This section aims to give those who are new to event marketing and communications a basic guide to help them through the planning process. It may also act as a stimulus for more experienced event marketers to review or rethink existing activity.

This section covers: 1) Where to start; 2) Who should devise the marketing plan; 3) Resources; 4) Identifying your target market; 5) Forming the marketing objectives; 6) Developing the marketing strategy; 7) Marketing tools; 8) Media relations; 9) A marketing plan template.

The development of an effective marketing and communications plan is essential for the delivery of a successful event. The key is to match your event concept (the theme, programme, etc) with the appropriate audience (those who will attend or participate in your event). In order to do that, you must have a strong idea of what the event actually offers and to whom. You also need to have an effective plan of action and the necessary resources to implement it.

Before plunging into the planning process, it’s worth taking a minute to consider the unique challenges connected with marketing an event as opposed to an ongoing activity or product. Events are, in general, special annual or one-off manifestations that take place in a specific, relatively short time-frame. You have a finite period to plan and action your marketing activity and a one-time-only chance to mount your event. Remember, attendees that you attract to your event as a result of your marketing activity are themselves key to the event’s success. If you attract the right type and level of attendees, this will help create the special atmosphere and experience that the event aspires to offer, not to mention any financial or other targets that you have set.
1) Where to start: the situational analysis

The first stage of devising your marketing plan involves what is sometimes called the ‘situational analysis’. It basically means taking a step back and having a good look at all the available information that relates to the event before devising a plan to move forward. The idea is to give you the proper context in order to make informed marketing decisions. The good news for those unfamiliar with event marketing is that if you have already conducted the basic event planning activity suggested in Chapter 1, you have already taken the first steps in carrying out the ‘situational analysis’. For example, you’ve already:

- Established the event’s ‘vision’, ‘mission’ and ‘key objectives’
- Considered the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats pertaining to both the event and your organisation
- Begun to formulate/refine the event’s programming policy/content
- Decided when the best time to hold the event is

To develop the situational analysis further in marketing terms you should now begin to consider the following in more detail:

- **The existing audience for the event** (i.e. who comes, where from, how many, level of repeat attendees, level of first time attendees, has the audience profile changed over the years, etc?)
- **If there is any existing research** (i.e. do you hold any hard information on your audiences, have you closely examined it, what does it tell you, is it recent, what else do you need to find out, etc?)
- **Previous marketing activity and resources** (i.e. what has worked in the past, what could be developed further, etc?)
- **Available resources** (i.e. budget, staff, stakeholder support and amount of time available to deliver the plan, etc)
- **Competitor analysis** (i.e. does the event have any competitors, can you learn from them?)
- **Income targets** (i.e. what level of return does the marketing activity aim to deliver by way of ticket sales, what are the other sources of potential income and can marketing activity influence these?)
Throughout the process you should keep in mind that event marketing is never a stand alone or rigid activity. It involves working as part of the wider event team and ensuring that the marketing plan is structured yet flexible enough to respond as the event develops.

2) Who should devise the Marketing Plan?

The size and nature of the event will determine who feeds into the planning process and who is ultimately responsible for delivering the plan. For a small event, marketing may be one of a range of responsibilities that a single person holds, whilst a larger event may require a full marketing team with specialist skills. Whatever the requirement, responsibilities should be clearly defined. A written and developed marketing plan allows those responsible for marketing the event to communicate their plans to the wider event team, funders and partners and to seek feedback and input as appropriate. Some larger events may benefit from the formation of a ‘Marketing Planning Sub-Group’ made up of representatives of the various ‘event partners’. This kind of group should serve to influence strategy, provide practical support and advice for the event marketing staff and ensure that all partners are fully on board with (and able to enhance) marketing plans.

3) Resources

When preparing your Marketing and Communications Plan you must keep the available resources at the forefront of your mind. There are three key resource factors to consider:

- **Budget** – you need to establish the basic marketing budget at the outset
- **Time** – you need to be aware of what’s actually possible in the time available
- **Staff** – you need to agree who’s responsible for what and identify if there are any sources of additional assistance

4) Identifying Target Markets

The situational analysis should have broadly identified the type of person the event is likely to attract and if there is a perceived demand or gap in the market for the event. Now, identify in detail the types of groups that you will actually spend time and money
trying to attract. This means being more specific and realistic. At this stage you need to ask yourself two key questions:

i. **Who are the Target Markets?**: these may include previous attendees; new audiences; special interest and community groups; schools; specific age, socio-economic and ethnic groups; families, couples, tourists, future sponsors, the media, stakeholders, relevant clubs and organisations, movers and shakers, etc.

ii. **Where are the Target Markets?**: for each entry in the WHO category you should identify WHERE they are likely to be drawn from, i.e. the local community, the wider region, Scotland, UK, Europe, etc.

It’s always good to get ideas down on paper. In table format make a list of all the groups you believe are possible targets (WHO), and next to them list the geographic scope of each (WHERE). This is a brainstorming activity which could be undertaken with other members of your team or marketing planning group as appropriate. It will help you identify the full range of possible targets. Now prioritise these into primary and secondary markets to help you plan and apply your resources accordingly. You need to decide WHO and WHERE your targets are in order to start thinking about HOW you will reach them.

