



MARKETING YOUR EVENT

There are endless websites and guides to help you to market your event. Here are just a few tips and tricks.

WORD OF MOUTH

Word of mouth is still one of the most powerful selling tools because it also comes with a reliable, credible endorsement. The first place to start is with your members and supporters. Use your meetings, regular communications and newsletters publicise events and encourage everyone to spread the word through their friends and networks.

POSTERS AND SHOP WINDOWS

Posters are particularly effective for local or community events. Put together an eye-catching design with the event details, and stick copies on every power pole and flat wall within ten blocks. Be aware that some councils have by-laws prohibiting where you can display posters. Local shops will often display your information in their window if you ask politely.

SIGNS

Catch passing trade with a large sign. Many local groups, particularly schools and sporting groups, get a local real estate firm to donate sign-writing and the use of a sign for a few weeks. If you require signage regularly corflute signs can often be reprinted and reused.

'WHAT'S ON' COLUMNS – PUBLISHED AND ONLINE

Local and major newspapers, as well as online portals or sites, have "What's On" sections which publicise information about upcoming events. These columns shouldn't be overlooked; they are usually cheaper than other advertising and convey all the information you need to a wide number of readers. People who read these columns are looking for things to do. They are motivated and looking for options.

LOCAL NEWSLETTERS – COMMUNITY, ORGANISATION, POLITICIAN OR COUNCIL

Take advantage of other newsletters circulating in the local area to publicise an event to a wider audience.

- find out the editors of newsletters you know of that may be linked to your area, or your area of interest

- most politicians put out regular newsletters to highlight what they've been doing for their electorate - some contain sections on upcoming events
- Western Bay of Plenty, Tauranga and the Bay of Plenty Regional Councils produce quite detailed bulletins for local residents - telling them what's happening and what's coming up in the area. If you are well-organised, you can get your event listed in those publications.

NEWSPAPERS – LOCAL AND MAJOR

Approach newspapers on your media contact list with a pitch for a story on your upcoming event.

- local newspapers are always looking for 'news' to fill its pages, so with the right pitch and plenty of time you should be able to get an article in. Send a press release a month or so in advance with professionally prepared photos and letterhead, then ring and talk to a journalist in a bid to get a story and picture in the paper
- it is much harder to get into the metropolitan papers, but by no means impossible. If you have a big name involved in your event, you may get some pre-publicity or a snippet from the columnists. See if there is any way you can link to other current news.

RADIO – COMMUNITY AND MAJOR

There are a few ways your group can get its message out on the radio, with local or community radio more likely to give your locally-based event the best run.

- the two major networks are NZME and Media Works. Each provider covers a range of stations that have different audiences
- for major radio, find out if you can get a free public service announcement, or if your event is timely or topical, it may be possible to get an interview as well
- phoning in during talkback programmes is another way to get your event some exposure. Many stations frown on callers using up their time on free ads but tend to be more sympathetic if callers are plugging a genuine good cause.

TELEVISION

TV news needs footage to illustrate a story, so they tend to report on things that have already happened rather than things due to happen. Your group will have to work hard to "sell" a station on your story - including setting up an attractive or striking picture opportunity, or TV stunt that they can't resist. Invite the TV stations to the event when it happens, which may be no good for selling tickets in advance, but may result in getting footage to air, which can be invaluable in generating interest in your group and any future events it holds.

ONLINE

Publish Great Content. Don't underestimate the importance of great content! If you can create it yourself, all the better. Even if writing isn't your strong point, you shouldn't have too much trouble getting someone on your team to create some articles for a blog.

Create Videos. Video content is really valuable, and while it can cost big bucks to get professional videos produced, there's nothing wrong with giving it a shot yourself or hiring a film student. There are some great online tutorials on how to shoot expert looking-footage on your regular smartphone!

Digital Ad Campaigns. While massive ad campaigns may be out of your budget, consider using paid Facebook ads or Google ads. You can set your limit and there's no doubt you achieve better hit rates.

Be a Savvy Social Networker. Create business accounts and participate in the big social media sites - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and Pinterest. Include Instagram too if your business is image-oriented.

DIY Infographics. Infographics are insanely powerful marketing tools. They're visual eye candy, they're easy to digest, and people love to share them, so they're a great way to drive up referral traffic and links. Hiring a designer to make you an A+ infographic can hit your wallet hard, but you can make your own cheaply if you don't mind a bit of a challenge. Try using canva.com - it's an easy to use platform for creating your own infographics, posters, presentations, social media images and more.

Speaker or artist pictures and bios: Great speakers and artists draw crowds like a magnet. The event page should show their faces and list their credentials.

PRE-EVENT EMAIL

If you have a list, email marketing may be your best channel. If you don't, you may ask partners, speakers, or friends to mention the event in their emails. Here are some simple tips to make your email marketing more effective.

Subject line: Subject lines that inspire awe, anger, or anxiety lead to higher open rates. Studies have shown that subject lines with lukewarm emotional content are less likely to be opened. Try a subject line such as "10 things you miss if you aren't at this event".

Send during the weekend: Consider sending an email on the weekend. Since few companies do it, open and click through rates are often higher. And when possible attendees see it on a weekend, they may feel less stressed for time and more willing to commit a few hours to your event. They may be in a social mood and even invite a friend.

