



EVENTS NOVA SCOTIA

Inspiring times

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

There are many different marketing techniques you can use. Today, online marketing (including websites) and social media are core promotional tools for festivals and events.

Introduction

Marketing used to mean traditional advertising like radio spots, newspaper advertisements and flyers. But these traditional media are only a small piece of the marketing mix for festivals and events today. Growth in online marketing and in social media has made it possible for festivals to promote themselves with a more limited budget – though you still need time and money to do social media successfully.

This is not to say that online marketing and social media are the only promotional tools available for you. Other promotional activities can be effective in generating visitation, even with a limited budget. You just need to leverage opportunities for getting others to assist you in marketing your festival or event, such as:

- Your sponsors –they can include you in their social media promotion, website links, or email blasts to clients/suppliers
- Your community organization partners – service clubs, the municipal government, and its parks and recreation department
- Your tourism partners in the area, including Visitor Information Centres
- Your local and regional tourism marketing organizations
- Tourism Nova Scotia through novascotia.com and other marketing channels
- Your local media
- Provincial media, including Halifax media (and, depending on the scale of the festival/event, potentially national media as well)

This chapter first looks at some key marketing terms and preparing a marketing plan. It then addresses the major marketing tools available to a festival: your website, online marketing, social media, and other tactics. Finally, it talks a bit about tracking and measuring your results, as well as adjusting your marketing activities in response to your findings.

Glossary of Key Terms

Traditional Media

Traditional media refers to early mass media and often includes TV, radio, cinema, music, and print (e.g. newspaper, magazines, books, brochures, signage, tent cards, etc.). One of the hallmarks of traditional media is that it is a one-way communication, and often doesn't allow for immediate engagement. Traditional media are often very expensive.

Digital Media

Digital media includes popular social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, along with less-considered channels like e-zines (digital magazines), text messages, blogging, and web advertising. Many festivals and events prefer digital media because it can be less expensive than traditional advertising. Digital media is typically a two-sided communication, making it easy to engage followers and measure your impact. Using social media platforms, in particular, can increase awareness and boost sales. The goal is to create and share interesting content your followers will engage with by purchasing a ticket, RSVP'ing to your event, sharing your posts, or interacting with your page.

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

Public Relations (Publicity, PR)

Public relations (PR) is all about your festival's image. When PR works, it is basically free advertising and can generate great word of mouth. The goal of PR is to get media exposure, which is especially powerful because it is seen as unbiased. Developing a solid PR strategy is essential to success. Getting involved in your community, particularly if you are in a small community, is a big part of PR.

The Marketing Plan

No matter how small your festival, you should prepare a marketing plan in conjunction with your initial planning and budgeting. You need to clearly identify what markets you plan to attract and how you are going to tell them about your festival.

Marketing incorporates the following 4 P's covering all aspects of the festival as illustrated to the right.

The marketing plan should address the following:

1. An assessment of the marketplace situation:

- The available markets for the festival
- The competition, if any, at the time of the event

2. Your objectives:

- The priority target markets
- The levels of visitation and revenues desired
- Other objectives for the event

PRODUCT

*Entertainment and programs
Food, beverage, retail vendors
Employees and volunteers*

PRICE

*Prices for admissions, entertainment, etc.
To cover costs and generate a profit*

PLACE

*How customers buy your festival, e.g.
online, on the phone, at the gate, etc.*

PROMOTION

*The tools used to take your product to market
and generate sales, e.g. online marketing,
social media, public relations, advertising, etc.*

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

3. Your marketing strategy:

- How you are going to “position” the event to attract the market’s interest. Positioning involves a statement as to the key and unique features of the event: who the event or activity is aimed at; what is special about it; why it’s a good idea to attend; when it will take place; where it will take place.
- Where do your markets generally look for information? What media platforms are they most active on?
- How are you going to reach the markets? Include the various marketing tactics you intend to employ and a timeline of execution.
- Your partners and sponsors and how you intend to work with them in marketing the event.

