

# Community First New Forest

## Promoting Your Organisation

### Steps to effective promotion in the voluntary and community sector:

- Define your 'product'
- Establish your 'brand'
- Allocate your 'budget'
- Identify your target audience
- Select your medium/media
- Create your message
- Establish effective partnerships
- Monitor and evaluate

### Defining your 'product'

This could be your organisation, a particular service you provide, a recruitment campaign (volunteers/members), an event you are planning or an issue you are raising awareness of. What exactly are you trying to promote? If you are not clear about this then no one else will be!

### Establishing your 'brand'

You need to have something recognisable about your organisation so that people begin to know who you are and what you do. This could be your name, your logo, your slogan, your corporate colours or any combination of these. They need to be used consistently, and ideally be associated with a good 'product', in order to establish your reputation and build trust with your target group.

### Allocating your 'budget'

There is always some cost implication to promotion – even in the voluntary and community sector! It may not be money, or much money, but it will certainly take time. Time is a valuable resource and with a team of volunteers can be used to good advantage. A lot can be done with minimal financial cost, but probably the most effective is media coverage – press, radio or even TV if you're very lucky – and social media, if you have access to the basic resources – Twitter, Facebook, Streetlife (very local Internet based social medium) etc – if it is appropriate to your target audience. Leaflets, flyers and posters can be produced reasonably cheaply if you have the creativity, equipment and skills to hand. Professional design and print is not essential. Effective publicity materials can be produced on your own PC or by hand.

## **Identifying your target audience**

Who are you marketing your 'product' to? Older people? Younger people? People in a specific geographical area or cultural community? Being clear on this will help you get the message and the medium right. You may have a captive audience already – a database of clients/members you can target with promotional material – or you may be reaching out to prospective targets among the general public, which is more of a challenge.

## **Selecting your medium/media**

Promotions generally benefit from a multi-media approach: leaflet, flyer, poster, press release, newsletter, talks, displays, outreach events, advertisements (from a card in the newsagent's to the back of a bus), banners, A-Boards, social media (Twitter, Facebook, Streetlife, etc.), marketing giveaways (pencils, pens, fridge magnets, key fobs etc). Much will depend on your budget, your resources and the appropriate medium for your target audience. Libraries, GP surgeries, council buildings, community centres, youth centres, schools, faith groups, museums and arts centres are all great places to showcase promotional materials. Word of mouth remains a very powerful means of promotion and should never be discounted, whether it is talking to a group or talking one-to-one. This can be very effective on a stall at an outreach event, where you can engage with the public directly. Word of mouth can also include the dreaded cold call by telephone. At its simplest it means telling everyone you know!

## **Creating your message**

*Pictures* – Your message will probably be in words, or words and pictures, and pictures certainly help to draw the eye. Pictures for the press need to be in jpg format and on the largest setting your camera has, ie bigger rather than smaller! The press can make big pictures smaller but can't make small pictures bigger without them breaking up. Unfortunately, though pictures might look great on your computer screen, that doesn't mean they'll look great in the press if they are too small. The Daily Echo, for example, can accept pictures of up to 10 megabytes per email.

*Words* – People agonise over writing 'proper' for publication and tie themselves in knots trying to sound formal and posh. If you are struggling to compose something, explain to someone else what you are trying to say and then write down what you just said. Write it as you speak it – honestly, try it!

*Language/Clear Print* – Thought should be given to the use of accessible language, alternative languages and clear print, depending on the target audience ([http://www.psncorp.com/Downloads/RNIB\\_Clear\\_Print\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.psncorp.com/Downloads/RNIB_Clear_Print_Guidelines.pdf)). It is

inclusive to produce promotional materials in other languages, but if this prompts people to contact you in their own language and you can't respond in kind, then you are creating a false expectation.

### **Some simple rules**

- Write the critical information in the first paragraph (which is as far as many people will get)
- Check what you've written for the following: Who, What, Why, Where, When – it is a life saver!
- Spell people's names properly – it matters
- Get permission to use people's pictures, quotes and stories
- Email press releases and pictures rather than posting them (so they don't have to be retyped and the picture can be dropped into the publication directly from the electronic file)
- Stick to the point and remember the KISS acronym: Keep It Simple Stupid
- Be interesting! People love a picture and a story, not loads of worthy words
- On posters use the least number of words and the biggest font you can

### **Establish effective partnerships**

Other agencies may be able to help and support you to promote your 'product'. Examples include your local Council for Voluntary Service and District/Borough Council. You can also work with other local groups to promote your work.

If your target audience is older people, then older people's groups and forums may be able to help – and so on. These relationships can be reciprocal!

Establish cordial relations with the local media – press and radio. Create a media list with names, phone numbers and email addresses. If you have something to say on an issue of current concern – give them a call. Become the local spokesperson, the go-to organisation for an opinion on older people's issues, arts issues – whatever your organisation is about. If you have a problem (need more volunteers/members, etc), give them a call and ask if they can help.

### **Monitor and evaluate**

Monitor your promotional activity so you can evaluate it. Ask people how they heard about you and keep the statistics, so you can see what works and what doesn't. Then concentrate your efforts on what works.

**Good luck!**