Video thumbnail: Show a clickable image of a speaker interview video in the email. Video thumbnails in emails can improve click through rates.

Social proof: If you have positive feedback from previous events or credentials for the speakers, use them as quotes in your emails.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Photo and video partners: If you don't have the budget to hire professionals, offer free admission (or a table in the event space) to a photographer or videographer in exchange for services. Make sure they commit to providing you with assets in a reasonable timeframe. Ensure you give them good exposure in exchange for their time.

Standardise presentations: Create a standard PowerPoint template and share it with your speakers. It may only be two slides (a title slide and an interior slide) but it will have fonts and colours that match the event theme. This will help things look good later, when you share the presentations after the event.

Send and send again: Plan to send an event marketing email several times. For large events, email once months in advance to announce the speaker/artist line-up and to announce early-bird registration discounts.

Email just before this discount ends, and again as the event approaches. Finally, send an email a few days before with reminders of time, place for registrants and a final pitch for new registration.

Links in social media bios: Usually your Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn bios will link to your website. But when you're promoting a big event, consider changing these links so they send visitors *directly to the event page*.

Post the event on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Google+: Make sure that the image from the event page appears. Mention speakers, encouraging them to share it with their networks. Post again with videos and to remind people of registration deadlines.

Registration thank you page: On the thank you page after registration process, offer to let them share the event on social media.

Write a pre-event blog post: Like videos, this could be an interview with one or more of the speakers / artists. Email interviews are an efficient way to produce content quickly. Just send a list of questions and post the answers when the speaker sends them back. Link to this post in the emails mentioned above.

Invite speakers /artists to write guest posts: Speakers will recognize that although this takes a bit of time, there are Search Engine Optimisation and social media benefits to

guest blogging. If they do write something for you, encourage them to share that content with their networks.

Affiliate partners: Create a unique promotion code for each partner and speaker. They can use this code when they promote the event, offering a discount to people in their social networks. Since the code is unique to that partner, you'll know how effective that partner was at promoting the event. Now you can pay them a referral fee to that partner for those registrants.

Example: Create a promotion code "BOB50" that gives \$50 off to registrants. Share this code with Bob, your keynote speaker. Bob starts tweeting the code to his network and registrations start rolling in. In the end, the registration report in Eventbrite (or your Event registration website) shows you the code was used ten times. Now you can write Bob a cheque for \$500 (and a thank you card) for his help promoting the event.

Incentivise others to market the event for you as affiliates with promotion codes. This can be very effective!

Submit to local media outlets: Many media sites, especially the hyper-local news sites, let you post events. Find these by searching Google for "event calendars" in your city.

Submit to industry associations: If the event is relevant to their audience, ask if they will accept, post or promote events from outside organisations. Chambers of Commerce are often happy to promote events relevant to their members, especially if the organisers are members themselves.

Let the press know: There are likely to be journalists who cover local events. Find them by searching for similar events in news websites. Then graciously contact them with an invite, or offer of a relevant article. This could be an interview with a speaker or a guest blog post from you for their website. If you successfully get their attention, you may get a bit of press!

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISE YOUR EVENT PAGE

People may already be looking for your event! Follow these basic instructions to search optimise your event webpage or sites such as Eventfinda and Eventbrite:

Target a keyword: Choose relevant keywords. The target keywords should include the event topic, the word "event," and the name of your city. Examples: "orthodontist event Tauranga," "campfire safety event Timaru" or "vegan cooking event Opotiki."

Title tags and headers: Use a title tag and header that include your keywords. In the title tag, it's best to put the name of the event last, so the keyword appears first. This helps indicate relevance to Google. For example, an event for veterinarians in Tauranga may

benefit from a website with a title tag such as “Veterinarian Event in Tauranga – PetCon Dallas.”

Search-friendly description: The event page should have a detailed event description, which includes keywords several times. If it’s long, break up the text into short, concise paragraphs. Use lots of formatting, including headers, sub headers, internal links, bullet lists, etc.

Linking: Links are important for search engine rankings, so make sure to link to the event page from other pages on your site including older blog posts. This will guide visitors to the page, but also help search engines know that the page is relevant.

Hold a contest or prize draw: Even if you’re giving away something small, like a book or a gift from a sponsor, use this as an opportunity to gather email addresses (with permission of course) and then share a picture of the winner holding the gift on your social networks.

The end of the event isn’t the end of the event marketing. After the event, follow up with activities that will make your next event an even bigger success.

Summary of presentations: These summaries can include quotes of positive feedback from a follow up survey.

Speakers’ presentations: As with the photos, it’s ideal if the presentations are embedded into the event site or blog post. You can use sites such as Slideshare to do this.

Gallery of event photos: Ideally, these galleries are embedded into the event site or recap blog post using tool such as Flickr. If so, you’ll be sending traffic to your site, rather than a photo sharing website.

List the “top tweets” from the event: These are easy to find if you used a hashtag. It’s even easier with Storify.

List the speakers, sponsors and attendees: This kind of list may help attendees find each other afterwards and get a better networking benefit from the event.