4. The marketing budget and plans for tracking results:

- Specific marketing initiatives – the tools, the message, the schedule
- Budgets for each initiative
- Tracking methods to measure the effectiveness of each initiative

Branding

Having a recognizable brand (logo) is helpful, particularly one that communicates the unique appeals of the event and its market positioning relative to other events. The logo can also be used by partners and sponsors in helping you promote the event and in connecting their organization to the event. This is important, particularly for sponsors who want to benefit from the publicity value of providing support for your event.

Your logo should be something simple and easily reproduced. Use it in all your marketing materials and promotional activities. You will want to use the same logo year after year, so take some time (and perhaps get some help) to create it.

Marketing Tools

Some of the most commonly used festival or event marketing tools include

- Internet – website, blog, e-bulletins/email
- social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)
- print – posters, flyers, postcards, programs, etc.
- direct mail of flyers and postcards to previous event or activity attendees, friends, donors, and sponsors
- outdoor poster sites
- word of mouth (friends, clubs)
- media advertising in print publications (newspapers and magazines), radio, and TV. Only consider paid advertising if you have at least \$1,000 extra in your budget. Depending on the nature of your event, you may wish to use community newspapers as a good way to reach your local audience.
- media releases — this is a basic tool used for submitting information to the media.

Start spreading the word of your event as soon as you can on social media. It will take a while to catch on. Use “teasers” but don’t give away any major announcement until you have all your planning completed and contracts confirmed. These teasers will attract those planning vacations ahead of time.

Create a timeline for your marketing that fits your festival or event.

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

Six months out from your event date may be a good time to put out your first official press release, but nine months might be best for another event. Even if you don't have your full roster of entertainment confirmed, announcing the when and where as well as ticketing information will start the conversation.

Be sure your website and social media sites are up and running before you send out the release so people can follow up on the promotion online.

If you do radio promotion, alternate between ads and contesting to stretch out your reach. For print ads, choose a section of the paper that best fits your target market (such as business, arts and culture, sports).

The various marketing tools at your disposal are explained in greater detail below.

Website

The Internet essential for marketing for festivals and events. But before you start spreading word about your festival, you will need a good website.

Your website will be the hub of your online marketing. Your website is where you will send people for all the information about your event (dates, locations, schedule, tickets, etc.). All other online marketing activities will grow from your website so be sure to include your site on all your promotional material (posters, brochures, etc.).

You may be tempted to rely on social media platforms, like Facebook, for this purpose, but keep in mind that you don't own your Facebook

page. A website belongs to you and won't be subject to the constant changes that can occur with social media platforms.

You can easily build your website using any of the free online tools such as WordPress, Weebly, and Wix. They also offer upgraded accounts for more options and personalization.

Your website needs to be easily found by search engines like Google and Bing, so be sure to research how to use keywords and search engine optimization (SEO).

Your website should include the following:

- Contact information
- Date(s) and time(s) of event
- Prices and ticket sales (if applicable)
- Event schedule (performers, programs, etc.)
- A link to sign up for your e-newsletter
- Links to social media profiles
- Information on volunteering for your event
- Information on sponsoring your event
- Recognition of event sponsors
- A brief history of your event, including photos if possible

Keep your website simple and easy to read and navigate. Make sure people don't have to go through too many links to get the information they're looking for or they may give up and leave. Your website should also be mobile friendly.

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

Link your website to your sponsors' and partners' sites and encourage them to link back. Also, add Facebook, Twitter and other social media links to your site and invite interested parties to follow your event for up-to-the minute news on your festival. This will grow your overall social media reach.

Google Ads

One way to drive traffic to your website is through Google Ads. This service guarantees your ad and a link to your site will show at the top of the results page when someone does a search using keywords that you choose and pay for. Additional information, step-by-step instructions on how to sign up, and fees can be found on their sign up page (https://ads.google.com/intl/en_ca/getstarted/).

Helpful Tip: Social Media

Once you have grabbed your audience on one of the social media platforms, it's important to engage with them regularly. Don't ignore them.

Social Media And Online Marketing

Social media and online marketing are the most effective and wide-reaching promotional tools for every event. However, being good at Facebook and Twitter does not mean your online marketing campaign will be successful.

