



T3SC Factsheet 10

marketing

Traditionally voluntary organisations have not been very good at marketing. This is usually because they are too busy running activities and offering their services. However, a little time and effort can work wonders in the long run. Almost every group wants to reach new users, communicate it's ideas and/or impress funders and partners.

Marketing doesn't have to be very expensive or glossy and can be addressed quite easily. It is simply the ways in which you get your message heard and your name known. (For design ideas for written materials such as posters, leaflets, see Factsheet 11: Publicity materials and Factsheet 12: Dealing with the press)

Public Image

Think about all the different ways that the public might find their way to your organisation. Each of these methods needs to be addressed so that the public get a consistent message and you make the best of your organisation.

Your Premises

Not all organisations are lucky enough to have their own premises. If you do, then you need to make the best use you can of them. If you do have premises of any kind then make sure you let people know where it is and have clear signage. First impressions are important and there are some quite simple steps you can take to make your premises welcoming to visitors, for example if there is a waiting area, make sure it is clean and tidy

The Telephone

Answering the telephone A phone conversation is often an individual's first contact with your organisation. You don't have to sound false or follow a script but remember when you answer the phone remember politeness and efficiency goes a long way.

Answer machine message An answer machine is a cheap and effective way of being available to your users when you're not actually there. Your message should make it clear whose answer machine it is! And remember if you are inviting people to leave a message, then make sure you return the call. If not people will get the impression that you are inefficient or worse, incompetent.

Word of Mouth

This is rather more difficult to control. If people have had a bad experience of your organisation, you can bet that they won't keep it to themselves. It is vital to take steps to ensure that people are generally happy with your organisation. However, problems do occur and you need a complaints procedure to deal with these. In notifying your users that there is such a procedure, you will be making it clear that your organisation has open procedures for dealing with such matters.

On a more positive note, user comments can be very effective. If you run an event then try to get some feedback (you could use feedback forms). You can then use the (anonymous) positive comments in your publicity materials. If you receive negative comments, make sure you address them in the future.

Networking

You might not think about it in this way but every time you talk to someone at a meeting, you are publicising your organisation. Talking to other people who work in the voluntary sector is vital for raising awareness about your services and activities, and raising your profile in the community. Getting to know your local councillors, networking with people in the local council, health authority and other statutory organisations can be a good way of building up networks through which you can publicise your organisation. T3SC can put you in touch with lots of useful contacts and relevant networks.

Letterheads, Compliments Slips etc.

This is the official face of your organisation. It needn't cost a fortune to produce, and it does look more professional. Remember if you are a registered charity you are required by law to include your registered numbers on your cheques, invoices, receipts and orders for money or goods. It is good practice to include these on your headed paper as these may get used for orders etc.

Consistency

Good practice means that you undertake services and activities consistently, i.e. that you do run your Parent and Toddler group every Wednesday at 11.00am. This can also apply to the way your organisation is run, e.g. answering the phone between certain hours, answering letters within a given number of days. If you have email, make sure you check your messages regularly (and reply to them!) All this will go a long way to giving your organisation a reliable image.

Website

You may not have caught up with the technology yet, but you may well want to some day. Your website is another means of telling the world what you do and how you do. Make sure it is kept up-to-date and interesting, to make sure that people come back to use it again. Again, make sure you have your address and phone numbers included, so that Internet surfers know that you have a presence in the real world. T3SC can help you join Tameside Community Webpace; this offers an online database for local groups and gives you free and easy access to your own website.

Publicity material

Ensure that your leaflets have your address, phone and fax numbers, email and website addresses and if possible a map of how to find your premises. Make it as easy as possible for users to contact you. Think about places in your community to display posters, distribute newsletters etc. Publicity material should be targeted for specific audiences. See leaflet 11 publicity materials for more information.

Media Relations

If you have a major campaign or event coming up, then you mustn't forget to use the local radio, newspapers and even television if you can. If you are doing something that's a bit different, or has a good story behind it, then you'll get yourself a lot of free publicity. Fact sheet 12 includes a pro forma press release for you to use.

for more info please contact T3SC
tel 0161 339 4985 email info@t3sc.org