



EFFECTIVE EVENT MARKETING

One of the biggest challenges in event planning is getting the word out to the right audience. People have a lot of choices, so how do you find people who will connect with your event and how will you effectively market your event to the right people?

PLAN. ADVERTISE. ANALYZE

Good planning will help to minimize marketing mistakes, but don't be afraid of them, and be willing to take some risks. The key is to have a PLAN, follow through with your ADVERTISING and then ANALYZE your results.

PLAN - IDENTIFY YOUR EVENT VISION

Write two-three sentences that describe the overall vision and plan for your event. Think about it like the infamous "elevator speech." If someone asked you to describe your event and why it is important, what would you say? An event vision statement gives you a reference for decision making in event planning. It will help you stay focused and keep your event team on the same page.

Example: The Rock-A-Bye Music Festival will be a three-day event held every fall that celebrates the roots of bluegrass and rock-a-billy music in our community. The event will have three main concert events on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings with an all day festival on Saturday. We want to share our love of this music, introduce people to our community and encourage lodging, dining, shopping – and maybe a little dancing - in our businesses.

PLAN - IDENTIFY EVENT GOALS & IMPACTS

Identify clear goals for your event that will impact your organization or community. Goals are measurable and may be simple, but thinking through what you want the impacts of your event to be are as important as planning the elements of the event. Focus on tangible things that can be measured.

Example:

- The Rock-A-Bye Music Festival will secure 20 local hotel rooms for performers and vendors for Thursday-Sunday. (Total of 60 nights)
- The Rock-A-Bye Music Festival will draw 100 visitors new to our community.
- The Rock-A-Bye Music Festival will introduce 1000 children to the bluegrass style of music through four interactions at school assemblies.
- During the Rock-A-Bye Music Festival local businesses and restaurants will see a 25% increase in spending in their business over their typical weekend sales.

PLAN - IDENTIFY TARGET MARKETS

Once you have identified the vision, goals and impact for the event, you now need to identify who will attend the event. One way to do this is to have participating businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, and Visitor and Tourism Bureau create a list of types of customers and visitors who would deliver results for each goal.

Using the example above for the Rock-A-Bye Music Festival, their target market would include current fans of bluegrass and rock-a-billy music; potential fans; people who have previously attended the event; and people who may be visiting the area during the time of the event.

Then you create a target market profile. Describe who each target market represents using simple demographic information:

- Geographic location – local, regional or a tourist
- Gender
- Age – adults, teenagers, children, millennials, gen-x, baby boomers, etc.
- Level of education
- Occupation – general or specific
- Lifestyle:
 - Relational – families, married, divorced, singles, groups (women’s group, military, civic group)
 - Economic – expendable income
 - Time – busy professional, lots of free time
 - Interest – adventurers, athletes, shoppers, clubs, music lovers, readers, etc.
- Morals and values – psychological data that influences how people view themselves and the world around them

Then you create a target market profile. Describe the person each target market represents.

Example: Rock-A-Bye Music Festival Target Market One – male and female bluegrass music lovers aged 30-50 with expendable income who will stay for all three days of the festival, shop in boutique stores and frequent medium-high end restaurants.

Next, you will create a set of benefits your event will provide to each target market. Think about why they would like to come to the event, and what activities and amenities they will enjoy while they are in your community. These will be the “hooks” to use when creating the event marketing campaign.

ADVERTISE – MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE

What is the best way to reach your target markets? Unfortunately, there is no “one size fits all” answer for marketing to specific groups of people. Start by thinking about how your targets get information.

- Do they read newspapers or special interest magazines?
- Do they participate in Internet groups or pages?
- What radio stations (local or satellite) do they listen to?
- What television stations do they watch?
- What places do they frequent? (Posters, flyers, table tents)

Then determine the cost to advertise in those venues, and if the cost outweighs, meets, or is worth the benefits of reaching that target market.

Next, create ads that appeal to that target market and then place them. Local and regional venues will have lower costs and shorter timelines for inserting ads. State and national publications plan several months in advance and you will need to place those early for maximum impact.

