

Case study

Open House

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Background

Open-City is an independent, not for profit organisation that aims to be at the centre of creating better places – and a better city. We champion excellence in design quality and advocate for an inclusive and informed approach to the development of our city.

Our work covers 3 core strands:

- Engagement
- Education
- Enabling

With a basis of experience, expertise and research built up over 20 years, our programmes are designed to encourage dialogue, debate and learning about how architecture and public space affects our daily lives, and to enable people to discover and understand how they can really influence change in the built environment.

Open House London is the flagship project for Open-City. Open House London celebrates all that is best about the capital's buildings, places and neighbourhoods. Every September, it gives a unique opportunity to get out and under the skin of London's amazing architecture, with over 700 buildings of all kinds opening their doors to everyone – all for free. The dates for 2013 are 21 and 22 September.

Open-City is an independent organisation with a limited budget and a very small team and there is no specific specialist marketing role within the team. It was therefore necessary to factor this in to the communications and PR plan.

Objectives

Given that there is no specific marketing resource within the organisation it was necessary to create a way of delivering marketing which was shared by all – staff and volunteers. In addition, we needed a plan which had impact and could scale up well. Volume is very important to the project but we didn't want to lose clarity on our messaging.

Target audience

We believe that architecture should be engaged with by everyone. We therefore target the general public as well as a professional audience.

Process

The organisation invests in print and infrastructure every year, so that there are communication tactics ready to be deployed and a strong, consistent brand is maintained. The print includes leaflets, the *Guide*, banners, posters, badges. In addition, a thorough training system and internal communications plan is implemented so that staff and volunteers are fully engaged and equipped with the Open House message.

Through this, staff and volunteers are empowered to spread the message, to set up their own reciprocals, be active on social media and secure new partnerships and relationships for Open House. These are captured each year and kept centrally and then built on the following year.

Outcomes

This way of working has internal benefits as it means that the team (both volunteers and paid staff) are dynamically engaged with the project and the organisation. It has also resulted in a highly successful project with high levels of impact, delivered on limited resources.

Key points for effective practice

Strong internal communications is the bedrock to this approach, to ensure that the resulting external messaging is in line with the aims and values of Open House.

Conclusions and recommendations

Open House now has over 700 buildings participating, 7,000 volunteers involved in delivery and 30 core volunteers year round. The messaging has had a high impact and 250,000 people participate in Open House London each year. Repeat participation is high and Open House is a well-known brand.

Additional information

www.openhouse.org.uk