A template with sample entries is provided below to get you started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who, Where and How – Brainstorm Template</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who</strong></td>
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<td>Existing attendees</td>
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<td>Families</td>
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<td>Special Interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Etc…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building your audience

If yours is an annual or regular event, be aware that your existing audiences are one of your most important assets. At the very least you need to ensure that you are constantly building and utilising your audience database. You need to understand your current audience profile in order to maintain and develop it further. Audience data should be captured at every event and trends analysed and compared to previous years. Your existing audiences can be useful ambassadors for your event. They are important in spreading positive word-of-mouth and should be nurtured in order that they will return. In addition to that, by examining information about your current audience (where they live, what they enjoy, their family status, etc) you can begin to identify ways to expand it. In accordance with budget limitations, remember to concentrate on your existing and ‘potential new audiences’ and don’t spend valuable time trying to convert groups that your research and experience tell you may be indifferent or unlikely to attend. The more you understand about your current and potential audiences, the more sophisticated you can become in using different techniques to target specific groups (also see Visitor Research, Chapter 12).

5) Forming the Marketing Objectives: Where do you want to go?

Once you have identified the key groups that make up your current and potential target markets you can begin to set clear objectives that describe what you want to achieve. Make sure your marketing objectives are SMART (see Chapter 1):

- **Specific** – do they describe precisely what are you aiming to achieve?
- **Measurable** – can you define and measure them?
- **Achievable** – do you have the resources to put them into action?
- **Realistic** – never over-estimate anything, especially financial targets
- **Timely** – can you achieve them in the timeframe available?

Here’s an example of what SMART marketing objectives might look like for a fictional multi-arts event that is aiming to build audiences based on a previous year’s profile and performance:
To increase the level of overall attendances by 1,000
To attract 10,000 attendances over 2 days: 6,000 on Saturday and 4,000 on Sunday
To increase the number of visitors attending the event from outwith the region by 300
To raise £25,000 in net ticket revenue
To attract 30% local, 20% regional, 40% Scottish and 10% ‘rest of UK’ attendees
To attract 300 new mailing list members
To increase ‘family ticket’ sales by 10%
To achieve 95% audience satisfaction rating of ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’
To achieve national press coverage

Remember, marketing objectives have to make sense within the framework of the broader event objectives (see Chapter 1).

6) Developing the Marketing Strategy: How are you going to get there?

Once the marketing objectives have been set, begin to look at the approach you will take to achieve them. In other words, begin to define your strategy. In order to do this, first think about how the event will be positioned in the market place.

Positioning

This is a marketing term used to describe the way in which you present what you are offering to the public. It involves communicating the ‘feel’ and main benefits of the event experience through ‘key messages’. Each event will have its own unique range of benefits, which may include, for example:

- The reputation of the event
- The key elements of the programme
- What the special interest area is
- The kind of experience the event offers (outdoors/indoors/all day, etc)
- If there is a unique element – for example something that is specific to the town/event/venue
- If it offers something that is different/better than other events/experiences
Remember, for effective positioning you need to keep in mind **who** the main targets are and focus on **what** will appeal to these groups most strongly. Ask yourself if there should be a strengthening of the current positioning or a shift in emphasis to particular benefits or target segments?

**Marketing Mix: What makes people attend events?**

Alongside effective positioning, the combination of Product, Price, Convenience and Promotion are the principal factors that are most likely to influence attendance and therefore your marketing strategy:

**Product – what the event offers**

Can you develop the product any further? Things to consider:

- Are there any adjustments that should be made to the overall event to make it more appropriate or attractive to your target audiences?
- Does the programme/content need to be further developed?
- Does the venue need to be adapted or improved?
- What is the total experience? Are you offering event ‘packages’ in association with transport providers, hotels, restaurants, etc that could make the event experience more attractive and enjoyable?

**Price – the cost of attending**

How does the cost of attending the event add up? If appropriate, consider:

- Is the ticket price/entry fee at the right level for target groups?
- Does the price offer value for money?
- Is there an appropriate range of ticket/entry options? Do you need to introduce family tickets or special offers for example?
- Do you need to offer any price differentials to encourage attendance at particular performances?
- Are there any additional costs (booking fees, travel, meals, accommodation, parking) that will affect decisions to attend?
Convenience – making it easy to attend

- For ticketed events – Have you put in place the appropriate advance ticket distribution network? For example, are you using a ticket hotline, web sales, walk-up box office, ticket agencies, postal bookings, sales through local shop or library, etc?
- Do you offer various/appropriate methods of payment (e.g. credit card, cheque, cash)?
- Is the event programme appropriately timed to appeal to your targets?
- Is the event easy to get to?
- Make sure you provide the appropriate travel, accommodation and location information necessary to encourage visitors who do not know the area well.

