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| **Tips on getting free exposure for your event** |

Having limitless money to spend on expensive publicity, marketing and advertising campaigns is simply a dream for most community groups and not-for-profit organisations.  Because of this, many groups have to use their wits, ingenuity and their contacts to find ways of getting their message out without spending money.

Even groups that have marketing budgets are looking for ways to leverage their money with some free promotion.
Below are a dozen tips on gaining attention for your group without spending money. While many of these tips are money-savers, they also encourage groups to look more widely and be more innovative.

**Word of Mouth**

Word of mouth is still one of the most powerful selling tools because it also comes with a reliable, credible endorsement. The first place to start is with your members and supporters. Use your meetings, regular communications and newsletters to publicise events and encourage everyone to spread the word through their friends and friends of friends.

**"Sell, Sell, Sell"**

Get people who are spreading the word to carry raffle tickets, monetary or auction item donation slips or event invitations so transactions can be completed in one simple operation.

If you do this, make regular checks to see who's done what. What's been sold or who's been signed up. Make sure your group manages the situation and keeps track of any money that needs to come in.

**E-mail**

Your group most likely has e-mail for quick effective communication, but it can also be used as a free marketing tool to promote your group and what it is doing.

* Mass e-mail bulletins can be sent to members/supporters/business partners to let them know about an event (where, when, why, cost, RSVP etc.) Remember not to 'spam', seek the receiver's permission first.
* Your e-mail signature can be used to market an event. It is easy to change the wording so that every e-mail you send promotes an event – date, time, location, price, reason for the event and attractions on the day.
* You can also encourage receivers of your e-mail bulletins and alerts to forward them to other people, or post the details to a site or notice board that might be appropriate. This is the on-line equivalent of word of mouth marketing, and can be surprisingly effective.

**Posters and shop windows**

Posters are particularly effective for local or community events. It is relatively easy to put together an eye-catching design with event details on paper, add colour and stick copies on every power pole and flat wall within ten blocks, but be aware that some councils have by-laws prohibiting it in certain areas. Local shops will usually display your information in their window if you ask politely.

**Signs**

Catch passing trade with a large sign. Many local groups, particularly schools, sporting groups, even CFA and SES branches, get a local real estate firm to donate sign-writing and the use of a sign for a few weeks. Otherwise ask for a volunteer to put their painting skills to the test.

**'What's on' columns – published and on-line**

Local and major newspapers, as well as online portals or sites, have "What's on" sections which publicise information about upcoming events. These columns shouldn't be overlooked; they are usually cheaper than other advertising and convey all the information you need to a wide number of readers. People who read these columns are looking for things to do. They are motivated and looking for options.

What's on columns can be used to target an audience viewing a site or reading a paper – for example, larger Australian cities have weekly street-press or freebie newspapers covering art, music, museums, area events, pub bands and movie times.

**Local Newsletters – organisation, politician or council**

Your group could take advantage of other newsletters circulating in the local area to publicise an event to a wider audience.

* Find out the editors of newsletters you know of that may be vaguely linked to your area, or your area of interest.
* Most politicians put out regular newsletters to highlight what they've been doing for their electorate - some contain sections on upcoming events.
* Councils often produce quite detailed bulletins for local residents – telling them what's happening and what's coming up in the area. If you are well-organised, you can get your event listed in a publication delivered to every household in the area.

**Newspapers – local and major**

Approach newspapers on your media contact list (for more information refer to the help sheet [Creating a Media Contact Book](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1515)) with a pitch for a story on your upcoming event.

* Your local newspaper is always looking for 'news' to fill its pages, so with the right pitch and plenty of time you should be able to get an article in. Send a press release a month or so in advance with professionally prepared photos and letterhead, then ring and talk to a journalist in a bid to get a story and picture in the paper.
* It is much harder to get into the metropolitan papers, but by no means impossible. If you have a big name involved in your event, you may get some pre-publicity or a snippet from the columnists.  See if there is any way you can link to other current news.

**Radio – community and major**

There are a few ways your group can get its message out on the radio, with local or community radio more likely to give your locally-based event the best run.

* For community radio, find out if they are willing to interview you about your event and your group or if they are able to give your event a "plug" through free announcements in the week prior.
* For major radio, find out if you can get a free public service announcement, or if your event is timely or topical, it may be possible to get an interview as well.
* Phoning in during talkback programs is another way to get your event some exposure.  Many stations frown on callers using up their time on free ads but tend to be more sympathetic if callers are plugging a genuine good cause.

To find your nearest station visit the Community Broadcast Association of Australia's website at [www.cbaa.org.au](http://www.cbaa.org.au/)

**Television**

TV news needs footage to illustrate a story, so they tend to report on things that have already happened rather than things due to happen. Your group will have to work hard to "sell" a station on your story – including setting up an attractive or striking picture opportunity, or TV stunt that they can't resist

Invite the TV stations to the event when it happens, which is no good for selling tickets in advance, but may result in getting footage to air and this can be invaluable in generating interest in your group and any future events it holds.

**Community Service Announcements (CSAs)**

Radio and TV stations often run Community Service Announcements for community or charitable groups, or for community events.More information on CSAs can be found in the help sheet [Getting a Community Service Announcement](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1543) at the Marketing, Media and Post Centre.

**Websites**

Put details of your event on your website.  Although this may only reach people who know you exist or are interested in what you're doing, they are also the group most likely to invest in a ticket.

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

**http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing\_article.jsp?articleId=1612**