Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Supporting charities, volunteers and communities

10. Promotion and marketing

10.1 Communications and marketing plan

Where are you now?

You need to ask yourself how aware are the public is of your work, and what its opinion is of what you do. In order to get an objective view, some research will probably be required – often a quick questionnaire or phone call to a reasonable selection of people will do. This will help identify your 'position' in people's minds.

Take an environmental group as a example. Draw a straight line across a page. At one end write Greenpeace, at the other National Trust. Ask people to put a cross where they think your organisation is between the two. This technique can be applied to almost any field.

Where do you want to go (your objective)?

Where do you want your organisation to be within a certain time frame – say a year, three years or perhaps by the end of a campaign? Do you want more people to know about you – why? Do you have the capacity to handle larger numbers of users/clients/visitors etc?

Take your position line as described above and put a cross where you would like to be seen at the end of your time frame.

If your cross for where people think you are now coincides with where you want to be at the end of your time frame, it does not mean you have no work to do, it just means you might not have to change your image. Image and reputation, however, can change – ask Marks and Spencer or British Airways!

Who do you want to talk to (your target audience)?

Which section/s of the community are you trying to reach? Examples may be local opinion-leaders, such as the local MP or newspaper editor, parents of children under five, or those who care for the elderly. The 'general public', or 'everybody' is too vague. The more you narrow this target down the more effective you will be. Targeting does not mean excluding everybody else, it means knowing a smaller group of people better.

Find out how your target audience gets its information. What papers do they read; do they listen to local radio; are they part of another network; do they think the local paper is a waste of time? This will all help with implementing your strategy.

What do you want to say (your key message)?

Narrow down what you want to say as much as possible. Key messages are usually very simple and rarely involve policy statements.

You should ask yourself 'why should our target audience come to us?' The answer 'because we are good' is not good enough; why are we good? 'We are trustworthy', 'we know what we are talking about', are both key messages.

In particular think about key messages in relation to a new campaign or developing a new service. Are they going to have an impact on your target audience?

What methods will you use?

How best can you reach your audience with your message? This is based on what you know about them. Think beyond media relations. If word of mouth is best, conferences, meetings and visits can all be part of a PR plan. How about shop window displays, direct mail, exhibitions etc. Your methods should be based as much as possible on what you know about your target audience. There is no point in putting a great effort into getting coverage in the Western Mail or Daily Post for example if very few of your target audience read that particular paper – the local weekly may be much more useful to you.

Strategy timetables

Your plan of action. Do you want a big blast of publicity or a steady flow? Give yourself targets and a timetable – magazines, even local ones, may need a story or feature three months before they appear in print.

Budget

What is all this going to cost you? In an ideal world your budget would simply be set at what it would cost to implement the strategy. In the voluntary sector this is where you start to narrow down your options. You are unlikely to be able to do it all, so target your resources at the methods you think will be most effective – even if they are not the most glamorous ones.

Some elements in your strategy may not start for several months, in which case you might have time to try and raise some money. Funders are more likely to give for a specific item if it is clearly part of a general communications strategy than an item on its own.

Evaluation

We know this is can be a pain to keep up! But how else can you judge whether your efforts have been a success? A bit of market research – even on a very simple basis, is the only way to keep track of things. Plan time in for this on a regular basis – even if it is simply a matter of keeping press cuttings and a record of the number of inquiries you receive. Done regularly you will start to notice if things are not working as you hoped. It's a great early warning system that enables you to change your strategy rather than bang your head against a brick wall.

Remember – the best strategy is one that is flexible, and can change and develop over time.

Disclaimer
The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

For further information contact

Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF10 5FH
Registered Charity: *218093*

Tel: 0800 2888 329 help@wcva.org.uk
Fax: 029 2043 1701 www.wcva.org.uk

Produced by WCVA, County Voluntary Councils and Volunteer Centres.
Last Updated:14/06/2013

Cyngor Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Cymru
wcva
Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Tel: 0800 2888 329
www.wcva.org.uk