Promotion – saying the right things to the right people

- Communicate the positioning of the event through key messages: Who the event is aimed at; What is special about it; Why it’s a good idea to attend; When will it take place; Where will it take place; How easy it is to engage with the event?
- Develop the right combination of marketing tools to reach your audience.

7) Marketing Tools

Once you have undertaken the above activity you should be better equipped to decide on the kinds of ‘tools’ (materials and actions) that you will employ to most effectively reach your target audience. There is a whole range of available options and the tools that you choose will depend on all of the above factors together with the resources (time, money and staff) that are available to you.

Some of the most commonly used event marketing tools include:

- Print: posters, leaflets, postcards, programmes, etc
- Direct mail and print distribution
- Media advertising: print, radio and TV
- Website/internet/e-bulletins
- Outdoor advertising: billboards, bus sides, poster sites, street dressing, etc
- Friends/ambassadors’ programmes/clubs
- Media releases, promotions and activity
- Media sponsorship
Developing the Brand

Whatever tools you employ, they should be united by a consistent ‘brand’. By this we mean the ‘graphic identity’ and ‘tone of voice’ that is developed for the event. This will involve the event logo, colours, image, typeface, copy and how these are brought together into unified communication materials. Things to consider:

- The brand should reflect and reinforce the desired positioning of the event.
- Think about the shelf life for the brand. Does it have the potential to adapt in future years?
- Does the brand work across the whole range of marketing tools – from posters to headed paper to website graphics for example?
- Are you creating a new brand or developing an existing one?
- How does your audience perceive the existing brand (if any)?
- Does the current brand fit with where you want to take the event?
- Does it reflect the event experience?

Working with Graphic Designers

Cheaply produced print materials can be a false economy. Unless there is someone with strong graphic design talents on the event team, you should secure the services of a graphic designer in order to develop the brand and produce professional print materials. You may have an ongoing relationship with a designer that you trust, or you may choose to invite one or more design companies whose work you admire to pitch for the job. Either way, at the outset you should clarify what is required in the form of a design brief. Here are some pointers to get you started:

- The design brief should include: a short event description, overall event aims, target audiences, SMART marketing objectives, a comprehensive list of the range and quantities of design items required, the timeline for the sign off and delivery of each item, clarification of who is to be responsible for print management, an outline budget, any special requirements.
- Make sure that you have carefully thought through all the design elements and materials you are likely to need before agreeing the budget. If you don’t, your costs could escalate significantly as you add additional print items to the job specification.
Agree copyright. Make sure that you agree and understand which party owns the rights to the design. If it’s not you, be prepared for the consequences should you want to work with a different designer and retain the logo or other graphics in the future.

If you are working with a design agency, make sure you have one point of contact to ensure smooth communication.

Keep the designer up-to-date with any changing deadlines and alter and agree the timetable if appropriate.

Ensure that all proofs are signed off before going to print.

Ensure that you are supplied with digital copies of the logo suite and key design elements in a relevant format that is compatible with your computer software. You don’t want to have to go back to the designer every time there is a request or need for your logo or brand image.

Print

There is a wide range of approaches you could take with your printed material. Think through the full range and quantity of print that you require. Think about what has worked well in the past and what will work for your range of target groups. The key is to review and revise tactics where appropriate – don’t produce material just because you have always done so. Here are a few tips to help you get the best out of your print tools:

Sponsor and Funder Logos

If your event is funded by a range of public agencies and sponsors, ensure that all your print and publications carry the agreed acknowledgements but avoid creating print that looks like it has a touch of ‘logo-i-tis’. It’s a good approach to devise a ‘logo set’ that can be used across all your print items. Try to avoid placing logos in the body of the design – it’s usually a cleaner approach to place all logos together in a ‘logo set’ – for example in a strip at the bottom edge of the poster or on the back panel of a leaflet. Ensure that each logo has the appropriate ‘breathing space’ around it, that it’s the required size and that the sponsor has approved its use and placement.

Posters

Posters serve the function of creating awareness and anticipation for the event. They can often be produced reasonably well in advance of the event because they are concerned with communicating your key messages – not the detail of your programme.
Your design should be eye catching, simple and bold – never overload your poster with text.

Make sure the text, especially the event title, dates, venue and web address are clear and can be read from an appropriate distance.

Ensure there is a contact for further information and tickets – a web address or telephone number.

Make sure you have thought about where you will be able to display your posters – do you need to produce A4, A3, A2 or 60”x40” versions – or a mix of various sizes, for example.

Decide on appropriate print quantities and remember to keep some posters back for dressing the venue, archive and debrief packs.

Consider if there is an option to sell posters at the event – perhaps signed by a special guest.