Social media can be confusing because it is constantly growing and changing. Your success depends on choosing which platform(s) will work for you, establishing a plan to use it/them, and then putting that plan in action. Social media is not about broadcasting your message, but engaging with your audience, so be sure to listen and respond.

Social media management should be a dedicated role for a qualified staff member or trusted volunteer; budgeting the staff power to manage your platforms will guarantee consistency and quality. If your designated manager doesn't have any experience in running social media for an event or business, invest in training so you'll experience all the benefits this powerful tool has to offer.

Building a strong social media presence takes dedication and patience. It won't happen overnight, but if you invest the time, the planning, and the human and financial resources, social media can be an immensely powerful marketing platform.

Facebook

Facebook is one of the most popular social networks and is an ideal platform for events and festivals. Set up a page for your festival, making sure you include all the relevant information and some strong images for the cover and profile photos.

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

Share your page with your supporters, sponsors, and volunteers, and get them to share it on their pages. This will help grow your follower base.

Leading up to your event, create a content plan for what you will post on Facebook. Posting daily is optimal, but several times a week will work. Don't be afraid to repeat information regularly, as not all your followers will see all your posts. Share fun images and videos, ask questions, announce event details, be friendly and engaging; think about what you enjoy seeing on your Facebook feed and replicate it.

Keep the text in your Facebook posts to a few brief and clearly written lines.

Use Facebook's scheduling tool so you don't have to be online all the time. This tool lets you schedule your posts hours, days, weeks, or months ahead of time and will make regular posting of content far easier.

Be sure to pay attention to comments and messages on Facebook. If someone asks a question, answer it as quickly as possible. If someone has a complaint, address it speedily; sometimes a simple "We're sorry to hear that ... here's what we can do to fix it" is all someone needs to see to feel their complaint is understood. If someone makes an inappropriate or offensive comment, don't be afraid to delete it. Engaging in conversation with your followers lets them know you're listening.

You can learn a lot about your followers through the Insights tab at the top of your festival's page. Clicking on People will give you a look at where your followers are from, their age, and other demographic information. Insights also allows you to see the reach (how many

people saw the post), as well as the engagement (likes, comments, and shares) for your Facebook posts. Paying attention to this information will help you discover what types of posts (photos, videos, links, etc.) are most popular with your followers.

The average organic (that is, with no paid promotion) reach for a post is between 5 per cent and 20 per cent of your followers. Facebook also allows you reach more people through Facebook advertising.

For a small investment, Facebook advertising allows you to target posts to specific locations and audiences. You're also able to promote your website and your festival's page to Facebook users. The more you spend, the larger your post's potential reach.

In order to run a paid Facebook campaign, you sign up for a Facebook Ads account at www.facebook.com/advertising. This site gives step-by-step instructions on setting up your account and planning your first campaign. Also take the time to read through the term of service so you don't violate any of Facebook's rules.

Similar to Insights, Facebook advertising provides information on the reach and engagement for your promoted posts, which is helpful when you're evaluating your promotional spending after the event; you'll be able to determine your CPM (cost per 1000 views), which is a standard measurement for online marketing efforts.

Twitter

Twitter allows you to communicate with followers in brief messages. While Twitter allows a maximum of 280 characters, we recommend going with 40 characters or fewer. Due to the speed at which this social platform moves, it's important to tweet more often than you would post to Facebook.

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

Set up an account with a relevant username for your festival, making sure that you include all the pertinent information and images for the cover and profile photos.

Third party applications, such as Hootsuite, Tweetdeck, Buffer, etc., have scheduling options that let you plan your tweets in advance. Twitter also supports video and images, so make use of visuals to catch attention.

Be sure to follow accounts that are related to you (other festivals, local businesses, sponsors, entertainers, etc.) and engage in conversation. Come up with a hashtag (i.e., #ourfestival2020) that you'll use during the festival and share it so attendees can use it as well. This will allow you to search for the hashtag in Twitter and see what people are saying. Don't forget to engage in conversation and thank them for tweeting about your event.

