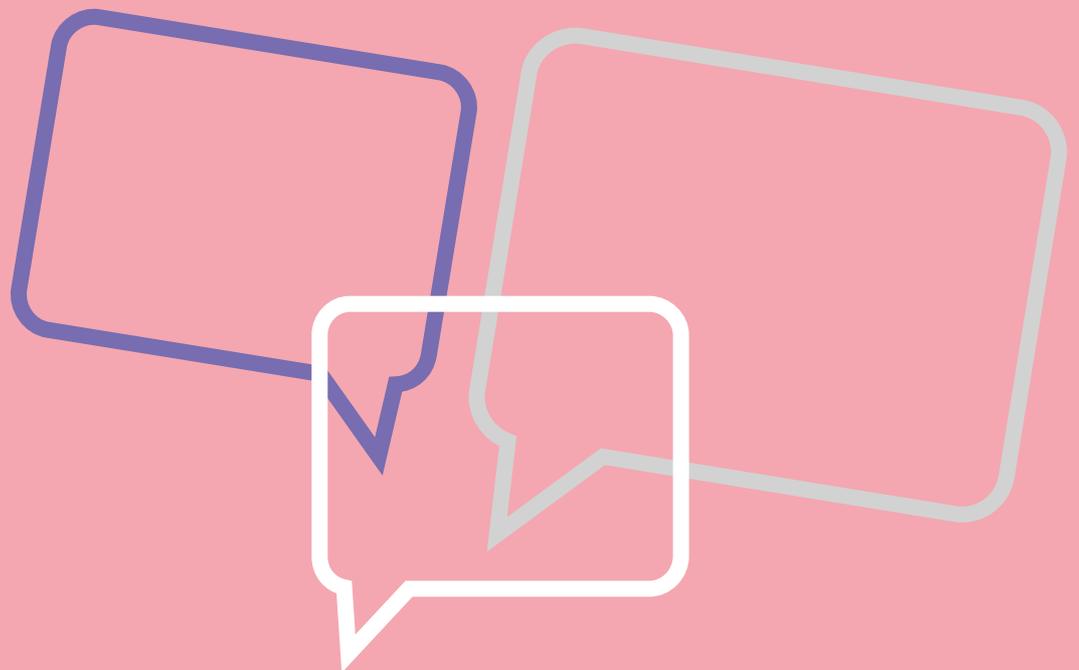


Getting your messages right



Understanding the people your organisation needs to talk to and how to communicate with them can help you to achieve your organisation's goals.

From fundraising to volunteering to using your services or attending your events, it is vital that you “market” what you offer and develop messages about your organisation that will resonate with the audiences that matter to you.

What is marketing?

The term “marketing” means developing a product or service and encouraging people to “buy” it. Sometimes this might be about getting someone to spend money, but you can also use marketing to encourage people to engage with you in other ways such as making a donation, volunteering, attending events or taking up a free service.

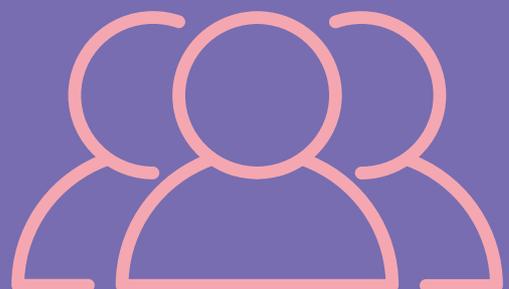
The key principles of marketing include:

- **Understanding your customers or audiences and what motivates them** – you can use this insight to choose effective channels to reach them and to make the most convincing case for your organisation.
- **Building a relationship with your audiences** so you can increase their involvement with you over time – for example by offering them something free of charge if they join your mailing list.
- **Being more recognisable through a strong brand** – an immediately identifiable logo, design and ‘tone of voice’ for your organisation will make you more memorable.

What is a target audience?

Your target audience is a group of people you want to communicate with. Identifying and focusing on target audiences will help you to think about the best ways to reach and engage them and make the most of your resources.

For example, the target audiences of a community-owned arts centre might include the local council, national arts funding bodies, residents, local partners such as disability charities and schools in the area. Each of these groups may need to hear different messages about the arts centre. Local residents may need to be encouraged to attend an exhibition, while national funders may need to know how the centre meets its funding criteria.