**Flyers and Leaflets**

Flyers and leaflets provide a different function to posters. For one thing people can pick them up and take them away with them. Therefore don’t just produce ‘mini posters’ but provide a fuller level of information, expanding on your key messages to convert interest into attendance. Here are some tips:

- Make sure your flyers are eye-catching and interesting – something that people will stick on their pin boards rather than in the bin.
- Keep the front image simple and bold. Don’t overload it with text.
- Describe in more detail the Who, What, Why, When and Where of the event in the inside and/or back of the leaflet.
- Give clear information about ticketing (include any group discounts, available concessions, etc).
- If you are aiming to attract visitors from outside the local area, a map showing the location of venues is essential.
- Make sure you have given clear travel information (or appropriate contacts) regarding nearby train stations, bus and road routes, parking, etc.
- Include any essential health and safety advice such as: no glass, no alcohol, dress warmly, not suitable for children, etc.
- Make sure you use a plain font and that the text is of a reasonable size.
- If text is to be placed over or reversed out of images make sure it remains legible.
The ‘copy’ should be well written and concise. Get someone with an eye for detail to check it for inaccuracies and ‘typos’ before going to print.

Think about the appropriate size of print for distribution/mailing/racks – *i.e.* A6, A5, 1/3 A4, folded, special cuts and shapes – the options are wide.

If you are going to post some of the leaflets or flyers, make sure you can source envelopes that they will fit inside without the need to fold them.

Never print on just one side of a flyer – this can look unprofessional and is usually a wasted opportunity.

**Printed Programmes**

Programmes should give full details of the event activities. It is likely that they will be produced only when the full programme is confirmed and they should act as a guide to the event.

They can be distributed in advance, or at the event itself (free or for sale).

They should include elements such as: a welcome message and word from the sponsor or any other endorsements; ‘programme at a glance’; a site/orientation map with key; full programme details; sponsor information and acknowledgement; event background and images; where to get food and drink; a list of local visitor attractions, accommodation and amenities in the area; a note regarding any future sponsorship/advertising opportunities connected with the event; event mailing list and contact details; a ‘credits’ section.

Don’t forget that you may be able to raise advertising income by selling pages in your programme or swapping adverts with other appropriate publications.

Bear in mind that a well produced event programme can be helpful when trying to interest future sponsors in your event.

**Tickets**

Don’t forget that event tickets themselves are useful communication tools. Ok, so you may have already ‘captured’ the customer, but tickets can still continue to work for the event in other ways.

Make sure the tickets you produce reflect the professional level of the event, especially if tickets are sold in advance.

Again if sold in advance, make sure that the ticket cannot be easily reproduced; if appropriate, think about using serial numbers or holograms for example. Specialist ticket companies can provide a range of appropriate options.
Make sure that each type of ticket is easily distinguishable on collection. For example you can use colour to differentiate between full price and concession tickets. This will make ticket checking quicker and smoother on entry.

Think about using the reverse of the ticket to draw attention to key programme elements, health and safety reminders, or consider selling it as advertising space.

Think about other ways that the ticket might work for you. For example is it appropriate to incorporate a tear-off ‘special offer voucher’ or a ‘prize draw’ opportunity?

The point is, don’t miss a trick and be inventive with your marketing tools.

Other Print/Design Items

Other print or design items may include VIP, launch or press invitations, headed paper, website, complimentary tickets, carrier bags, entry forms, folders, catalogues, direct mail material, sponsor packs, advert layouts, site maps, etc. It’s important that you think through all the print elements that are required in the planning stages for effective use of time and budget resources.

Printing

If you are working with a professional designer you may decide to delegate the business of working with the printer to them. Alternatively you may choose to work directly with the printer. Whatever way you manage your print production, here are some points to consider:

Get a good price for the job. Print quotes can vary widely from supplier to supplier. The rule of thumb is to seek at least three quotes.

Use the appropriate quality and weight of paper stock – make sure you get a sample from the printer. Inappropriately cheap print can have a negative impact on your marketing effort, whilst very high quality stock may be unnecessary.

Set realistic timescales and make sure the printer is able to deliver to these. Allow a contingency so it’s not a disaster if the print is a few days late.

Be smart – think about the size of press that your printer is working on – can you print various items on the same stock in order to save your budget? Talk to your printer about ways to save costs – perhaps you can adjust your timescale and/or print sizes accordingly.
If you don’t understand something ask your designer or printer to explain...
Always get a colour proof and sign if off before the final print run takes place.

Be aware of the various options open to you. Standard full colour print jobs are achieved using a mix of four inks – Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black (CMYK).

‘Mono’ (black and white) or ‘spot’ (black plus one colour) print jobs are likely to be a little cheaper than full colour. This may be a false economy though if the look they provide does not reflect your event positioning.

Using special premixed ‘Pantone’ colours, gloss or special finishes and unusual cuts can be effective but they are likely to cost you more.

Be aware of the different kinds of printing processes. Seek advice on the most relevant and cost-effective process for your print run – i.e. lithographic (good for large print runs), digital (good for limited print runs, large format and one-off jobs), screen printing (good for large format posters).

Build your knowledge. If you don’t understand something, ask your designer or printer to explain it to you.

