

## Creating Advertisements

Different advertising media offer different creative opportunities, which will also influence the final product. Although some organisations are happy to prepare their ads in-house, most benefit from the assistance of a trained professional.

Advertising agencies provide a full range of services, including basic market research, the creative development of ads, an effective range of media for ads, and negotiation with the media. Some agencies will undertake a certain amount of community service advertising, or agree to sponsor an organisation and provide in-kind sponsorship in terms of ad creation or production.

Local newspapers and radio and television stations may also assist with the production of advertisements.

## Placing Advertisements

You can either book advertisements directly with the media or through an advertising agency. Local print and broadcast media are quite happy to deal directly with advertisers. Larger organisations may require bookings to come through an agency (agencies are often able to negotiate better prices). A telephone call to the advertising department will provide the necessary information.

You will need to put everything in writing and be specific about:

- ◆ Print:
  - the name of the publication;
  - the date(s) you want the ad to appear;
  - the size of the ad;
  - the exact format and wording;



- whether colour is to be used;
  - the location of the ad (where on the page, in what particular section, etc.);
  - restate the price you have been quoted to confirm it is correct.
- ◆ Broadcast:
- the name of the station;
  - the specific program(s) in which the ad is to appear;
  - the date(s) you want the ad to appear;
  - the length of the ad;
  - the exact format and wording;
  - restate the price you have been quoted to confirm it is correct.

## Publicity and Promotions

**P**ublicity is defined as:

*news or information about an organisation, including its products and services, that is published on behalf of the organisation, but is not paid for by them.*

Although it is not paid for, publicity is certainly not free. Time and effort and cost may be involved in organising publicity activities — and there is no guarantee that they will result in good coverage in the media.

However, the coverage which results from a well-executed publicity story can bring an organisation a level of exposure they could never afford at commercial advertising rates.

## ***What Makes Publicity Unique***

Although the public may be sceptical of advertising, publicity often seems more like news. The same individuals who make it a point to refuse to read or watch advertisements will watch a news item about the arrival of a new animal at the zoo or a 'documentary' about the making of the latest Hollywood special effects film.

The things that make publicity unique are:

- ◆ Editors, program managers, or producers have control over the publicity item. They decide whether or not to use it, when, and in what context.
- ◆ Editors and producers can decide to use all, none, or part of a publicity release. Once you give the media release or story to the media to use at their discretion, you lose control over the final product.
- ◆ Publicity has a much higher level of public credibility than other forms of promotion.
- ◆ Publicity often picks up the authority and prestige of the media vehicle in which it appears.
- ◆ Publicity may reach and influence people who are inaccessible through other promotional activities. Sponsorship decision-makers and celebrities who would probably not notice advertisements may take note of a publicity item.
- ◆ A review will carry more weight with some people than an advertisement. Unfortunately a negative review may well have a negative impact.



- ◆ Publicity costs are small when compared with the amount of possible return. An organisation with a limited promotion budget can make publicity a significant part of the strategic planning.

### ***Types of Publicity***

Publicity includes a variety of activities designed to raise the visibility of an organisation. As a general rule these activities are oriented toward the media, so they can be incorporated into programs and publication.

The three most common forms of publicity are:

- ◆ news releases;
- ◆ feature articles;
- ◆ photographs.

Writing a news release or a feature story means you have to identify something about your organisation that is interesting or newsworthy.

- ◆ Is anything timely taking place, such as a new exhibition or the opening of the season?
- ◆ Is there anything taking place with a 'local' angle, such as a visiting expert or the arrival of new products from overseas?
- ◆ Is anything taking place which would be of interest to a particular audience? For example, an exhibition on Antarctica would appeal to anyone who ever visited or worked there.
- ◆ Is there any aspect of your operation which would be of special interest to people? For example, staff with interesting qualifications or background?

## ***Allocating Resources for Publicity Activities***

Because publicity is not difficult, and the rewards can be significant, there is sometimes the temptation to focus too much time and attention on publicity activities.

It is important to be realistic about the publicity potential of your organisation. A major cinema company or theatre group may have a considerable potential for a regular, planned publicity program. For a small regional historical society, however, the opportunities for regular publicity will be limited. Although whatever publicity they do receive will be important, it is unlikely that a sustained program can be mounted.

Publicity is usually a time-intensive activity, requiring considerable effort for:

- ◆ developing a publicity program;
- ◆ identifying potential activities or events;
- ◆ organising activities;
- ◆ preparing budgets;
- ◆ co-ordinating volunteers and staff;
- ◆ co-ordinating with management, Board, or Committee members;
- ◆ writing media releases;
- ◆ preparing guest lists, invitations, etc.;
- ◆ hosting the event;
- ◆ recording the event (organising in-house video or photography);
- ◆ answering queries and follow-ups;
- ◆ sending thank you letters and notes;
- ◆ recording effectiveness; and
- ◆ preparing evaluations of activities.