Do not automatically link your Facebook to Twitter. This is tempting because it may save some time, but these social platforms have different audiences and you should tailor your message for each one.

You can analyze the performance of your tweets at www.analytics.twitter.com. Twitter also offers advertising to promote tweets or accounts. To find out more, visit www.ads.twitter.com.

Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform you can use to showcase your festival through photos. Instagram is a mobile app and can only be used on smart phones and tablets. Instagram accounts can be viewed on a desktop or laptop computer, but photos can only be posted via the app.

Come up with a hashtag to use during the festival and let your followers know about it. Attendees will use it to post about your event and share their personal photos. By searching for your hashtag after the event, you'll be able to track what was said and shared. Don't forget to comment on their photos and thank them for attending.

Several different apps allow you to "regram" (repost) photos in Instagram, much like retweeting in Twitter. This allows you to share and engage with people at your event.

To see how your Instagram posts are performing, you can use a third party site such as www.iconosquare.com. You can also boost your Instagram posts by paying for advertising.

For more information on specific platforms, check out these resources:

- Mashable's Social Media Blog
<http://mashable.com/category/social-media/>
- Yelp Support Centre <https://biz.yelp.ca/support>
- How to Use Twitter (via Wiki)
<http://www.wikihow.com/Use-Twitter>
- How to Use Facebook for Business (via Facebook)
<https://www.facebook.com/business/overview>
- How to Use Pinterest (via Wiki)
<http://www.wikihow.com/Use-Pinterest>
- How to Use Instagram (via Wiki)
<http://www.wikihow.com/Use-Instagram>
- HubSpot's Marketing Blog
<http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing>



Other Online Marketing Techniques

Blogs

A blog is a great way to tell the story of your festival. Unlike Facebook and Twitter users, who prefer short messages, users visit blogs expecting to read. You can host a blog directly on your website or use a third-party site (Blogger, WordPress, Tumblr).

Planning is important for a successful blog. If you want loyal readers, you need to create new content on a regular basis, so map out what topics you want to write about and schedule when you will launch those blogs. Use your other platforms to promote your blog — post the link to a new blog entry on your Facebook and Twitter accounts, using teaser text (“Want to know who we’ve booked for our festival? Check out our blog for details!”) to spark interest.

Take pride in your social media platforms, as they’re the way many people will be introduced to and learn about your festival.

- Use quality photos; you can use a phone, but make sure photos are large, in focus, and well lit.
- Assume your followers know nothing about you; if you post a photo, make sure to explain what’s happening/who is featured in that photo.
- Don’t be afraid to repost content; not all your followers will see every post, so recycling appropriate content is a good practice.
- Pay attention to grammar and spelling; don’t use text speak (OMG! U R AWSM!), or overuse exclamation marks or emoticons.
- Keep it professional; your festival social media accounts are the voice of your event. Avoid sharing irrelevant or offensive posts and memes, and do not express personal opinions. Speak as “we” instead of “I,” keeping the tone light and conversational.

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

Email Marketing

Email marketing is a great way to directly reach people who are interested in your event. Canada's anti-spam legislation (CASL) requires you to obtain permission from an individual to contact them by email. Building an email list takes time, but is worth it. The quality of your list (that is, the people who are interested in your event) is far more important than the size.

Some ideas for building lists include

- having a sign-up form on your website and Facebook page
- promoting your list on social media
- running a contest in which you ask for people's email on the ball lot along with an opt-in for receiving emails
- asking your volunteers, supporters, sponsors, and friends if they would like to be added to the list
- asking people you talk to about your festival if they would like to be added to your list

You can use free online newsletter applications (such as MailChimp, Constant Contact) to create a sign-up form, manage subscribers, and design emails, as well as keep track of statistics for your campaigns (open rates, etc.). They also offer upgraded accounts for more options and storage.

Plan your email communications in advance, keep them short and filled with valuable information, and resist the urge to send emails too often. Depending on your event, sending emails monthly or every two weeks will be enough and won't be regarded as unwanted spam by your subscribers.

Helpful Tip: Email Marketing

Email is still one of the most effective online marketing tools, as open rates can be as high as 20 – 30 per cent. Build respect among your fan base by keeping messages to the point.

