

> TOP TEN

10 top tips for social marketing

How to make sure that community engagement is part of your marketing strategy

I began developing audiences for arts and cultural events in the late 1980s and became immediately interested in going out into communities so that I could connect with people on a one-to-one level in order to personalise what I was promoting.

As a result of years of working with young people, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and outside the arts on a number of education, health and social projects – including the engagement of BME communities with a leisure centre for adults with learning difficulties and a social and support service for Black and

Asian gay and bi-sexual men – my audience development practice is now a combination of traditional marketing underpinned by community awareness and engagement. The following is a basic outline of the key tips that I consider when developing and delivering an audience development campaign.

Research

1. Who are the new audiences and why? It is important to understand why a specific community is being targeted as a new audience.

2. Has there been or is there an existing relationship or dialogue with the community that is being marketed to? You can establish the level of work that needs to be done to engage these communities, once you know what work has already taken place to date.

3. Desk research:

- Research demographical information to learn about the profile of the target community in terms of size and diversity.
- Develop a list of relevant voluntary groups operating locally and, where relevant, regionally for brokering dialogue and partnership work.
- Create a database for direct mail, distribution and e-marketing.

4. Outreach: to develop a tailored campaign strategy, you need to speak with and listen to people, in order to understand their experiences, perceptions, challenges and needs.

Tools and methodologies

5. Print design: to engage a specific community it is important to consider the following:

- Print is often the only initial visual

representation of the work that is promoted. Understanding or even speaking to the potential audience will allow you to develop print that is both relevant and appropriate.

- Some images or references can be deemed inappropriate when targeting a specific cultural community. The objective is not to exclude communities but to engage them by being accessible.

6. Distribution: when going out into the community, you have to be aware of a number of things including appropriate dress wear, when best to distribute, language skills, etc. Before each distribution campaign, I inform my street teams about the diversity of the potential audience, as well as about the product that is being promoted. This allows my street teams to be aware, accessible and empowered.

7. Direct mail: the objective is to reach out to relevant community organisations. This will broker dialogue with organisations that work with members of the community that you are targeting as new audiences. It is about connecting with the very organisation that they trust.

8. E-marketing: depending on the research, the market can be local, national and even international. This is a good method of

marketing to a large number of networks and keeping costs low.

9. Press and media: it is useful to work with press and media beyond advertising by brokering a strategic relationship with key journalists and editors. Online media can also be a good place to get significant coverage, reaching a more geographically and culturally diverse audience.

Sustaining audiences

10. Sustaining the community engagement:

- Why? Once a relationship has been brokered with a particular community, it is important to sustain it, as this builds an audience for future work.
- How? Continue to practise tailored methods of marketing by being creative and developing key partners including community networks via ambassador's schemes and with organisations in other sectors so as to reach communities that are not traditional arts audiences. ■



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