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| **Developing a Marketing Strategy** |

Getting the message out about your group or organisation – its aims, activities and attitudes – is crucial in ensuring the public know what your group does, what it believes in and what it is working toward. The idea of producing a marketing strategy can sound a bit daunting. However, developing a marketing strategy you can use and improve on over time is as simple as following a few steps and answering a few questions.

Listed below is a series of steps your NH could work through to produce a marketing strategy. Your group can return to these steps each time it has something to market or communicate.

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| **Seven steps towards a marketing strategy** |

**1. Know what you are marketing.**
The first step towards an effective strategy is for your group to know **what** it is marketing.

The **"what"** could be as straightforward as wanting to attract new members, or as complex as your NHs objections to proposed funding cuts that will impact on your community.

It could also be a simple round-up of your house's activities during the past month to keep your members and supporters up-to-date.

Whatever the reason may be, your NH needs to be able focus quickly and clearly on it so it can then develop effective ways of communicating it.

**2. Develop the message you want to communicate.**
When you know what it is you are marketing, the next stage is to develop the message you want to use to communicate that information.

The messages you might want to convey can be separated into two types: general and specific.

**General messages** can be classified as those which you want to convey most of the time.

General messages relate to underlying themes, motivations, values and attitudes including:

* Your activities, what you do and why.
* Your beliefs, stances or philosophies.
* Your aims - what the NH is striving to do or be.

Once these general themes or messages are clear, include them in as many of your communications as possible.

**Specific messages** are those messages you wish to convey that are directly related to a certain situation, activity, occasion or event. When you need to develop a specific message, consideration should be given to:

* What is the specific message you are trying to convey?

 (For example - events, annual fundraising raffle or a successful funding application.)

* What are the important details that need to be included in the message?

(For example- date, time, location of event, details about how funding will be used?)

* Are there different messages for different audiences and target groups?

(For example – NH volunteers may be needed to help with event and this will need to be included in any messages directed at them)

Returning to the example relating to proposed funding cuts, it is not enough to say your objective is to simply be critical of the proposed changes. Your NH needs to spell out its message in more detail:

* What does the NH do?
* How will the proposed cuts affect your activities and the people you work with?
* Are there any alternatives your NH thinks the government should explore?
* What are you going to do about it (for example, meet with the government, send in a submission, etc) and is there any action you want the public to take?

If what you want to communicate is a little simpler – like a round-up of your group's activities in the past month – your main aim may be just to keep your valued contacts "in the loop".

It could be a good idea to start developing short sound bites or "quotable quotes" to increase how effectively you get your message out; especially through the media.

For more information, refer to the help sheets [Why Sound Bites are Important](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1539) and [Creating a Tasty Sound Bite](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1613) at the Marketing, Media and Post Centre.

**3. Identify the audience for your message.**
Who are you communicating with? It's no use having something to say if you are talking to the wrong people, so you need to be clear on the target audience for your message. Are they small niche audiences or larger groups of people?

Usually there is more than one target audience for your message – for example, objecting to funding cuts could involve targeting messages at a number of different groups of people:

* Your own members, supporters and volunteers.
* Other similar organisations or peak bodies.
* Other community groups that you work with regularly
* The politicians considering the funding changes.
* The wider public in order to increase pressure on the government not to make the changes.

 Essentially, you need to know who you are aiming your message at and, if there is more than one target audience, prioritise those audiences in order of how important it is they hear your message.

**4. Identify the best method to communicate to target audience/s.**
Once you know your message and the people you want to hear it, your group has to choose the right way to convey that message to your target audience/s.

There are many ways of communicating your message - from flyers, banners, stalls and newsletters, to local and metropolitan media (radio, newspapers and TV), letters to politicians or the media, and even the Internet and email.
What your group needs to do is use the right communications channel to reach the desired target audience.

Using the funding cuts example again, there are a number of communication channels a NH could use to get its message to its target audiences:

* Through their monthly printed or electronic newsletter to members, supporters, donors and volunteers.
* Through a statement or media release on the organisation's website - or printed and pinned on noticeboards for those groups it works with.
* By speaking to the local, state or national media about the issue and the organisation's stance on it, the message will go out to the wider public. (Established relationships with journalists will be a help here).
* By writing letters to relevant politicians or decision-makers (as well as urging supporters to do the same) and releasing a copy of that letter to the media, the message will be conveyed to those considering tax legislation changes.
* Other options could include a letterbox drop of flyers urging people to take action or information pamphlets at the organisation's office or by taking a stall at a public event.

Think about both the actual and preferred channels your target audiences might use and challenge whether you are planning to use the right ones for maximum impact. You can focus your communications on one specific channel if it is a niche group you are trying to reach (for example, does your target audience read certain magazines or listen to certain radio stations?), or direct it at a wider set of channels if it has across-the-board interest.

**5 .Develop an action plan**

Each marketing strategy can now be broken down into specific action plans, or the actual things, the NH plans to do in order to meet its objectives.

Each action program should specify:

* What will be done (for example, a direct mail-out to attract new members to your group)?
* When it will be done (started, reviewed and completed)?
* Who is responsible for doing it?
* How much it will cost?
* What resources might be required
* What will the measurable projected outcome be (for example, 50 new members from the mail-out)?

When you've finished this you'll have a detailed plan to follow that will assist you to keep on track.

**6. Monitor, review and evaluate**
As your NH endeavours to get its message across to its target audience, it needs to make sure it keeps track of the progress of its communications. For example:

* Which media outlets gave certain interviews or media releases a run?
* How much awareness did the letterbox drop, or your stall raise?

If your marketing strategy involves a budget, it is important to build in regular reviews to keep track of how much it is costing and to avoid overspending in the early stages of the strategy.

 By developing a detailed action plan, you will be able to assess progress at regular intervals and tick off specific tasks as they are completed on time or on budget.

It is important to build some simple evaluation measures into the marketing strategy – for example, levels of media coverage; feedback from those targeted by your communications strategy and number of responses gained . This evaluation will help you assess how successful you have been in meeting your objectives.

When reviewing your strategy also look at what your group learned and what could possibly be improved next time.

**Adapted to the NH context by S.Birch**

**Source:** [www.ourcommunity.com.au](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/)

[**http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing\_article.jsp?articleId=1601**](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1601)