Other Promotions

Several other promotional methods can be effective in building awareness and motivation to attend a festival.

Brochures, Flyers, Posters

Flyers and brochures can be expensive to produce and tend to have a low ROI as a marketing tool, but do have their uses. For example, having one gives you a "leave behind" when pitching potential partners or sponsors. Think carefully about whom you want these pieces for and design them accordingly.

Partners and/or sponsors can really help in this area. Offer to feature them in the brochure in return for them funding some or all of the costs of design and printing. Identifying a local print shop to sponsor with an in-kind print of materials is also an option.

Media Advertising

Media advertising includes newspaper, TV, radio, and billboards.

Local radio and newspapers can be affordable and will get the attention of locals, but reaching outside of your immediate area

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

can get expensive. If you don't have a major TV sponsorship, you probably won't have TV in your budget for the first few years. Billboards are also expensive, and their reach is limited.

If you do decide to go this route, get sponsors to help by placing ads on your behalf and/or by adding a "banner" about the festival in their own advertising.

Ways to make your advertising dollar go further:

- Your local printer will have some expertise in ad design and layout; you can also approach a graphic designer who may be willing to work as a sponsor
- Find a local marketing partner selling a product complementary to yours
- Approach your local newspaper, radio station, etc.
- Work with your local tourist association coordinator
- Talk to a local art or communications instructor/teacher

The point is to get help from someone who has expertise in marketing and communications techniques.

Contra Advertising

Contra advertising, or swap advertising, has long been a factor within the tourism sector. Basically, contra involves trading media coverage for some of your product. This is often done for contests, where a resort, for example, gives a free weekend as a prize for a radio contest and receives plugs on the air or actual advertisements at no charge.

Sponsor Promotion

As mentioned earlier, it is a good idea to work with your sponsors on marketing the festival. This can include any or all of the following:

- The sponsor paying for some or all of the festival's advertising
- The sponsor paying for a portion of the advertising through a co-operative arrangement with some or all of the other partners and sponsors
- The sponsor including promotional messages for the festival in its own advertising to its own target markets

Complimentary Admissions

You may want to provide VIPs, sponsors, police and emergency personnel, family members, and volunteers with complimentary admissions as a thank you for their support. This makes them goodwill ambassadors for the festival. You will need to regulate this, however, if you have more than one show and limited seating. Having all 100 volunteers showing up to the same time will take seats from last-minute door ticket sales. Limit free access to certain shows or limit the number of free tickets per show.



CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

Appreciation Events

Holding an appreciation event for the staff, volunteers, sponsors, emergency personnel, etc., is a successful way to build a network of “friends” of the festival.

Promoting Your Event Through Tourism Nova Scotia

Tourism Nova Scotia (TNS) features festivals and events on its marketing channels, including [NovaScotia.com](https://novascotia.com) and social media. To be eligible, festivals must have the ability to influence and motivate travel, be open to the general public and welcoming to visitors. You will need to have a brief description, some photos, a link to your website and social media and, if possible, a short video. For more information, and instructions on how to list your festival or event see <https://tourismns.ca/promoteyourbusiness>.

Packaging Your Festival and Event

As mentioned in Chapter 6, you may want to consider partnering with local tourism businesses (such as accommodations, restaurants, and attractions) to create packages that include your festival/event.

A package is two or more tourism products or services that are sold in one transaction, for a single price. Packages can be created for a specific target visitor segment to entice them to take part in the festival/event and increase how much they spend. A package can include admission to your festival and be used to enhance how visitors experience the event. For example, including tickets and overnight accommodations for a sold-out event and an opportunity

to go behind the scenes provides an exclusive opportunity for purchasers who will pay a premium to take part.

Packaging is not about discounting the price. Instead, it's about offering added value and making it easy and convenient for the customer to buy. Savings can be part of it, but added value, such as exclusive access and expert insights, can increase its appeal and more effectively entice people to book by offering something visitors can only receive through your packaged offer.

