



Chapter 6 - Marketing, Media, PR and Communications

Chapter 6 – Marketing, Media, PR and Communications

From producing print materials and liaising with the media, to traditional or online advertising campaigns, marketing the charity event is all about:

- a) Communicating the right message to the right people
- b) Distinguishing your brand from others.

Traditionally, charity events will be marketed on TV, the radio and in print (such as through newsletters, brochures, magazine and newspaper event listings). These can all be effective depending on your targeted demographic and budget. However, these days, with the advent of social media technology such as Facebook and Twitter, it is now much easier (and cheaper) to market charity events to a wider range of people.

Six things to consider before you start marketing your charity event

1. **Have a long-term approach.** The charity event brings your charity “brand” to life. It is important to have a “bird’s-eye view” and see the benefits this event will bring to the charity in the *long run*. The event doesn’t happen in isolation.
2. **Know your target audience(s).** One of the first things any professional marketer or advertiser will ask is: Who are you targeting? It is simply more effective to produce creative marketing material that piques the interest of a strategic group of people than one that tries to encapsulate every age group and demographic. This is also true when targeting sponsors and media outlets. Be specific.
3. **Know your brand.** What does the charity organisation stand for and represent? You need to understand the values and the work that you do inside-out as this will ultimately determine how you develop your website design, print materials, press releases etc. Think about the details. For example, if you’re promoting an environmental cause you’ll want to consider printing on recycled paper.
4. **Know your message.** What are you trying to communicate? This will change depending on who the audience is (i.e. the media, sponsors, supporters or attendees), so tailor the message accordingly.
5. **Make it relevant.** Whether you’re pitching your message to the media or to your supporters, make the issues and message relevant to *them*. Think about what’s happening in the news, research demographic trends, and use this information as a basis for delivering your message.

6. **Use an appropriate delivery medium.** Naturally, if your target audience is 18-25 year olds, creating online campaigns via social media or through websites, will be one of the most effective ways to reach them. Choosing the right medium to deliver your message is just as important as the message itself.

Clearly, a strong, long-term marketing plan should be developed long before the first brochure design or blog post is made. Strategic marketing significantly lowers costs while effectively reaching the right people.

Cost-effective marketing for your charity event

Depending on the type of event and your budget, you may wish to market your event across TV, print, radio and online mediums. Regardless of your available expenditure, you must remember to keep all marketing campaigns **consistent** across all the media outlets you choose to use. Whether it's over the radio, in print, online or on TV, your charity 'brand' must carry the same look, feel and message no matter what.

Marketing Materials and Campaigns

Print

Printed materials – such as letters, handbooks, posters, newsletters, brochures and the like – can be a costly marketing expense. But if printing is an integral part of your marketing strategy, be sure to approach printing centres or sponsors to offset, or at least subsidise, the printing costs. Remember to offer something in return, like the inclusion of their company logo on all printing materials.

Another great way to lower printing costs is to attach a 'soft' copy of your brochures, pamphlets, posters and newsletters on your website. This way, supporters can download the documents and print out copies on their own accord, email them to friends, or simply read the information online. Many non-profit organisations, including The Smith Family, have found that this is an extremely useful way to reduce printing costs, especially in the digital age – plus it cuts down on paper use, which helps the environment.

Postage

'Charity Mail' is a great initiative by Australia Post which provides lower postage costs for charities. Terms and Conditions include a minimum of 300 small letters per lodgement so visit Australia Post for more details.

You may also consider using Australia Post's "Reply Paid" service, which is a cost-effective marketing initiative that is ideal if your mailouts require responses (i.e. donation and sponsor forms, charity event sign-up forms etc). Postage is free for respondents, and your charity will only pay for returned forms that you receive.

Design

Design is a crucial part of your charity event's marketing campaign, as it helps to communicate your message to your target audience. Visual aspects such as layout, typography and the colour scheme used in marketing material are just as important as the text itself.

A great way to keep the cost of professional looking design work down is to enlist the help of volunteers. See if there are graphic designers who would be willing to do the work pro bono, or search for promising design students looking for work experience and to build their portfolio. Again, provide incentives for their involvement (i.e. exposure for their company, written recommendations, work experience, free ticket to charity event etc).

TV and Radio

Some non-profit organisations ask online supporters to donate money and fund television advertisement. Others, including The Smith Family, use Community Service Announcements (CSAs) which are available for free to charity organisations and community groups.

