**Creating a successful marketing and communications campaign**

As a team we’d like to ensure you have all of the tools you need to help get you started with the marketing plans for your Creative Communities Programme project. Although we will look to help and support you by providing a range of templates for use, it’s important that you know the basics when it comes to putting a marketing plan together. This guide will aim to walk you through how to construct your plans across all areas of marketing – including traditional marketing, digital and PR.

Over the coming months we will also arm you with a range of templates and a set of creative partner brand guidelines, so you can ensure that your marketing activity is working with Hull 2017 towards the same key objectives.

As part of your agreement with Hull 2017 you will be required to submit a marketing plan for approval by the brand and marketing team. The dates for this submission will be included in your individual agreements. We will endeavor to get back to you within 2-3 weeks of receiving your plans with feedback.

Hull 2017 Top Tips

1. **Plan**

Allow enough time to implement a proper campaign, there’s no point getting to the day, or even week, before an event and trying to attract an audience. Marketing is an awareness raising exercise and as such needs time to grow to its full potential. Winging it will only get you so far!

1. **Marketing Budget**

Many people forget to ring fence money to create a reasonable campaign. Even the smallest event will benefit from a little investment in some publicity raising activity.

As a general rule you should be looking to allocate 3-5% of your overall budget to support your marketing activities e.g. If you’re looking to spend £10,000 on your event your ideal marketing spend should be around £500.

1. **Know your audience**

It might sound obvious but before you commit to anything ensure you know exactly who your event is aimed at. Very few events will appeal to ‘everyone’ so be critical, think realistically about who might attend, where you might find them and who else you might want to attract. This will save a lot of time, money and effort further down the line.

1. **Know the environment**

It’s easy to overlook external factors when you’re focused on making your event work, but knowing what’s going on around you may actually boost your chances of success. Think about things that might affect your audience e.g. current economic climate, geographical location, school holidays and other local or even national events (related or not) taking place around the same time.

1. **Know your local media and community outlets**

Advertising is a highly-competitive industry and it can be difficult to know where to spend your money to get the best return on your investment. This is where knowing your audience helps – if you know your attendees are not likely to read a specific paper or go to a certain part of the city, there’s no point wasting money on these avenues. It can also help to get circulation and demographic figures for local newspapers, these should be available from the publication itself though BE CAREFUL they don’t always tell the full story.

There are other ways to ‘advertise’ your event that don’t include traditional print and street campaigns, many local theatres/arts centres offer space in their season brochure for a nominal fee and most community venues (and some shops) will be happy to display a poster and stock leaflets.

So get out there, look around, chat to local businesses and community venues and build up a list of contacts.

1. **Write a detailed plan**

This is not as daunting as it may sound. If you have followed steps 1-4, you should have the knowledge to write a detailed marketing plan. Use the headers below to help.

***Aims and objectives*** - yes you want people to attend, but what else do you want? Do you want to change attitudes? Are you hoping the event will become an ongoing project?

***Synopsis***– write a brief (1 or 2 sentence) description about the event. This will help you describe your intentions to others more effectively.

***Company summary/history*** – people are by nature very curious beasts and many will want to know about the people putting on the event. Whether it’s your first event or you’re an old hand, finding ways to sell yourself/the company at this stage can be very useful for communications purposes.

***Identify key messages -*** we will identify key messages for the Creative Communities Programme as a whole but have a think about individual key messages for your specific project. What are the three things you want the viewer / listener / reader to remember?

***Key selling points*** – try to find at least two or three reasons why people should choose to attend your event above everything else that’s currently going on in their lives.

***Competition*** - what else is going on at the same time within city, region, UK that may impact on your attendance figures?

***SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)*** – this is where your research will really help you. Consider the project, what are its strengths and weaknesses? What is going on with in the local community that you might be able to use to help promote your event? What factors might prevent people from attending your event.

***Target audience*** – having worked out who you are targeting it’s important to record this and this is the place to do it. Include as much detail as possible.

***Target locations*** – it is also important to record the location of your desired audience. Where they frequent e.g. nightclub, library. And how you may be able to reach any niche groups.

