

Seven Steps to Marketing Your Next Event

1. Determine your goals for the event.

Ask yourself why you're holding this event. What do you want to achieve? What would you like to result from the event?

2. Plan your line of communications.

What forms of communication will assist you in achieving your goals? Examine the ways in which you're already effectively communicating with your audiences: website or microsite? Monthly e-newsletter? Quarterly magazine? Direct mail? E-mail? Twitter? Consider how you might use or re-purpose the materials and media already in place to promote your event. Keep in mind that while some members of your audience might respond to a brief e-mail, others might appreciate a postcard, brochure or calendar. Once you've assessed your current modes of communication, as well as the various demands of your audience, you can determine what supplemental communications you'll need.

3. Encourage response.

While getting your information out there is important, be sure to encourage feedback and response from your audience, by including a website or phone number in your printed materials, or links and an e-mail address in your online communications. Ideally, your event communications will begin dialogues.

4. Know your budget.

Before you can create additional materials in-house, or invest in the work of a design or marketing firm, you have to know what your budget is for marketing the event. This will help you set realistic goals for yourself and your school. It will also allow you to prioritize your efforts and use the money where it will be most effective.

5. Devise a master plan.

This may be a no-brainer, but plan ahead. Give yourself ample time to plan and market the event; some events may require only a few months worth of marketing, while others may need at least a year. Determine when to use existing communications and when to send out new marketing pieces—e-mails, brochures, postcards. Establish a schedule and stick to it.

6. Create a visual identity and theme.

A distinctive event identity and theme is the key to marketing your event; the two together can be used widely, on both your website and in your print materials. Create a visual identity that is distinct yet still connected to your institution. Utilize the school's font or colors, for example, or find a way to incorporate the school seal. Similarly, conceptualize and solidify a theme for the event that is unique yet connected to the mission of your school. What message or concept will reinforce your goals for the event and resonate with your audience? What will compel them to participate or attend? Use the graphic and tagline on as many marketing materials as you can, and as often as possible.

7. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

Your audience won't notice or recognize your event if it isn't promoted consistently and often. You might tire of seeing or repeating the event identity and theme, but keep at it. Only repetition will ensure that your audience is intrigued enough to participate, donate or attend.