**Media Advertising**

When considering which advertising platforms to use, think about the media that will best reach your target audience. For example daily newspapers generally have a short life but a high readership; monthly magazines have a longer shelf life and often a more targeted or specialist readership; radio can provide repeated short messages and a high market penetration; TV can appear expensive but can give your event a sense of credibility. The starting point is to identify the media that is more likely to suit your needs (and your budget) and then make contact with the various companies to request information about their readership/audience profile, reach, advertising opportunities, cost and deadlines. This information is usually available in the form of a ‘Rate Card’. Collating and understanding this information will allow you to start to build your advertising plan. This plan should incorporate all publications/stations, dates, deadlines, requirements and special notes to help you manage your advertising activity. To help you track your advertising spend and activity set up your plan in a package such as Microsoft Excel using headings such as those indicated opposite.
Advertising Plan Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of insert (list in date order)</th>
<th>Publication/ Media</th>
<th>Size &amp; Spec</th>
<th>Copy Deadline</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Notes/ Status</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Agreed Cost</th>
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Advertising in the Printed Media

By this we mean adverts placed in publications: the local, regional or national newspapers; specialist magazines and other printed media.

- Make initial contact with the sales team of the various publications you are interested in well in advance of booking the campaign. Explain the kind of event you are promoting, find out if there are any special supplements or issues coming up that relate to the nature of your event. Ask if they offer any block booking discount schemes or deals with sister publications.
- Adverts in the printed press are usually sold by a ‘per column centimetre’ (p.c.c.) rate. They are also often sold by specific set sizes, (i.e. full page, half page, quarter page, etc).
- When buying adverts according to a p.c.c. rate, establish how wide each of the publication’s columns are, decide how many columns wide and how many centimetres high you want your advert to be. To calculate the price, follow this formula: 
  Price = (number of columns wide) x (number of centimetres high) x (£rate p.c.c.).
- Bear in mind that different rates are usually quoted for colour and mono adverts. If planning to place mono ads ensure that your designer has been briefed to supply mono versions of the design.
- Make sure you know where in the publication your advert will appear. Remember that different rates are usually charged for advertising in the ‘classified’ section as opposed to ‘run of paper’ (ROP). You can specify a particular page (i.e. the arts or front page) but make sure you ask if this involves paying a premium.
- Check when and how the publication should receive the advert ‘copy’. Once you have sent your copy, check to see if it has been received or ask for confirmation of receipt.
Always send a printed proof of your layout to avoid print error.

Always check that your advert actually appeared. If the publication has made an error and the advert does not appear or is incomplete, negotiate a refund or an appropriate alternative placement.

Even if your budget is extremely tight, it may be worth holding back a contingency amount so that you can take up any attractive last minute offers.

Don’t forget that if you have your own publication (event programme or brochure), you can attempt to arrange ‘contra deals’ with other relevant publications (special interest magazines, other event brochures) whereby you swap advertising space.

Some publications also offer the opportunity to insert your print into their publications.

## Radio Advertising

Regional radio advertising can be a useful and cost efficient way to achieve a general high level of event awareness. Some things to consider:

- Will your key messages be adaptable to radio?
- What stations are relevant to your target markets? Think about listener profile and reach.
- Consider the programmes and time of day that your target market is most likely to be tuned into the radio.
- It’s usual for the radio station to produce the advert – but they need a clear brief in order to design and script the advert effectively.
- Think about the music, the voiceover, the script – does it reflect the event positioning?
- Local radio stations are sometimes interested in broadcasting live from events. If they get involved in this way the partnership often involves a level of presenter ‘talk-ups’ in advance of the event. These can help to further endorse the event.

## TV Advertising

Local TV advertising may be cheaper than you think and can be effective for large scale events with wide target markets.

- Commercial regional stations often offer packages split into ‘micro regions’. This can be a cost effective way of gaining blanket coverage in specific areas for events with a wide market appeal.
IF YOU DON’T PROMOTE SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS
The TV station will help plan the schedule according to when your targets are most likely to be watching and can produce the advert for you as part of the deal.

If you don’t have quality visuals available, do not consider this option. You may end up damaging your marketing effort if the TV ad looks cheap.

Outdoor Advertising

Outdoor advertising is an excellent way to achieve a strong ‘on the street presence’. It generally involves displaying large format posters and banners in key locations. Specialist outdoor advertising companies own and sell space across a variety of platforms including transport networks, billboards, and large city centre screens. Some outdoor advertising opportunities are owned and managed by the local council; these often include overhead banner positions and branding on street furniture (i.e. lampposts and display units). In addition to these formal advertising opportunities you may also identify and negotiate additional opportunities yourself, for example the use of shop windows to build a display. Here are some additional pointers:

- Have a look around your town and access routes. Identify the various outdoor advertising opportunities available; establish who is responsible for them and what the costs involved are (production and display).
- Make sure you gain permission for the placement of all posters or banners where appropriate.
- When producing outdoor banners, it’s recommended that they are printed on to wind permeable/waterproof material as appropriate.

