



*Basingstoke  
and Deane*

# **THE GUIDE** to Marketing

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing is seen by many voluntary groups as an optional and expensive luxury that they can manage without. However, for most organisations, marketing is a necessity that can be inexpensive, and should always be good value for money. Effective marketing can help you achieve your business objectives, by putting your customers at the centre of your business and applying communications, research, planning, and analysis.

This guide aims to give practical advice to local organisations (many voluntary), who do not have specialist marketing staff, and have a limited budget for marketing or promotion.

## 2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Within the guide, the use of marketing jargon is as limited as possible. However, it is useful to define the terms used.

**Customer** - a broad term for a person or organisation for whom you provide facilities/products/services, whether paid for directly, or free of charge.

**Product** - whatever you offer your customers - buildings, programmes, services, events - paid for, or free of charge.

**Promotion** - the act of telling customers, or potential customers, about your products.

**Target market** - the people or companies to whom you are directing your communications.

**Place** - how customers get access to your products.

### 3. WHY USE MARKETING?

Many people see marketing just in terms of promotion - telling people what you are offering. However, marketing, in its widest sense, can be much more than this. It can be used to:

- find out what local people think about your event/programme/service
- offer a new service
- adjust your prices eg. seasonal discounts
- change the timing of an event or activity
- improve the helpfulness of your staff
- analyse the competition for your products

#### Marketing can:

- help you get more profitable business
- help you achieve your financial targets
- develop improved communication with customers
- improve your organisation's image

#### "The Marketing Mix"

This involves combinations of the following: **product, price, place and promotion**

Some organisations put more emphasise on one element. For example, a budget hotel chain markets based on its low price, while a five star hotel leads on its product. Dotcom companies emphasise the 'place', for example, their website. You have to determine the right mix for your organisation and, be aware that this may change.

### 4. GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS

Gathering information, especially about your customers, is probably one of the most important functions of marketing. This is often called research and can be done formally or informally.

#### Why do research?

- to find out exactly who your customers are, where they live, how old they are etc in order to establish any common factors. This is called a 'customer profile'
- to find out what your customers think of your facilities/services etc
- to collect ideas for improving your products
- to find out how to attract new customers
- to establish whether you have competition and, if so, what it offers
- to keep up-to-date in your field/market
- to anticipate future trends

#### How to research?

You do not necessarily need to employ expensive market research consultants in order to obtain feedback from your customers. Useful information can be gathered by:

- talking to customers informally
- researching customers' opinions or a suggestion scheme
- having a group discussion with some of your customers
- reading articles in journals, to see what other people are doing

- talking to colleagues/competitors/other providers and sharing information
- conducting a simple survey yourself, or approaching a college for a student project

Background information is available from a variety of sources (eg census information from the Borough Council or the Office for National Statistics).

#### Tips for writing a questionnaire:

- keep it as simple and as easy to follow as possible.
- if you are surveying a large number of people, use both multiple choice questions, and tick boxes, as much as possible
- if it is a survey for self-completion, lay-out, and very clear instructions are important
- before writing the questions, think carefully about the information you want to collect. This will help you to frame the questions
- don't collect information that you are not going to use
- try to put the questions in a logical order  
This will help the person completing the survey to understand what you are trying to achieve
- ask the important questions early. Questionnaires are not always fully completed
- ask the personal questions at the end. They may put people off, if asked too early in the process
- be aware of the Data Protection Act and do not ask for names/addresses/telephone numbers, unless you explain what you are going to do with the information, and how long it will be kept

## Customer Segmentation

You should target customers who you think will buy, and not use a 'blanket' approach. You can 'segment' (split up) customers using the following criteria.

- age range
- gender
- income/employment category
- type of housing
- geographic location
- lifestyles (hobbies/pastimes)
- why they buy your products
- how much they spend

## Building Relationships with your customers

Keeping existing customers is much cheaper, and easier, than trying to create new customers. Try to keep your customers loyal, through good service and quality products. Complaints must be taken seriously and customers often become more loyal if you deal efficiently with their complaints.

## The loyalty ladder

Move your customers up the loyalty ladder until they become your advocates. The stages are:-

- Unknown customer
- Target customer – someone who receives information about your organisation
- Prospect – someone who is considering buying
- Customer – someone who makes a purchase
- Regular customer – someone who buys from you regularly
- Advocate – someone who recommends your organisation

Recommendation can be the most successful way of persuading others to buy, so it is worth developing relationships with your customers, to turn them into advocates. Schemes such as 'Introduce a Friend' can develop this process.

## Your products and services

Most products have some kind of lifecycle, which can often be extended by restyling or repackaging, to keep it up-to-date. Again, this is an area where it helps to seek advice from your customers.

In order to distinguish your products from those of your competitors, you will need to define your 'Unique Selling Points' (USP). If it is difficult to find USPs, do something that 'adds value' to your products. This will differentiate them from your competitors and products and thus create an advantage.

In order to promote the product, you also need to be aware of its features and the benefits to the customers. For example, the features of a gym are its size, the type of equipment etc, whereas the benefits to the customer of using a gym are: being healthier, fitter, feeling good about themselves etc. To promote your products, concentrate on highlighting the benefits.