There are professional public relations companies who can organise publicity, but the charges for their services often put them beyond the reach of small organisations. It is important to assess how much publicity your organisation can manage. You need to assess the resources you can realistically allocate to publicity activities in terms of:

- ◆ human resources;
- ◆ time; and
- ◆ budget.

Many small organisations or non profit groups have limited numbers of staff and volunteers. Diverting them from core activities to work on publicity may not be in the best long-term interest of the organisation, and may conflict with their commitment or motivation in working for the organisation. On the other hand, most volunteers enjoy the prospect of working with the media, and enjoy meeting celebrities. Many of them will be prepared to put extra effort into these types of publicity activities.

## Public Relations

Generally speaking, key publics can be divided into two broad categories:

- ◆ internal public — staff, volunteers, Board and Committee members.
- ◆ external publics:
  - consumers (the target markets for our products);
  - suppliers and distributors;
  - government departments and authorities;
  - the media;
  - sponsors and donors;
  - special interest groups;
  - local community/neighbourhood.

The attitudes of these groups can be measured in various ways — including formal research and informal contact with opinion leaders or key individuals from each group. Then specific public relations objectives can be set for each segment of the public.

### ***Internal Public Relations Programs***

Dissatisfied staff can successfully undermine even the most expensive advertising and promotions campaigns. If they do not feel valued by the organisation they only do the minimum necessary to avoid being terminated — or even worse, they won't be overly concerned about the provision of quality customer service.

Volunteers may start out with a high level of enthusiasm, but if they feel taken advantage of, or that the organisation is mismanaged, they soon lose that initial enthusiasm. They may do more than just drop out, they may feel strongly enough to air their grievances publicly.

Board members, similarly, may become disenchanted with an organisation and leave. If they express their concerns to others, word may soon travel through business circles with an impact on both the ability of the organisation to recruit appropriate board members, and also a negative impact on sponsorship, funding grants, or other support.

Some internal public relations opportunities are:

- ◆ newsletters or house journals;
- ◆ special reports and briefing papers for staff;
- ◆ visits to the facility for employees' families;
- ◆ notice boards and posters;
- ◆ induction programs;
- ◆ regularly scheduled meetings and seminars — full staff gatherings, departmental or small group meetings;
- ◆ suggestion boxes;



- ◆ business development programs — for new ideas, products, etc.;
- ◆ production of company videos;
- ◆ awards programs for employees;
- ◆ public information circulated to staff;
- ◆ social clubs;
- ◆ special events (annual dinners, etc.).

### ***External Public Relations Programs***

External public relations programs focus on a variety of external organisations, including government departments, the media, suppliers and distributors, sponsors and donors, special interest groups, and the local community in which the organisation is located.

The types of activities which can be undertaken to reach external publics include the use of:

- ◆ **Written material** — media releases, articles, feature stories, publications, annual reports, catalogues, general newsletters, magazines, direct mail letters, and circulars.
- ◆ **Audio-visual and electronic material** — films, Internet Home page programs, audio and video cassettes, prerecorded information on telephone numbers, and such things as helplines and special information lines set up for blockbuster events, etc.
- ◆ **Interviews and speeches** — involvement of staff and volunteers in conferences and conventions, presenting scholarly papers, being interviewed on radio and television, speaking at school careers nights, or at Rotary, Lions, or Red Cross meetings.

- ◆ **Public service announcements** — as noted previously not-for-profit organisations can make use of public service announcements on television and radio to promote their organisations and special projects or events.
- ◆ **Events** — planning and staging events is always a popular way of reaching various publics. The more original the event, the more likely it will receive coverage.

## *Handling a Crisis*

Sooner or later, something is bound to go wrong. And when it does, it is important to react calmly, professionally, and quickly. A public relations crisis can be something which will generate public sympathy and concern — a fire or flood, for example. Or it could be something which will damage the organisation's standing, such as a scandal, theft, or serious accident.

It is important to train senior management and board members to deal with the media in the event of a crisis.

The rules for handling an emergency are broad, but simple:

- ◆ Don't try to run away — Pretending that nothing has happened, refusing to take phone calls, or trying to evade the media will just make the situation worse.
- ◆ Be helpful — It is also important to at least 'appear' helpful. Don't stonewall. The media is investigating potential news — that's their job. Don't comment until you have all the facts.
- ◆ Don't respond to third person situations or hypotheticals — Never, never respond to third person situations — for example, *we have heard that someone has reported to the police that something has been removed from your gallery*. Also avoid answering hypotheticals, such as *If the censor is approached and does decide the film was not classified appropriately, would you consider cancelling the screening?*



- ◆ Answer truthfully — Although it may not always be the easiest approach, it is important to tell the truth. Lying, hedging the facts, or deliberately misleading the press will not work. A determined reporter will discover the ruse and then may put a more negative ‘spin’ on the story than is really necessary.
- ◆ Stay calm!!! — At least put on the appearance of staying calm. Your apparent composure may help those around you stay in control of themselves.