Print Distribution

Before producing any print, do your homework and think carefully about where and how you will distribute it. For example there is little point creating A2 posters if local shops and businesses will only take A4. No matter how fantastic print may look, it is useless if it never leaves the event office. Some points to consider:

- There are professional print distribution companies that can cover the whole of the country or just your local area. They can design a distribution schedule for you based on your target audience profile and will display your print in professionally maintained racks and sites for an agreed period.
Locally, galvanise the support of your committee or recruit extra volunteers to help distribute print. With your target audience in mind, think about areas that may be willing to display or distribute print for you free of charge. These might include: tourist information centres, local hotels and B&Bs, shops, cafés, colleges, council buildings, libraries, pubs, arts and leisure centres, theatres, doctors’ surgeries, etc.

Don’t forget potential opportunities to leaflet audiences at other events or venues; think about door-to-door drops or hand-to-hand leafleting on a busy Saturday afternoon.

Think about how event partners can help you. For example, are there opportunities to insert leaflets in sponsors’ mailings or do they have any public space where you could create a display or distribute leaflets, etc?

**Mailing Lists**

It is essential that recurring events develop a mailing list. Capturing the details of attendees at one event in order to tell them about the next is common sense and a cost-effective way of retaining (and communicating with) audiences. Those events that sell the majority of tickets in advance through box office systems have a direct route to capturing the details of attendees. However, many events are free to enter or simply charge on the gate. Whatever your situation, ensure the capturing of audience data is a priority in your marketing planning. Here are some tips:

- Mailing lists don’t have to be complicated. Only capture the information you need.
- Make sure you hold the information on a computer programme that allows you to sort the list, perform mail merges and print labels (e.g., Microsoft Access or Excel).
- Think about ways you might want to segment the list. Make sure you provide a ‘field’ to enter when the member joined the list along with any other appropriate information.
- When people buy tickets, ask them if they’d like to join the mailing list and be equipped to take their details – at the event have guest book or mailing list forms at the ready.
- Think about incentives – mount a prize draw or competition (e.g., “Join our Mailing List and Win…”). Set up highly visible ‘stations’ where people can enter.
- When conducting visitor research, offer respondents the opportunity to ‘opt in’ to join the mailing list.
Always get consent. On any data capture forms include a phrase along the lines of “Your information will be used for the purposes of (company name) to let you know about future events. We will not pass your contact details on to any other organisation”.

Make it clear the details will be stored on computer.

Hold on to the original data forms for reference.

Familiarise yourself with the Data Protection Act – visit www.opsi.gov.uk

Back up your database regularly to disc.

Keep the database live throughout the year. If speaking to someone interested in the event, ask them if they’d like to join the mailing list.

Add a line in all your print materials giving information about how to join the mailing list.

Keep it clean. Always include a ‘return to’ address on any mail and delete any contacts from whom mail is returned.

Make sure you capture postcodes to assist with efficiency.

**Direct Mail**

Once you have developed your mailing list, it’s important that you use it effectively. Direct Mail basically means personally addressed marketing information that you send by post to your mailing list. On a basic level you can make sure that all on the list receive general information about the event. For more sophisticated campaigns you may want to think about segmenting the list so that you can target specific groups. Some points to consider:

- Direct Mail can provide a high rate of return but the cost per unit can be high in comparison to other marketing tools.
- Send a personalised covering letter with your print. Sign it personally (in blue ink) if possible – it will look less like ‘junk mail’.
- Think about who you are writing to and outline any key benefits that you think will specifically appeal to the mailing group.
- Include a ‘call to action’. What should the person do next? Are discounts or special opportunities on offer through the mailing?
- Seek advice. Check with the Royal Mail about franking, bulk uplift levels and any ‘Mailsort’ discounts, etc that may apply to your campaign – www.royalmail.com
choose the most practical method of delivery...
Think about how the mailing ‘fulfilment’ will be carried out. Do you have helpers/volunteers to assist you with stuffing envelopes? Are you using a mailing house to do this for you?

Remember to include the addresses of some key staff members in any mailing to test delivery.

### Email

Don’t forget about email. Provide the opportunity for your mailing list to receive information electronically instead of (or as well as) by post. Some pointers:

- Email is a comparatively low cost and flexible mailing solution. You can distribute information cheaply and easily after the main printed programme is produced and right up until the last minute if necessary.
- Don’t ‘spam’ – only email those who have signed up to receive information.
- Don’t become a pest. For example a monthly or quarterly email is generally more appropriate than a weekly one and only send an email if there is something to actually say.
- Provide instructions for people to remove themselves from the email list, should they want to stop receiving information at any point.
- Always provide a link to your event website in the body of the email to facilitate an easy ‘click through’.
- It is possible to measure the effectiveness of email campaigns very closely especially if linked to website access and ticket sales.
- Think about presentation options – will you send your email in plain text or in HTML format?