Experiences are clusters of unique activities and services also sold for a single price point: think of them as enhanced or unique packages that also include hands-on activities where visitors learn something by doing something with someone who lives here. Experiences authentically connect visitors to our culture, people, places, and flavours—creating memories they'll share with friends and family back home. They often allow behind-the-scenes access to a special place or connect visitors with local storytellers and experts they may otherwise not have opportunity to meet. These special elements increase appeal of your festival or event to potential customers.

When developing a package or experience, keep the following tips in mind:

- Look to partner with businesses or tourism operators that share your vision and fit with your brand to deliver on elements of your experience or package.
- Plan carefully, with close attention to detail, and focus on your target customers' interests to ensure a quality experience that's delivered consistently.
- Consider including exclusive or engaging activities to add value for your guests, increase your revenue opportunity, and enhance the market appeal.

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

- Showcase elements that are unique to Nova Scotia, the community, or business, such as local flavours, music, stories, cultural activities, or special locations.
- Focus on your business goal for your package or experience, as well as your theme, when adding packaged components, so the elements align and appeal to target visitors.
- Clearly indicate what is included in the package/experience and the partner businesses who are providing products and/or services.
- Clearly indicate when the package/experience is available (e.g. specific dates or days of the week, offered daily during a specific time period, etc.).
- Price the package or experience to ensure all costs are covered and you and your partners earn a profit.
- State the price per person, per couple, or per family (include maximum family size) and, if accommodations are included, identify whether it is based on single, double, or family occupancy (include maximum family size).
- Include the booking, cancellation, and refund policies.
- Arrange and advertise one point of purchase for the guest to book all package/experience components (the point of purchase business/organization books the other components on behalf of the guest).
- Indicate whether the package/experience requires a minimum number of guests to be delivered. Also indicate when it will be cancelled if the minimum quantity of packages are not sold.
- Promote the package/experience well in advance and on appropriate marketing channels to ensure visitors can find and book it.

- Ensure you are following all regulations, permissions, and laws to offer your experience.

The Nova Scotia Experience Toolkit, offered by Tourism Nova Scotia, provides a series of short videos with tip sheets and worksheets to help you develop and market your packages/ experiences. For more information, visit: <https://tourismns.ca/experiencetoolkit> toolkit.

Once you've created your package or experience, be sure to leverage opportunities to connect with visitors through NovaScotia.com and other Tourism Nova Scotia marketing channels. Find out more about listing packages at: <https://tourismns.ca/promoteyourbusiness>.



Publicity and Media Relations

The media organizations in your community and in the region can be extremely helpful in promoting your festival in a number of ways.

- Arrange radio/TV broadcasts from the festival site during the event – morning shows, newscasts, weather forecasts, interviews with VIPs, and call-in shows all lend themselves to on-site broadcasts. Also, interviews with festival organizers, entertainers, and VIP attendees can be done on-site or in studio.
- Host an invitational media event prior to or at the beginning of the festival to introduce the media to the program and answer their questions. It helps if you offer some inducements, such as complimentary passes for them and their families.
- Prepare stories on your event, preferably with photos, that are suitable for publication by the media, and provide them to the appropriate media people.
- Have your sponsors and partner organizations hold their news conferences at the festival.
- Offer the festival site to fundraising organizations for their special events during your off-hours (such as a pancake breakfast for The United Way). The other organization will attract and coordinate the media themselves, with your festival benefiting at no cost and with little effort expended.

Create a newsworthy event of interest to the media's audience and you will have their co-operation in telling your story.

Publicity and media relations are important for a festival's success and deserve special attention. They are affordable and powerful means of reaching your target audiences. Most festivals have a number of newsworthy aspects and the media organizations will usually be co-operative. It's a win-win relationship.

Media Tools

If you want the media to communicate your story, you need the appropriate tools. These include press releases, feature stories, public service announcements (PSAs), in-person interviews, and more. All are discussed below.

Press Releases

Use press releases in advance of the festival and when really newsworthy events occur.

An effective media release answers what the event or activity is; who created and is running it; where it will take place; when; how much it costs to attend; and contact information.