How to identify your target audiences

List the types of people that you currently communicate or work with or would like to communicate with in the future. These people could support or participate in your work or they could hold your cause back in some way. You can define or list them by demographic characteristics or anything else they may have in common - they may be individuals or organisations.

For example you could focus on:

- Age group
- Male/female
- Culture/ethnic group
- Location – where do they live or work?
- Socio-economic group – this could influence their attitudes and interests
- Engagement with you – do they already support you or have they never heard of you?
- Occupation – are they in work/education/ at home? Perhaps you want to focus on one profession?
- Interests and life stage – such as young families or recent arrivals to the UK

Having a list of audiences can make it more manageable to sort them into a few key groups that you can communicate with in a similar way. In the following example for a day centre for the elderly the organisation's audiences have been categorised into three key groups.

Day centre for older people

Supporters/funders

- Council social care commissioning team
- Councillors with social care brief
- Local MP
- Individual donors in local community – esp. carers of service users and those aged 50+

Service users

- Residents in three mile radius aged 75+ especially those recently widowed/ with disabilities
- Children or carers of those aged 75+ in three mile radius

Partners

- Local Age UK branch outreach team
- Local older people's team
- Ministers and outreach volunteers at places of worship within three mile radius

Understanding your audiences

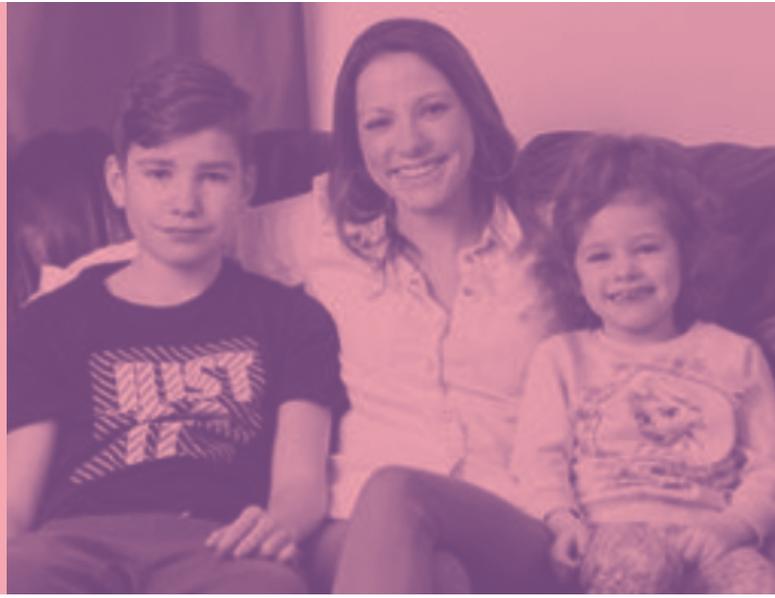
Think about the impact you want to have on your target audiences and what you can do to influence their views or get them to take action. You are likely to have some knowledge of your audiences but it may be helpful to find out more so you can shape your messages in a way that will appeal to their values, interests and needs. This can be achieved through a survey, group discussions or one-to-one conversations. Consider:

- What does your audience need and how can your product or service offer meet that need? Are your audiences facing practical barriers such as being short on time or money? In the example of the older people's centre, perhaps potential service users have become isolated due to mobility issues: a free pick-up service could overcome this barrier.
- How much does your audience know about your organisation and its work? How do they currently perceive you, do they hold any prejudices about your cause? Perhaps they are in the dark about the benefits you offer?
- Where can you reach your audiences? What media do they read/watch/listen to? Are any of your partner organisations already communicating with them? Are there events or venues where you can reach them in the local community?

Get to know your target audiences

It can help to imagine individuals from your target audiences so you can get 'under their skin' and come up with more effective ideas for communicating with them. The following example is for a community campaign to refurbish a 1930s lido and build a fitness centre.

You can use this format to create profiles for the audiences you would like to communicate with.



Kate, aged 34, mum of two

- possible lido supporter

Family

Tom is 11, Amelie is 4, Kate's husband Rick is a broadband engineer

Work

Kate works part-time at the local hospital

Hopes and dreams

Would like to lose weight/get fitter

Wants her kids to be healthy and stronger swimmers than her

Wants to keep in touch with other mums once kids at school

Needs

To find somewhere for kids to do swimming lessons

To entertain kids in school holidays

To find more work hours/another part-time job

Hangs out at...

