# So You Want to Market an Event: A Few Key Questions

Everyone knows that a good promotional campaign is essential for the success of a program. Since the right promotion for your program depends on the type of program, it might be helpful to think about the questions below before you get started.

## Who Do You Want to Attract?

Students? Faculty? People from the community? You need to know your audience before you spread your message.

#### When is the Event?

Is it during afternoon class time? Or a late-night event where people will have to return to campus? The time of the event will influence who attends and how you should advertise.

# Why Are You Programming This Event?

Is it recreational? Educational? Or does it call the community's attention to some neglected area? You need to be sure you know why you're planning the event so you can tell people why they should be there.

### What Type of Program is it?

Can the audience participate or is it lecture? Is it a musical event like a concert or a dance? Figuring out how the audience will be involved will help you target and attract your audience.

# Where Will the Event be Held?

Will it be in a conference room or outside? Is it on campus or off? The size and location of the venue determines how many people can attend and therefore the amount and type of promotion you'll need.

# Promotion Methods: A Quick How To

Before you can plan a successful advertising campaign, it is important to keep the following in mind: you and your committee must know your program inside and out before you can convince a stranger that it's worth attending! Brainstorm with your committee members to decide what will motivate the public to attend your program and plan your campaign accordingly. Take a look at these marketing ideas that may help you sell your program.

# **Banners, Flyers and Table Tents**

Attract attention with some visual material – a picture, a cartoon, a logo. With that design don't forget to print the who, what, where, when and how much information. Always include who is sponsoring the program. Make huge banners and hang them in approved locations. Create attention grabbing flyers and table tents to spark conversation at meal times.

# **Newspapers & Media Outlets**

Be sure to take note of deadlines so you'll be sure to submit the copy in time to have your ads run when you want them. Your copy should include the name of the program, the time, date, and place of the performance, the admission prices, the sponsoring organization and any other appropriate information. If you want a picture or design included in a newspaper ad or online, submit glossy photos, jpeg files or art work along with instructions on reducing or enlarging such work.

#### Logos

A logo is a trademark or symbol that is consistently associated with a product, event, or series. A logo should be used consistently on all visual publicity materials that focus on one event or program of a series. (example: Friday Night Live logo)

#### Give-Aways

Give-Aways always attract attention and provide the individual with a souvenir to take home as a reminder of the event. These may include bumper stickers, bookmarks, posters or cups. Give-aways can be handed out either before the event or during.

#### Displays

Set up displays at lobby tables in Olin, the Concourse, along the sidewalks, in residence hall lounges, or other approved locations. Get contents from press kits from agencies or be creative using approved photos and info.

#### **Living Displays**

Use sandwich boards to publicize events; have them on people and have them walk around campus. Have a graphic artist make posters for an upcoming event in the middle of a well-traveled area. Use costumed people to pass out information. Publicity stunts can be used to double a program's publicity. Create "extemporaneous happenings" and while the crowd forms, pass out leaflets and spread the word. Create a core group of people with extensive information about the program that will then speak to the campus clubs and other organizations. One-to-one contact is time consuming but is often the most productive means of publicity.

#### Utilize Other Programs

Have the master of ceremonies at an event make an announcement about your program. Have a lucky ticket drawing with the winner receiving a ticket to your program. Co-sponsor some events with other organizations – there are more people to get the world out.

#### **Teaser Campaigns**

Use teasers in the form of ads, posters, buttons or pins to begin a publicity campaign. A teaser campaign usually happens several weeks before the program and is calculated to arouse curiosity by being mysterious – such as leaking one word a week until the entire program title is complete.

# Resources: Where to Get it Done

The Office of Student Activities is your first stop to find resources for marketing your event. We can provide you with the following and so much more!

Concourse Banners Posters Table Tents

Sidewalk Chalking Catwalk Banners

Crafty stuff like paper, paints, markers and copy services

# **Seven Rules for Successful Publicity**

# 1. Weber's Law: There is never enough publicity.

When was the last time you had to turn people away? For every full house, there are hundreds of disasters. Yet in all the less successful events, someone thought they had done enough. If you live by the concept that there is no such thing as "too much" publicity, you will have taken a giant step toward eliminating empty seats.

# 2. Good publicity helps, bad publicity hurts.

There are hundreds of ways to publicize anything. You have to be sure to stay away from images, thoughts, words, that will keep people from attending your event. If you've sat through three mind numbing lectures today, you're not likely to be thrilled by a notice on a bulletin board that reads:

At 8:00 p.m. tonight, Mr. Ken Weber will give a talk about hypnosis. The presentation will be followed by a question and answer session.

Psychology majors are encouraged to attend.

Doesn't exactly get your hormones flowing. In fact, publicity like this will keep students in front of Star Trek re-runs. How do you avoid negative publicity? See rule number three:

# 3. Sell the Sizzle, not the Steak.

That's an old advertising adage, and it's still true. The notice above gave the facts, the steak. But it's the sizzle that makes your mouth water.

Get your mind blown! Come and watch your friends do amazing things! Tonight at 8, top hypnotist Ken Weber will use student volunteers in his outstanding demonstration of the powers of the mind. Don't miss this informative, hilarious experience!

Changing a dry notice into an enticing invitation isn't easy. It takes a little thought. But it can be learned. Just remember to –

# 4. Push the "HOT" Buttons.

What do students want? Fun, love, money, rock 'n roll, excitement, something new. You booked the event because it delivers some or all of these things. Find your "hook" and use it to reel 'em in.

# 5. Build Enthusiasm.

You plan an event because you think it is going to be special. Stimulate your committee to spread the excitement. Be sure you have a core group who thinks this event is something no living college student could possibly miss. Tell everyone you'll be there, and you'll be looking for them. If you've had the program before, remind all the idiots who missed it the first time that they are idiots, and their license to breathe should be revoked if they miss it this time. Word-of-mouth is the strongest publicity on the planet.

## 6. Use Everything.

If you've booked an experienced, professional act, you should receive professionally designed publicity material from them. Use it. Use it all. Then go out and make your own. Lots of it. Remember rule #1.

## 7. Lead Them By The Hand.

On the day of the big event, most students still don't know about it. Or they think it's next week. Or they forgot. Now's the time to let out all the stops. Make announcements every ten minutes. Do skits in the cafeteria. Send your committee, yes, literally lead them by hand into your super special event.