CSAs are advertising segments set aside specifically for community or charity organisations to promote an event or activity that is considered to be a "community service". They are available for both TV and radio.

Tips for securing CSAs:

- ✓ Contact your relevant radio or TV station for specific guidelines on CSAs. (Check that they provide CSAs in the first place!)
- ✓ Start early. Competition is fierce as there many other of charity organisations that also want air time to promote their event.
- ✓ Be concise and clear. Include the basics: who, what, when, where, why, how.
- ✓ If you have a TV or radio celebrity ambassador appearing in your announcement, make sure they are not under a contract that forbids them from appearing on other stations.

Event Listings

While newspapers, magazines, online publications and websites may not write a full-length feature article on your charity event, they may add it to their weekly or monthly event listings.

Send in a press release to relevant contacts at media organisations, local councils, publications and websites. Many magazines, online publications and websites, will send out weekly newsletters (electronically or through direct mail) to thousands of subscribers, so this is an excellent way to reach your targeted demographic at no cost.

Online

You can use a number of online tools, such as Pay-Per-Click advertising, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, or just using your own website to give your charity even an online presence. The key is to use any online marketing strategically within your overall marketing campaign.

With online marketing becoming more and more important, here are eight helpful hints charity organisations should know before they jump on the Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube bandwagon:

- 1. The web is only a medium.** The web, albeit popular and effective, won't save the day or solve all your marketing problems. It is only a communication tool used to spread your message, just like TV, radio and print. Like any other media, online charity campaigns need to be *strategic* about their approach for it to be effective.
- 2. Have someone in charge.** Analogous to TV, radio and print marketing, online marketing requires equal attention and effort to be successful. So appoint someone to oversee your online charity campaign.
- 3. Have a plan.** Never go into an online campaign without calculated planning and measurable objectives. Online marketing campaigns cannot be an after-thought, or something you launch for the sake of it.
- 4. Target relevant groups.** While there are millions of online users, keep your online charity campaign focused and concise. Don't try to reach everyone; zero in on relevant demographic groups and send the right message.
- 5. Less is more.** Don't sign up to all the latest and greatest online accounts just because everybody else is doing so. Instead, choose a handful of relevant online platforms (i.e. reaches your target audience and complements your charity "brand") and invest quality time and resources in these forums.
- 6. Create good content.** Once you have an account across a number of good platforms, use them effectively. Understand who uses those websites and create excellent content to attract the right audience. Interesting content gets noticed, watched, read, and shared online via email or other social networking platforms. Let others do the "marketing" for you by spreading and raising awareness of your charity cause.
- 7. Optimise your website.** If you have a website, make sure search engines like Google, Yahoo or Bing can find it – this is called "search engine optimisation". For example, include words that people would use to search for your organisation, such as "charity organisation", or "help kids" to create useful and informative content to publish on your site. Make sure your meta data is optimised – but above all, ask a SEO expert or assign an IT volunteer for help.
- 8. Monitor and engage.** Just because you open a social networking account, or run a blog for your charity organisation, doesn't mean your work is done. Because the internet requires **dialogue** between organisations and its followers, friends, fans, readers etc. You need to constantly monitor and communicate with your supporters. With the "new" internet or "web 2.0", you're no longer marketing to a silent audience – they want to comment, react and interact as much as possible. So engage with them, build relationships, and you'll develop a loyal following to help your cause.

Seven common online marketing mistakes:

- ✓ Engaging in online technology without sufficient experience, consultation or planning.
- ✓ Underestimating the importance and effectiveness of online marketing.
- ✓ Not measuring campaign successes or failures.
- ✓ Not knowing the 'why' behind your online marketing campaign.
- ✓ Remaining an anonymous and nameless face to charity supporters, instead of engaging in dialogue and building an interactive community.
- ✓ Underestimating the number of people watching what you do.
- ✓ Failing to research and understand your online target audience.

Beyond Marketing – The Importance of Media

Why attract media attention for your charity event?

Using the media is one of the most effective ways to attract attention to your charity event. Whether it's local, metropolitan, national or even international news outlets, piquing the interest of the media has several advantages:

- ✓ **Gives free publicity for your charity event.** Instead of spending lots of time and money marketing your charity event, the media can help generate publicity for you. Having your charity event mentioned on national television to millions of viewers is obviously more effective than a mail-out to 100 people in your local neighbourhood.
- ✓ **Raises the profile of the charity.** There are literally hundreds of Australian charities and non-profit organisations, but not all of them are familiar enough to be common household names. Grabbing the attention of the media not only brings your charity event into the spotlight, but also your organisation as a whole and all the hard work that you do.
- ✓ **Raises awareness for a cause.** Whether it's medical, health, educational, environmental, or social, all charities exist to support important causes. Gaining media attention means that genuine issues are put on the social agenda, which is important if your charity needs funding or support.