Local cafe and park with other mums

Local nursery and primary school

Health centre



Worries

Won't be able to afford holidays once both kids at school – needs more activities in local area

How to fill her days once both kids at school

Money's tight: membership may not be affordable?

We want Kate to think...

Lido offers lots of leisure opportunities for me and my family

Lido could bring employment opportunities for me

We want Kate to...

Make a donation/crowd-fund contribution

Take part in fundraising challenges – such as swimming or baking

Take out membership when lido/fitness centre opens

Media

Local commercial radio station

Council magazine/local newspaper

Mumsnet

Local community Facebook group

Through her workplace – noticeboards/staff newsletters

Marketing

What are messages?

A message is a point of view or piece of information you want to get across. It should convey how your product or service meets the needs of the target audience group it is directed at. For example, if your community centre helps teenage parents in the local area, a key message for parents would be that you provide anonymous, drop-in support to parents.

How to create strong messages

- Think about all the possible messages you want to get across. What is the most important information you need to tell your audiences? Sum each message up in a simple sentence. For example: 'the building could bring £3m more into our city's economy every year'.
- Choose the three-to-five most important messages and then review them. Are you appealing to people's emotions and logic? Are you responding to what you know about your audiences' needs, worries or hopes? Could your language be simpler or more direct? Test your key messages by asking your target audiences what they think.

- Don't forget to tell your audiences what you want them to do! If you want people to sign a petition or attend an event, make sure your messages ask them to take action and give them the details they need.
- Use your messages consistently across all your communications – this makes people more likely to take them in.

What's your elevator pitch?

A good way to practice your key messages is the "elevator pitch". This is how you would sell yourself if you ran into someone important in the lift of a high-rise building. The following example is based around someone who has met a journalist from the local paper. Use this format to practice your own pitch.

Hi, my name is Mo Ahmad.

I'm from Kicks for All football centre in Hackney.

We know a big issue in our local community is that children from different ethnic groups don't mix much, which can lead to prejudice.

We address this problem by running our football centre, which children from all local schools can attend.

We need more volunteers to help coach the children and provide refreshments. Could you help us to raise awareness?

We can provide a story of one of our volunteers for your paper.



How to get your messages out

Once you have a good understanding of the audiences you want to reach and clear messages that you want to communicate, it's time to get the word out! Your audience research should help you identify lots of ways to reach them. For example, residents that live in a three-mile radius of your organisation could be sent a leaflet or young people you engage with could be reached through social media.

Below is an overview of channels and tactics you can use.



Distribute leaflets and posters

- Post or deliver leaflets to people's homes
- Hand out leaflets at events you are attending
- Put up posters at your building(s) or ask partners to display them
- Run ads in local media



Create your own channels

- Set up a website and keep it up-to-date with news
- Send out regular emails to your contacts
- Write a regular blog and encourage the head of your organisation to contribute to it
- Hold an information event/open day



Use TV, radio and press

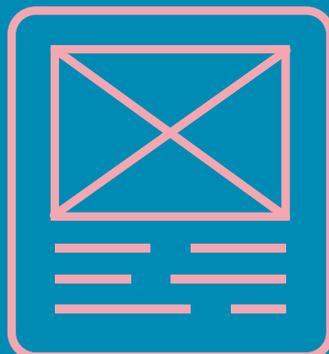
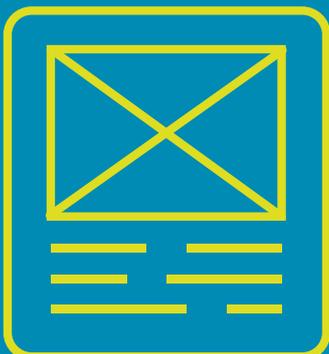
- Send out a press release to local newspapers/magazines/radio/TV
- Offer to write a feature for your local paper or call a phone-in show
- Put staff, volunteers, supporters and service users who are happy to speak to the media forward for interview
- Speak at a local event



Use social media channels

- Follow relevant Twitter accounts and join local Facebook groups - comment on or share relevant posts
- Use your social media accounts to share news and keep track of the content people engage with most
- Be interactive and conversational - thank people, offer advice or information, or ask a question

See Media Trust's 'Writing a press release and pitching it to the media guide' for a press release template



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