### Internet

The internet is an increasingly essential marketing tool. A good event website can offer events a head start when it comes to targeting visitors from outwith the local area. Don’t fall into the trap of simply putting your leaflet or brochure information on screen though. Use the medium to build a picture of the experience, use photographs, site maps, provide information on the programme and links to other information sources, etc. Some things to consider:
Always keep your site up to date.
- Ensure the site is easy to navigate – information should be no further than three clicks away from the home page.
- Be aware of the full costs – design, domain name, hosting and maintenance.
- The site should be appropriately designed and optimised to ensure maximum hits.
- It’s essential to be able to check on user activity, i.e. levels of hits, referrals from other sites, direct requests, etc.
- Think about how the site will be built. Will it be designed so that you can manage the content yourself? ‘Content managed’ sites allow you to alter the text and images within a pre-set template whenever you like, thus offering a more dynamic communication tool.
- Has it been designed so that it can be ‘re-skinned’ with future campaign visuals, etc.
- Can you capture mailing details and manage mailing campaigns through the site?
- If providing any links to other sites, seek the proper approvals.

TOP TIP
Communication tools are constantly developing – make sure you keep up-to-date.

8) Media Relations and Planning

Your media plan should form a significant and integrated part of your marketing and communications plan. By the media we mean newspapers and magazines, radio and television stations, the internet, newsletters, bulletins and freelance journalists. You should target those that are most appropriate to your audiences. Editorial media coverage is generally more persuasive than paid for advertising and what’s more, it’s free. Don’t expect the media to come to you though – you have to be active in communicating the event story. Here are some pointers to get you started:

- If you don’t have a dedicated ‘media officer’ for the event, make sure someone appropriate on the team has the responsibility for co-ordinating press activity.
Build a media database. Identify and research the key media and specialist journalists that you think may be interested in covering the event. Keep adding to the list as you identify new contacts. You may also include contacts such as your constituency politicians and stakeholders who should also receive any media releases as a matter of course to keep them in the loop.

Be aware of deadline days and preferred format (email or post) for receiving media releases and images.

Keep a track of media response and interest.

Create a good relationship with the local paper and appropriate journalists.

Think about angles and sell the story: can you offer programme exclusives, interviews, photo opportunities, previews to particular journalists?

Always be accurate and honest when dealing with the media – there is no point overdressing a story. You will lose their trust if they feel they have been misled.

Provide appropriate accreditation and facilities for the media to report from the event. Facilities may include: a press room with internet connection, computer, phone, refreshments, etc.

Remember to invite journalists to review the event.

Always say “thank you” if the event is covered.

The Media Action Plan

Build a media action plan plotting intended media activity against a timeline, taking in the pre, ‘live’ and post event periods. Your plan may include the release of the following:

- **Long Lead Information** – this is outline event information sent for the attention of selected ‘future planning diaries’ of newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations as appropriate. The aim is to create an awareness highlighting any potential the event has to provide content for future features. Remember to embargo information where appropriate.

- **Listings Release** – this is basic copy that should be sent to the listings editors of appropriate publications. Prepare a short release with all key contact information. Remember listings are usually around 100 words in length so make sure you keep it to the point. You may have to circulate these to some quarterly or monthly publications in advance of your press launch as these publications often have long lead times.
- **Press Launch Release** – circulated when you formally announce the details of the event: confirmed dates, venue, key programme messages, sponsors, etc. It is usual that there is some kind of special launch activity planned in conjunction with this. The main thrust of your marketing campaign activity would also usually launch from this date forwards.

- **Special Interest Stories and Features** – you should look to interest different publications with different story angles to build momentum for the event as it builds towards the big day.

- **Photo Opportunities** – think about how to sell your event in pictures. Come up with interesting visual angles and try to interest the appropriate newspaper photo desks.

- **Pre Event Release** – this is a general release, acting as a reminder and providing full details about the day and any last minute updates.

- **Post Event Release** – this release should be sent by email/fax at the close of the event. It’s a useful approach to write a couple of different scenario releases prior to the event and then tailor the most appropriate one to fit. Getting these releases out quickly is important. Ensure you are set up to email/fax your releases from the event site or venue. Once the event has been over for a couple of days, it’s old news.

- **Crisis Management** – ensure you have considered the various risks associated with the event. Prepare a range of scenario responses and identify media spokespersons as appropriate.
Here is a sample Media Action Plan template to get you started:

### Media Action Plan Template

**Event Title:** General Festival  
**Event Date:** May xx xxx

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Press Targets</th>
<th>Publication Date</th>
<th>Resource Implications</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X Dec</td>
<td>Long lead release distributed</td>
<td>Quarterly magazines, local TV and radio forward planning diaries</td>
<td>Spring issues</td>
<td>Email and postage materials</td>
<td>Release out</td>
<td>Follow up calls to key contacts required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| X Feb  | Press Launch (release and event) | Regional and local press, special interest magazines                           | Same week        | · Email and postage materials  
· Press packs for launch  
· Speakers for launch  
· XX to action and oversee  
· Helpers required for Press Launch | Draft approved | Create strong photo opportunity                                                |

Etc… Etc… Etc… Etc… Etc… Etc… Etc…
Writing a Media Release

Here are some basic tips to help you write a simple media release.

