

Information Sheet: Promoting your organisation.

Introduction

This information sheet looks at the way you promote your organisation, products and services, and considers what is involved in developing a promotion strategy. Your organisation might choose to promote messages about:

- The benefits of your organisation and its services/products;
- The image of your organisation
- The people involved in the organisation.

A promotion strategy might form part of a wider marketing plan, which should include amongst other elements a customer care strategy. See Social Enterprise Works information sheet on 'Marketing' under the Policy and Strategy section and Social Enterprise Works information sheet 'Customer care guidelines' under the Processes section.

Promotion Strategy

For the promotion strategy to be effective it needs to set out the message to be communicated and the methods for communicating that message. It should include:

- Promotional aims and objectives which set out what, where and how the organisation will promote its activities.
- Who is the target customer/user that you want to communicate with? Where are they and what do they want?
- Clarifying the message – what is being offered and why should they want it/use it? What 'tone' will work best?
- Description of the products or service, particularly any benefits or unique qualities which should be communicated.
- What promotional techniques are most suitable for each of the target markets? What are the cost, frequency and timetable for these techniques?

What are the messages?

If the organisation serves more than one “market” with more than one service or product, there may be more than one message to be promoted. In preparing the message it is useful to consider:

- To which market is the message being communicated?
- What will make this market take notice of the message? I.E what values/interests might it link into? The tone of the message can be “rational” (emphasising value, usefulness, quality...) or it can be “emotional” (emphasising guilt/shame, pleasure/fun etc)
- What image of the organisation should be conveyed through this message? For example, images might be “innovative”, “environmentally sound”, “resourceful” and so on.

Image

The image of the organisation and business is the face it presents to the outside world: it is a major part of the message. It is important to ensure that the image presented is appropriate to the organisation/business and the potential customer/user. Image is reflected in many areas of activity:

- Product and Services: positioning, packaging:
- Business Presentation: Name, logo, stationery. Consider carefully the visual symbols that are placed on letterheads, posters, vans, T-shirts etc...It may be worth “piloting” the graphics to see how potential customers/users respond, and it also may be costs-effective to bring in outside expertise:
- Staff: Physical and professional qualities as seen by customers/users, such as appearance, gestures and language along with skills, experience and knowledge. (see Information Sheet 1 ‘Customer Care Guidelines’)

Promotional Techniques

As with the content of the message, the way it is communicated (Promoted) will depend on the target market or audience. Certain techniques will be more appropriate for certain messages - for example if you wanted to put over the message that young people were welcome at your lively “Youth Café”, you might choose to place a radio advert with a station aimed at youth rather than a direct-mail letter that probably ends up in the bin.

One aspect to consider is whether the promotional techniques should be targeted to non-targeted. Targeted promotion means that it is possible to control or determine broad categories of people who will receive the message, and therefore be sure to reach the target market. Untargeted promotion sends out a message to a large and unspecified to a large and unspecified number of people in the hope that the target market is reached. Examples of targeted promotions are:

- Word-of-mouth/networking – though slow and message may not be clear.
- Videos about the Organisation – Can target distribution but can't ensure it is seen.
- Open – Days/Evenings, Conferences and Lectures – but there is still the question of how you inform the target market of these. Useful for introducing new services and products to an existing market.
- Stalls, exhibitions and shows – time-consuming but often effective.
- Specialist newspapers, journals and magazines- some adverts may be expensive, but may be cost effective. Be careful in the placement of adverts – check what headings they are placed under and ensure they are not placed where they will not be seen or next to something inappropriate.
- Leaflets and Posters – often a good technique if placed where the target market goes.
- Notices in shop windows – targets those in a geographical area.
- Radio – most stations have identified market, including ethnic groups, different age groups.

The following are generally non-targeted promotional techniques:

- Press Release – good for controlling the message but difficult to target
- Newspapers – can control message with adverts: if editorial or article, the message may be distorted though may be free. As with adverts in magazines, check that placement is appropriate.
- Direct mail letters/newsletters, circulars – can have these inserted into local papers or delivered to all homes/businesses
- Directories (e.g. Yellow Pages) – Useful in reaching large market if message likely to stay the same for a long time, may be expensive
- Television – very expensive and need to be careful about image conveyed.
- The choice of promotional techniques will also depend on other considerations:
 - How quickly do you want or need the communication to take place?
 - Whether “Instant impact” is desired :
 - Use AIDA formula: (gain) Attention, (generate) Interest, Desire (offer something) and Action (give opportunity to follow up)

- Use powerful wording in headlines
- Whether the promotion is being carried out jointly with another enterprise or organisation.
- Community involvement and consultation (for example through a special forum, workshops, or user group) is an important way of achieving longer-term promotion.
- Costs and frequencies

Customer Care

The development of customer care policy has been included under promotion as it is an important way for the 'message' to be conveyed. The impression users/customers get in dealing with the organisation will influence future use/purchase and be the subject of 'word-of-mouth' promotion to other potential user/customers.

The customer care policy should set out:

- Clarification of who the customers are: example organisation has a range and these include internal as well as external customers;
- Standards of performance and how these will be achieved (e.g. training, rewards for excellence)
- Tactics for encouraging repeat use/purchase (loyalty schemes, discounts)
- Ways of handling complaints;
- Methods of obtaining feedback from users/customers (monitoring cards, surveys)
- Other relevant policy requirements, such as equalities.