***Marketing activity*** – although this is dependent on budget there are a few key areas to consider:

**Print** – are you going to print leaflets/posters? If so, how will you print them and where?

Working with a small printer can be very useful if you have little or no experience in this area, they can offer help and advice on paper quality and finish, but it can be quite costly for smaller runs.

There are a number of high street print outlets that may be able to help with smaller quantities of print however, they can sometimes be more limited on paper quality and finishes offered.

Or of course you can print at home, but unless you have a super-duper printer you will rarely achieve the same quality finish.

**Distribution** – how you will ensure print gets to the relevant areas?

Paying a specialist company to distribute your leaflets can be a quick and easy option if you have the money, but there are restrictions on where their licenses allow them to deliver so always double check first that they can actually reach all of the outlets you suggest.

Many local papers offer inserts inside their papers, this will ensure that anyone buying the paper gets a copy of your leaflet however, this can be expensive and leaflets can often fall out on shop floors.

You may want to consider a door drop (where a leaflet is posted through the letterbox of every house in a certain area). This is quite a risky tactic as some houses may be empty/inaccessible.

Or, if you don’t have the budget to pay someone else to do this do it yourself! Using your knowledge of local theatres/ arts centres and community groups get out there. Get friends, family and fellow cast members involved and make your presence felt.

**Direct mail** – if you’ve previously organised a similar event, gathered audience details and asked if you can contact them for marketing purposes, direct mail can be a very useful tool. You can produce a nice letter (on paper featuring your header) inviting them to join you at your next event. Remember to include all the details e.g. date, time, place, price etc.

If this is your first event and you hope to run it in the future, you might want to consider gathering your own audience data if not at the point of sale (or if it’s unticketed) via a survey on the day. This can provide helpful data for analysing who attended the event and (if they agree to allow you to contact them in the future) you can use this data to build a relationship with people interested in your work as well as to build your audience.

**Advertising** – armed with your knowledge about your audience, where to find them and appropriate media/community venues you can start to think about the best outlets to place advertisements for your event.

Depending on your budget you might look at:

***Print advertising*** in local newspapers, monthly magazines etc.

There are various options and they increase in cost according to what size you choose. As a rule of thumb the smaller you go the cheaper they are but be warned, nice things don’t always come in small packages! If you go too small you won’t have enough remove to fit, all of your information on and run the risk of being overlooked. You also want to try and secure a right hand page if possible as people tend to scan the right hand page before the left.

As an awareness raising tool print advertising is a very valuable tool despite it being difficult to categorically assess its effectiveness.

***Digital advertising*** via social media channels and other websites.

The world of digital advertising has exploded in recent years and is definitely not one to be overlooked (*unless of course you are 100% certain your audience doesn’t exist online*). Again there are different shapes and sizes and a number of options regarding where you place adverts – think about your audience, what sites would they use/visit?

Social Media has become very popular and offers a simple and cost effective way of producing adverts that target exactly the people you’re looking for and gives measurable results.

If you think your audience exists in the digital world beyond social media channels you might be better advertising on third party websites though you might also want to consider employing a digital agency to handle this for you as it can be a minefield to navigate.

*N.B: Placing a paid for advertisement on social media is not the same as posting on your own, or other people’s pages about your event.*

***Radio advertising*** on your local commercial station.

Radio advertising is not as expensive as you may think especially on smaller commercial stations but it does come with its own risks.

Some cheaper packages tend to include fewer peak time slots (between 7am and 9am and 4pm and 6pm) and more late night options (between 10pm and 6am). It can also be tricky to judge exactly how far a particular station reaches, or how popular it is, even if you have the latest listener figures.

Your best bet is to do your own research again, ask friends, family, colleagues what station they listen to and if needs be find a community group that fits your audience profile and talk to them.

There are other advertising options such as TV and outdoor on billboards, bus stops, buses, in shopping centres etc. These can be very expensive and tricky to negotiate. There are many agencies around that can handle this for you but they too can be quite costly.

**Note:** For a marketing campaign to be effective it needs to reach as many people within your audience group as possible and to do that it should encompass as many outlets and as often as your budget permits. One advert in a newspaper for one week only is not going to be as effective as placing printed materials in the community alongside digital advertising and a series of printed adverts so think carefully about where to spend your money in order to get a good return on investment.

