like for promoting your event?

Combining this with all of the information you have already established about your target audiences, try to identify which approaches would be most useful for promoting your event.

NEXT STEPS: PUTTING YOUR PLAN INTO ACTION!

You've identified your audience, you know how to reach them, and you've decided which promotional tactics to use - now it's time to write it all down.

All the information you've gathered can now be combined into a single promotional strategy. It doesn't have to be complicated - for example, if you were running a creative art workshop for adults with early-onset dementia, your strategy might look like this:

TARGET AUDIENCE(S)	WHEN/WHERE TO REACH THEM	PROMOTIONAL APPROACH
<p>People aged between 50 and 70 who live in the Forest of Dean and have recently been diagnosed with early-onset dementia</p>	<p>At GP surgeries during weekdays</p> <p>At churches and community cafes during weekends</p> <p>Via local and/or online dementia support groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute posters promoting this event to GP surgeries/ churches/cafes • Share digital flyers for the event through online and/or social media support groups • Arrange to give a talk about art at the next meeting of a local dementia support group
<p>The partners, carers, and friends of people with early-onset dementia living in the Forest of Dean</p>	<p>At supermarkets during weekdays</p> <p>Through local sports and social clubs during evenings and weekends</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a short article for the newsletter of a local art club about art and dementia • Contact the local paper or radio station to tell them about why this event is important and who it will help (stories are great!)

Have a go at writing your own version of this, using all of the information you have so far.

AND FINALLY...

Whatever your promotional strategy is, you will need to produce some publicity materials to give your target audience all the relevant details.

This can feel quite daunting when you haven't done it before, but there are a few simple things you can do to ensure that your publicity materials are as effective as possible.

TOP TIPS FOR CREATING PUBLICITY MATERIALS

- **Strike the right tone.**

If your event was a person, how would you describe its style and personality? The way your promotional materials look and sound can make a big difference to how likely people are to come to your event, so make sure your visual style and 'tone of voice' are giving the right impression to the right people.

- **Keep it simple.**

You don't want to lose people's interest at the first hurdle - make sure it's as easy as possible for people to find or get to your event, by clearly stating the details and keeping any online links short, sweet, and accessible.

- **Get audience buy-in.**

You're obviously less likely to get no-shows if you're charging people to come to it, but even if your event is free of charge, you can still get your audience to 'buy in' by encouraging them to book a free ticket or sign up.

- **Introduce yourself.**

Don't forget to include details about who is organising and/or funding your event - not only will this keep any partners and funders happy, but most people are more likely to go to an event if they know who is inviting them!

- **Make it visual.**

It's often really helpful to include images in the materials you are using to promote your event, but you need to make sure they are relevant and that you have permission to use them. If you don't have any photos of your own, you can always use images from online libraries such as www.pexels.com and www.pixabay.com - both of which contain lots of interesting, free-to-use photos,



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