## 5. PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS

To plan a successful campaign, you should:

- draw up a profile of your target market
- establish constraints, budget etc
- investigate when, and how, you want to reach them (for example time of year and mail shot)
- select appropriate media and negotiate prices
- design and plan your creative approach
- ensure systems are in place to respond to customers, and that colleagues are aware of the campaign

The four stages in the process of buying a product are:

1. attention (notice the product)
2. interest (find out more about it)
3. desire (want it)
4. action (buy it)

A promotional campaign should take the customer through these stages, from the launch of a new product through to increasing sales of an established product.

### Promotional tools

The tools that can be used as part of the promotional campaign are:

- leaflets
- posters
- adverts in newspapers/magazines
- adverts on radio/TV
- direct mail/e-mail
- exhibitions
- open days/seminars
- personal selling
- money-off coupons/pricing offers
- public relations
- website

In order to decide which of these to use, consider the following:

- cost
- suitability - (to target audience/customers)
- creative suitability to your product
- reach - (how many people see the promotion?)
- frequency - (how often do people see the promotion?)

### Tips for promotional materials

- get the information across clearly - keep it simple
- eye-catching can be plain. It does not have to be 'over the top'
- design to suit your audience and products
- get someone to read it before you print it
- how quickly will it date?
- how will you distribute the literature? It's no use in a box in a cupboard
- printers will also do graphic design
- shop around for printing quotes. They vary enormously

### Websites

Websites can be relatively cost - effective ways of marketing your products. The web can certainly be used for promotion and advertising. It can also be used for:

- informal market research
- selling your products
- customers support and information
- giving out information about product availability
- maintaining relationships with customers

### Tips for websites

- keep the website as simple as possible. Not all customers have state-of-the-art computers, and they will not wait for hours while your site loads
- the website should be easy and quick to navigate
- the website should reflect any corporate image, or branding
- it should include an e-mail address so that customers can contact you easily
- the site should be kept up-to-date and changed regularly, to keep it interesting
- register with Net directories to ensure your site is publicised

### E-mail

Badly targeted e-mail is the same as 'junk mail'. However, e-mail is a quick and inexpensive way to keep in touch with customers in order to update them on your latest products, prices, availability etc.

## 6. MEDIA

Getting a mention in the local paper or on the radio can be a free, effective way of obtaining publicity. Obviously, this is difficult to rely on as journalists and editors will only print stories they think people want to hear about. **So your story has to be interesting.**

### News/Press releases and the local media

- make sure you include all the relevant information. times, places, people etc, but leave out unnecessary detail
- make it interesting by giving the media 'angles', for example local heroes, size of the event has doubled, community facilities for young people
- be positive, but avoid the hard sell
- follow up the press release with a telephone call, to clarify and enthuse
- where possible, get to know the local journalist who covers community news

## 7. SPONSORSHIP AND INCOME FROM ADVERTISING

### Sponsorship

There are two main reasons why companies will give your organisation money:

1. Companies benefit from increased publicity in the community. They will sponsor events, buildings and publications if they receive acknowledgement and association.
2. Companies will give money to community groups as 'charitable donations'. For this the company usually requires an acknowledgement, but not a large amount of publicity.

Note: Other methods of funding, such as grant aid, are outlined in other guides in this series.

To gain sponsorship from companies is a difficult process, which requires determination and the ability to 'sell' your product. The stages involved are:

- identify and research companies that may be appropriate, and may wish to be associated with your organisation
- identify an appropriate contact from the company
- personalise what you have to offer to suit the company you are approaching
- write to your contact with your offer
- follow up a week later with a telephone call if they seem interested, try to arrange a face-to-face meeting to win them over
- throughout the period of the sponsorship, keep the sponsor involved and informed. They may wish to extend their sponsorship

### Income from advertising

There are many opportunities for community groups to gain some income from advertising.

Potential exists in the following areas:

- advertising hoardings on the outside of your building. To find out whether this is possible, contact one of the main outdoor advertising sales companies who can be found in yellow pages such as Maiden/More O'Farrell. This may require planning permission
- a 'Local Traders' noticeboard within the centre. Write to local traders explaining what you are offering, and how much it costs. Sell the benefits to them (ie a highly visible place to advertise to the local community, and good value for money etc)
- offering advertising space in any newsletters you produce. This could offset the printing costs

## 8. PLANNING AND CONTROL OF MARKETING

### Planning marketing

Planning ahead for marketing is beneficial. Usually a marketing plan and budget is prepared each year. This does not need to be lengthy, but should give enough detail, so that anyone within the group could carry out the work involved. The plan should also be flexible, and allow for new opportunities.

### The plan should include

1. Objectives - what you are trying to achieve
2. Action Plan - how you are going to do it
3. Time - when you will do it
4. Budget - how much it will cost
5. Target Audience - who the marketing is aimed at
6. A method for monitoring your plan, and assessing your success

### Useful contacts for advice and training courses

1. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council  
Leisure Marketing Officer **01256 845384**
2. Chartered Institute of Marketing **01628 427500**

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