1. **Digital Marketing**

Digital marketing incorporates everything you do on the internet including your social media channels and your website (if you have one).

These days not everyone has a website but if you do this should be accessible, easy to navigate and relevant. If someone wants to know more about your event and they visit a website where the last news item was posted 6 months previous or they find it impossible to locate the information they require they will be unlikely to book for your event.

Similarly, social media needs to be regularly updated. The explosion in the number of social media platforms should give some indication of the popularity of this as a source of information and (as previously stated) unless you can 100% guarantee that your audience does not use these channels should not be overlooked.

Setting up and managing a good website does not need to cost the earth, but it can be labour intensive. If you don’t have the time to regularly update your digital channels with a variety of text, image, video and audio assets you might want to consider getting some help. Local colleges and universities often have students willing to do this for work experience and this can be a cost effective way of keeping up with the latest digital trends.

As part of your agreement with Hull 2017, you will receive a dedicated web page on the website. This will include up to 100 words about your project, plus an image and information about how to book tickets to your event. The copy will be pre-agreed with you before anything is published.

1. **Media Plan**

Before you dive straight into contacting the press about your event you probably need to do a little bit of groundwork.

Identify the relevant publications, stations, websites you want to target - these will largely be the same as those you identified for advertising purposes though you may want to include a few additional outlets too e.g. those within a reasonable commute time (usually 15 -20 mins) or those whose advertising packages were outside your budget.

Consider what you can offer them e.g. can you provide high-res production images, set visits or cast/creative interviews? Q&As and syndicated interviews are often well received by over worked journalists these days too. Can you provide an interview with a key member of the team that can be circulated (syndicated) and adapted by all media outlets on your list?

Now you just need to know who to talk to about your event. So, pick up the phone and call the media outlets you have identified and ask them who to send your press release to. Sometimes they will direct you to a generic email inbox or worse still a ‘contact us’ form on their website. If this is the case, try and gently push for a name but remember to keep your cool.

If you’ve got a name great! If not, don’t worry all is not lost, you just need to ensure your press release stands out in a crowd with a killer subject line!

1. **How to effectively write a press release.**

Some people find this daunting, it doesn’t need to be. Nobody knows your event better than you and all journalists want to know when they read your press release is what’s inside your head.

**If you include the following you can’t go far wrong:**

**Who:** If you’re company is well known in the area or if you have a well-known person taking part in your event, state it. If you’re a small company or new to this include a short paragraph about who you are (not your life story but a brief statement about your work e.g. Shutter Door was created three years ago in an old barn in rural Cumbria to bring exciting and innovative performance art to smaller communities.)

**What:** What is your event? What can people expect to see? What do you hope to achieve?

**Where:** Where will your event take place? Is it in a public space? Is it accessible for those with disabilities?

**When:** What day, date, time will your event take place?

**Why:** Is there a special reason for doing this? Is it an anniversary? What made you want to do it?

**How:** How will the event being executed? If you have a particularly unusual event that requires something out of the ordinary e.g. a community cast – you might want to tell people how that cast will be selected.However, most important under this header is to remember to tell people how to get involved e.g. where they can buy tickets or find more information.

*Bring the story to life with a quote:*

- Your quote should act as a sound bite that is punchy and memorable.

- Use quotes with purpose eg to provide an anecdote or unique perspective.

- Quotes shouldn’t sound forced, insincere or unintelligible. Just as with your content as a whole, be conversational and avoid jargon that can be lost in translation.

Journalists are often pushed for time so it’s important to give as much information as you can in the most concise manner possible.

As a rough guide you should aim to keep your press release to one side of A4, two at an absolute maximum. You need to ensure the what aspect of your discussion appears within the first two pars and it’s important to use spell check and if you’re not great and grammar ask someone else to check it. If your press release is littered with errors most editors will simply discard it. We will provide you with a boiler plate template for creating your own press releases – watch this space.

Also, don’t forget to include your contact details on the press release itself. Yes they will have your email address, but your release may be printed off or filed in a separate folder so that anyone on the team can follow it up. If you don’t include your details how will they know who to contact?