- Use headed paper
- Type Media Release on the top
- Type the date of issue
- State if the information is for immediate release or if it is embargoed until a certain date
- Use a strong, clear, attention grabbing (but relevant) title
- Add an explanatory sub title if it needs it
- Type in double line spacing and leave wide margins
- In the first paragraph make sure you cover the What, Where, Why When and Who – put the most important information first and make it snappy
- Expand and add depth to the story in the next couple of paragraphs, but keep it to the point
- Use quotes from the event director or funders as appropriate
- Try to keep it to one page, and no more than two
- Type ‘Ends’ at the end
- Include any key facts and further information such as ticket information, opening times, a list of all funders under ‘Notes to Editors’
- Always include details of the event press officer/contact for further information – name, company, phone number and email address
- State if images are available and in what format

Press Cuttings

If your budget allows it, it’s a good idea to engage a press cuttings agency to monitor press coverage – especially if yours is an event that is likely to attract coverage beyond your local area. Usually a retainer is paid for the required period along with a charge per cutting. Ensure that your agency is fully briefed and advised of your press activity.

Photographs

It is essential to have good photographs of your event. If your budget allows it, engage a professional photographer; if it doesn’t, make sure you nominate a photographer from the event team. Prior to the event, put together a comprehensive list of all the shots you would like to have. Think about future marketing and branding as well as site planning uses and don’t forget to get shots featuring prominent sponsor branding. Unless you agree otherwise, the photographer holds the copyright of images even
though you have commissioned the work. It’s a good approach to aim for an agreement whereby the images are supplied to you digitally with the agreement that they can be used for the future promotion of the event. In this scenario photographers should always be credited.

Other Considerations

- **Presentation Ceremonies** – The majority of sports events will include a presentation ceremony after the match or competition. Agree the format of the ceremony and advise the teams and officials in advance, giving consideration to any tradition and if/how the media are involved with photos or interviews.

- **VIPs/HRH Attendance and Protocol** – If you have invited royalty or other VIPs to your event, make sure you and your team are aware of the appropriate protocol. Consider in advance how you might get them involved and include this in the brief you send them. Involvement could include opening the event, an interview/photo call with the media, presentation of prizes or just simply being there.

- **Event Results** – Consider how you’ll communicate the results of your event/competition to those who are not attending the event. Websites and daily press releases to the media are the most popular communication methods and sometimes result sheets are available during the event for attendees. It’s also worth considering setting up a mailing list for people to submit their email addresses to receive the latest event news.

**TOP TIP**

At the start of your campaign, identify the range of photographs and graphics that you intend to use to promote the event. Size them appropriately, save them as jpegs, number them, and create a corresponding credit sheet. You could also create image CDs for press packs. This will save you time in the long run and allow you to quickly email/post images on request.
9) Marketing Plan Template

Now you have done most of the brainwork, here's a template to help you communicate and formalise your plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ Event name, dates, venue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Use event logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Date of version of plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Plan author</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ Provide a general outline of the event. State the dates, venues, times, etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ Stakeholders and partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Brief event history and outline of overall event objectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situational Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ Outline previous event research and evaluation information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Present the SWOT Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Outline any key information drawn from the Competitor Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Audiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ Outline profile of current audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Outline profile of new potential audiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMART Marketing Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ State the specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based marketing objectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Marketing Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positioning and Key Messages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Describe how you will position the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ State key messages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Marketing Mix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ Give an outline of the direction of the campaign with regards Product, Price, Convenience and Promotion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Tools and Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ Give a description of the tools to be used, what audience they will reach and the objectives they will work towards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Identify the resources (budget, staff and time) required to undertake each activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ▶ It may be useful to present the Marketing Tools and Tactics in a table like the one opposite:
### Marketing Tools and Tactics Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool/Tactic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Target Groups</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Monitor by</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.e. Event Website</td>
<td>New Content Managed site</td>
<td>All, Focus on potential short break visitors, Media</td>
<td>Work starts in Jan. To be complete and tested in time for launch</td>
<td>Web hits, additions to e-database, feedback and online ticket sales</td>
<td>Increase level of first time attendees from outside region</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>£5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Etc…</td>
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<td>£TOTAL</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Marketing Action Plan (see template on next page – Figure 11.6)

- The plan should show planned activity against months/weeks as appropriate and should act as a handy prompt as you go through the campaign. It is useful if you can insert it into the overall Event Action Plan for cross reference with other event management actions.

- Additional, more detailed plans are likely to be required for various elements such as advertising (see Figure 11.2)

#### Budget and Resources

- Plan how you will finance and resource the campaign
- Provide a detailed marketing budget showing all expenditure (ensure it relates to the overall budget)
- Outline the staffing/volunteer requirement

#### Research and Evaluation

- Describe how you will monitor the success of the plan prior, during and after the event
  - What checks will you employ?
- Describe any visitor research that you intend to undertake
# Marketing Action Plan Template with Sample Entries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
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<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
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<td>Situational Analysis</td>
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<td>Agree Objectives</td>
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<td>Prepare Print Brief</td>
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<td>Write Copy for Print</td>
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<td>Sign Off Design</td>
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<td>Posters Printed</td>
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