- ✓ **Give legitimacy credibility to the charity.** Having the media report on your charity event or the work that you do, increases the legitimacy, authority and trustworthiness of your charity organisation within the community.
- ✓ **Attracts new donors, sponsors and supporters.** People are more inclined to donate money and offer support to a charity that has been mentioned by their favourite channel, newspaper, magazine or newsletter.
- ✓ **Influences public opinion and policies.** Your charity plays an important part in reducing the stigma or misconceptions that surround an issue. Through the media, your charity can engage in public dialogue to educate, inform and even change public opinion and policies.

Increasing media coverage of your charity event

The best type of advertising for your charity is the media as it generates greater awareness - and it's free! The media includes Print (magazine and newspapers), TV, Radio and Online – but not all charity events will be of interest to every form of media, so you need to be strategic with the journalist or producer you contact.

Here are eight simple ways, compiled by the experts at Third Sector Magazine, to increase the likelihood of getting media coverage for your charity event:

1. **Have clear objectives.** Do you want people to come along, donate money or do you wish to promote the charity organisation and generate public conversation? Knowing this will help when you write your press release.
2. **Target relevant media.** All media programs and publications reach a specific market so keep things relevant by contacting journalists and producers from relevant outlets. For example, if you want to reach an older female demographic, contacting morning TV shows, women's magazines like Australian Women's Weekly or ABC radio shows are good places to start. Look for smaller niche audiences as well, such as hobby publications or Pay TV shows.
3. **Have a database of relevant media contacts.** Keep an updated list of all media contacts for follow-up, future charity events or for potential stories. Build and maintain a good relationship with the journalist, especially if their position focuses on your charity's targeted industry (ie health, environmental or education reporters).
4. **Think like a journalist.** Get a feel for the type of stories the outlet covers and come up with a good story angle when pitching the charity event to the journalist or producer. What is 'newsworthy' about your charity event? Is there an anniversary for the charity organisation or event? Are there annual "Days" or "Weeks" that you can capitalise on? (*Anti-Poverty Week* or *World Harmony Day*). It's also means planning your event so it doesn't clash with other major events happening (ie The Footy Grand Final or ANZAC Day).
5. **Craft a punchy media release.** Every media release should include:

- A **large, bold headline** that sums up your charity event but is still interesting enough to draw the journalist in. If the reporter doesn't get past the heading or the subject line in an email, then you have wasted your time. Remember, they are inundated with dozens of emails and press releases every day!
- A clear and interesting first sentence that leaves the journalist 'wanting more' –it's very similar to how news stories are written. Remember to keep the angle **newsworthy** and **relevant** with what is happening at the time. Providing photo or TV opportunities are also very useful.
- A **brief** background into the charity event: Who, what, when, where, why, how. Keep this as relevant as possible to the specific audience and stick with one page.
- Include interesting quotes from key people (i.e. your charity's CEO, the people you are helping). The latest statistics and research on a relevant topic are also very newsworthy.
- Your name and a direct number (office and mobile). Be sure to include the name, position and contact number of anyone you have quoted, as the reporter will want to interview them if they're interested. Details should be at the bottom of the media release.

Tip: Include the media release in the body of the email, and not as an attachment. Unless they have specifically requested for information, it is *highly unlikely* that the journalist will bother to open an attachment.

6. **Timing is everything.** Knowing *when* to send the press release could be the difference between getting a run in the media or not. Newspapers have daily deadlines; monthly magazines adhere to different publishing deadlines (sometimes up to 5 months in advance); TV programs have stories scheduled months ahead of time and so on. Even if your charity event is of interest to a journalist, there might not be space for it on that particular radio show or magazine title. Get in early.
7. **Don't be pushy.** You need to remember that the media is unpredictable. No matter how great your charity event is, sometimes it won't get a run because other news item may have priority. Send the press release and follow-up with a phone call, but don't be too pushy if they're simply not interested.
8. **Talk in 'quotes'.** Journalists are deadline driven, so be succinct and clear when answering questions – especially during interviews. They always need to include quotes or 'soundbytes' in their stories, so make sure you're as articulate and as clear as possible.