1. **Create a timeline or critical path**

As mentioned previously, marketing needs time to grow to its full potential.

Once you have your plan in place it’s time to put some dates to your planned activities. So you know what needs to happen when and what your deadlines are if you’re going to meet these goals.

As a general rule of thumb:

* Printed leaflets and direct mail should be distributed 6-8 weeks ahead of an event. The general feeling being that if you send things too early people will forget you.
* Posters should be distributed 4-6 weeks ahead of an event, but not sooner as people may lose them prior to being able to put them up.
* Any outdoor advertising e.g. on billboards, bus stops etc. should also be scheduled to take place 4-6 weeks ahead of an event. They are usually booked in two week blocks.
* Ideally radio would be 2-4 weeks out and run for two weeks at a time – this allows you to evaluate the response and also to decide if you want to re-run the ad (stations often give discounts if you re-run the ad immediately after your initial period).
* Print advertising should usually run 2-4 weeks before the event, depending on the publication and would ideally run for two consecutive weeks. If you can prepare artwork quickly it can be worth contacting publications a few days before their print deadline as they often have some good late deals. However, this can also be risky if it’s a particularly busy time of year, late space may be not always be available.
* Digital advertising would ideally be 2-4 weeks before the event. If you have the budget it’s worth investing in a 4-week campaign and running it right up to the event. If you can only do 2 weeks concentrate on the last two weeks before the event takes place.
* Digital marketing is slightly different in its timeframe and approach. You should ideally be keeping your own social media channels up to date with news and information throughout the process.
* Media activity is usually centered on the final month before an event. If you have good quality, high-res imagery don’t be afraid to send this out 4 weeks before your event and follow this up with your press release at least 2 weeks before the event.

1. **Create a lasting impression**

You’ve probably heard the saying “a picture paints a thousand words”? Never underestimate the power of good strong imagery.

Whether it’s a photograph, an illustration or a graphical representation of your event, think about what impression you want to make and what imagery might allow you to do this.

Creating good imagery doesn’t have to cost the earth.

Yes, you can pay a professional photographer and designer to do this and if you have the budget it’s a great experience. However, the cost can be prohibitive for smaller events. If this is you, consider the alternatives.

Perhaps you know a good amateur photographer, ask them to help out in return for a credit – no doubt they’ll be only too pleased to see their work and name in print.

Or what about approaching the local college/university and asking if they have any art and design students who could help? Many students would love the opportunity to work on something public facing at such an early stage in their career, it’s great for their portfolio and you could offer to write them a character reference in return.

1. **Be flexible**

By now you probably have a very clear idea of what you want to say and how, but don’t get so bogged down in the detail that you cannot adapt your plans.

Very few things in marketing are set in stone, somebody may drop out at the last moment, the venue may suddenly become unavailable or perhaps your desired advertising space is unavailable on the dates you want, your campaign should be flexible enough to be able to accommodate these little hiccups without adversely affecting the overall outcome.

1. **Have a backup plan**

It is possible that even after all your meticulous planning ticket sales/interest may still struggle to meet your expectations but don’t lose faith. It’s important to have a few additional ideas (and a bit of cash) up your sleeve just in case this situation arises.

It might be additional advertising, a publicity stunt or additional digital content e.g. Q&As, videos, fun facts. Whatever you decide to do, think of marketing like a long distance race it’s important to put yourself in a good position in the weeks leading up to the event but remember to leave a little budget in reserve for the home straight in case you need it.

1. **Remember to try and enjoy the process**

Although marketing is an essential part of audience development it shouldn’t be a chore. Nobody knows your event better than you, all you have to do is think of ways to make other people notice you and convince them to come and share the experience. So, don’t be afraid to have fun with it.

You could include in your marketing materials a hashtag for the event and encourage your audience to share this socially after the performance to share their reviews. There’s no better way of selling tickets and demonstrating success than through an organic online testimonial from peers.

1. **Feedback**

After your event has taken place, we’d really like you to share with us your learnings from the marketing process. What worked well, what didn’t work so well and what would you do next time to improve the process. This will help feed in to the monitoring and evaluation process as part of the wider Hull 2017 programme.