Social media venues are an inexpensive and effective place to advertise. You can place multiple ads with different images directed at different targets. Facebook is a good place to start, followed by Instagram, and Twitter. There may also be social media sites that engage one or more of your target markets.

COLLECT & ANALYZE DATA

Now is the time to see if you correctly identified and impacted your target markets. You will be able to review your findings and make adjustments for future marketing. There are two areas to look at for data related to event attendance and participation.

1. Attendance (counting the crowd)
2. Detailed information about attendees (survey)

ATTENDANCE

The most effective ways to count event attendees are ticket sales or a mechanism, like a turnstile that counts entries. This also requires a ticket booth, security and control at other entry points to the event and may not always be a feasible option for large festivals or events held outdoors or in public places. In that case, or if entry to the event is free, there is no way to accurately count attendees, but there are some methods for estimating crowds.

1. Counter Estimate - Have someone sit in an area near the entrance and count people entering for a moderately busy hour of the event and then multiply it by the approximate hours of entry (usually 1/2 the time of the length of the event to allow for people coming and going). Example: if your event starts at 4 and goes until 10 pm, count from 4-5 and then multiply it by 3.5. If you have 1000 people go by the counter during that time, then your estimate will be 3,500.
2. Block Estimate - (This is mostly used for parades) Count the number of people in one block (not the most crowded, nor the least) and multiply it by the number of blocks the event encompasses. Example: For the Clovis Parade, they count the block two blocks north of the grandstand, but the parade encompasses eleven blocks. The grandstand block is packed and the crowd thins out a little as you move north and south.
3. Exit Count - Count the number of people exiting at the end of the event and double it.
4. Aerial Count - From a location above the event, do a rough count during the busiest time of the event. (Maybe from the fire truck bucket?) This can also be done by taking pictures and counting heads after the event.
5. Grid Count - Estimate how many 10' square areas are covered by your event where people will mingle. Once, during each hour of the event, count people in a ten-foot square. Multiply it by the number of "squares" your event has and then figure out the average. (I have even seen events that tape off a couple of squares on the ground and then count the people in the square each hour. Can also be done by taking pictures.
6. Bluetooth counter (android by apps [zoom.com](https://www.zoom.com)) - counts the number of phones in the immediate vicinity that have bluetooth on. Resets every five minutes. Could be used to get a count of how many phones are in the area with bluetooth on.
7. Video and pictures - again, taken during the event and used to count after the event.

If your event has multiple locations or activities, you will want to count the participants at each place to see what percentage of people participated in each one. These numbers will show the interest generated by each of the activities.

SURVEYS

First, decide how you will collect data about your event.

- Have team members circulate in the crowd and ask questions
- Have hotels ask or collect short paper surveys
- Have a station at the event where people fill out a survey and can spin a wheel for a prize (t-shirt, hat, mug, event poster, etc.)
- Hand out cards for people to visit an online survey (may be the least effective, people are easiest to engage at the event)

Make a list of questions to collect information from your attendees. Types of questions to ask:

- Where are you from
- How did you hear about the event
- Are you staying overnight in town
- What was your favorite part of the event
- What else would you like to do while you are here (do you know about...)?
- How likely are you to come again

Once the data is collected, it should be assembled into an easy-to-read format. We recommend a database or spreadsheet of the findings with a list of comments.

Things to look for:

- Return on Investment (ROI) – Do your benefits outweigh your costs? Are the cash dollars invested by sponsors equal or exceeded by in-kind donations?
- Number of participants vs. marketing dollars spent – If you spend \$5000 marketing to tourists and have 1000 tourists (people from outside the region) attend, you have spent \$5 per person.
- Attendance growth – more people this year than last year, why or why not?

Use this data to assess the success of your marketing plan and to help you create a plan for your next event.

SUMMARY

Event marketing is a little like gambling. You put a lot of work into planning and executing the event and then wait – and hope – for people to show up. An effective marketing campaign will shift the odds in your favor. Don't be surprised if a campaign you focused on one target also reaches another target market. That is why we also analyze, make adjustments to the marketing plans, and then get ready to do it all again!

Effective Event Marketing: Plan. Advertise. Analyze.