Normally a press release is emailed to the target media on a designated release date so that they all get it simultaneously. The latter point is critical; in the media, news is only news for a short, fleeting period. Yesterday's news is of little interest.

There is a science in designing press releases and in getting them used by the media. A good press release has the following features, in this order:

1. FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE should be printed at the top left margin, just under your letterhead.
2. Two lines below put in a headline in boldface type.
3. Put in a "dateline" – the community your press release is issued from and the date you are distributing it.
4. The first, introductory paragraph of text should capture the essence of the announcement. It should be an attention grabber and contain the five "W's" (Who, What, When, Where, and Why).

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

5. The main body text that follows should provide more particulars and a fuller description.
6. End with contact information, including the name, title, email, cell phone number of your spokesperson, plus their home/cell phone number. (This number is important because reporters work to deadlines and may not be able to call during business hours.) This information can also be provided at the top, following the headline.
7. Include the website address of your organization and links to more detailed information available.
8. The press release should be one or two pages maximum, typewritten, double spaced, and printed only on one side of the page.

There are many helpful websites on how to write a proper press release.

Feature Stories

Some media will be interested in a feature story about your festival, your organization, or a performer. Writing the story yourself makes it easy for them to pick it up as is, or in edited form, saving them the research effort.

Public Service Announcements (PSA)

PSAs are free announcements made by media, usually radio, about a forthcoming event of interest to their audience. Some of the initiatives we discuss later will lend themselves to this.

Photos and Audio-Visual Materials

Provide high-resolution photos to the media along with your press releases or feature story, preferably featuring a person involved in the story, or an aspect of it. Ideally, these should be of professional quality. Captions describing who/what is in the picture are important and need to be provided.

Making them available on your website is also a good idea.

News Conferences

These are useful when you have a major announcement. You will have to convince media invitees that the news conference warrants their attendance. This is easier to do if you have an ongoing relationship with the media.

News conferences make sure everyone gets the same information simultaneously and gives them the opportunity to get questions answered immediately. Make sure all the people who might be questioned are in attendance.

Give attendees your news release, along with supplemental background material, pictures, and biographies of the key people and organizations involved.

Media Familiarization Visits

Invite media people to visit the festival. They should receive complimentary access accompanied by a media information package, making sure they get the information you want them to publish.

CHAPTER 11: MARKETING YOUR EVENT

Public Relations

Good public relations can build and keep community support for your event.

Having municipal councillors, the mayor, and other community leaders your side is crucial. Meet with them on an individual level in your planning stages if possible. They will have a good handle on potential issues and community concerns. Invite them to your public consultations and to press conferences or a media launch. Give them speaking opportunities where appropriate and engage them directly in activities at the event.

As we suggested earlier, invite tourism front-line staff to the event on a complimentary basis to empower them as goodwill ambassadors.

Measuring and Tracking Results

"If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." Measure the impact of your promotional efforts so you know which ones are generating visitation and sales. This will tell you where to invest, or not, next year.

You should have a strategy for tracking results before you start implementing your marketing efforts. With today's technology, it's much easier to collect and analyze specific metrics. Here are some ideas:

- Survey your visitors to find out how they heard about your festival. (See Chapter 12.)
- If you contracted with an online ticketing company, watch the daily reports to see how well ticket sales are doing and which of your marketing activities are working the best.

- Website analytics can tell you where your website visitors are coming from and which ones are linking through to ticket purchases.
- Look at your social media engagement scores.
- If you offer any coupons or specials, track how many are returned.

For each marketing activity, try to determine how many visitors or how much revenue was generated, and compare this to what you spent to get your ROI. Think carefully about the results and what they mean for how you spend your marketing dollars next year.

Key Takeaways

No matter how small your festival, you still need a marketing plan that identifies your target markets and how you are going to tell them about your festival.

The Internet is central to your success – and that means having a great website that becomes the hub of your online marketing.

Social media can be effective and provides opportunities traditional marketing does not. However, it needs expertise, time, and some money.



For more information, please contact our Events Nova Scotia staff
at Communities, Culture and Heritage at events.novascotia.ca/contact