

## **6 - Publicity**

### **Publicity – the secret of success!**

**Each university is different, so take this as a flexible guide...**

'Publicity' is a chore that every organisation must do in order to be successful - even the best ideas will not happen unless people know about them. There are hundreds of opportunities to publicise, and the more unusual the better!

### **Universities – a unique environment**

Universities are like small towns, in which the population is hugely concentrated (halls, student housing and bars) which great for publicity, think about these areas in your university and remember them. Universities get a whole new population every three years or so, which can lead to a constant battle for publicity with new opinions to challenge and people to 'get on board'. Many people will go on to be influential in their field and often develop their opinions while still at university. Students' Unions usually have a lot of opportunities for communication to the student population.

### **Relevant messages**

The message must be relevant to the target group or else it won't be recognised or listened to. The four basic points of a relevant message (known as AIDA) are:

- **Attention** – you need to identify angles in an issue that connect to the target groups' experiences or interests. This will allow you to overcome the 'Laissez faire' attitudes.
- **Interest** – Point out that the audience is being **AFFECTED** or that they are having an **EFFECT**. This should be identified as part of the 'big picture'.
- **Desire** – People often think and are told there is nothing they can do - identify and show the better alternative and make it attractive. Dispel myths that there is no alternative. Again this should be identified in terms of the 'big picture'
- **Action** – Show the audience how they can change the issue, then provide information and resources for action. Remember, there should be levels of involvement: from minor easy actions (e.g. a signature) to the opportunity to get substantially involved, this will make sure there is something for everyone.

### **Delivering the message**

The average person sees 13,000 advertising images a day! It follows then, that your message, however good, must stand out from the competition. The four basic points to an effective publicity campaign plan (known as DEEP) are:

- **Diverse** – Different people take in information in different ways, therefore mixes of methods are required. For example: Graphics; text; sounds and people. Different people also want to act in different ways. Passive publicity allows people to 'look at' or 'listen to', without having to involve themselves by getting into a conversation or attending something. In contrast, interactive publicity allows others to ask questions and find out further information. Both these styles should be used, to allow people to get involved in the speed and at the level they feel comfortable with.
- **Enormous** – No one will be looking out for you, so you need to attract attention by being where people are going to see you. Make your publicity large!

➤ **Everywhere** - Put your publicity in appropriate places, for example areas where your target audience is concentrated. Think about what people spend their time doing and where they are. For example:

- WORK (Faculty buildings, Libraries, IT facilities).
- LEISURE (Students' Union, Bars, Clubs, Sports clubs, Cinema).
- HOME (Halls, Student housing areas).

➤ **Planned** – Advertising works by continued suggestion. So be diverse, enormous, everywhere and persistent. Planning involves working backwards:

- What do you want to achieve?
- What would you like to happen?
- What resources, and how long do you need?

## Planning and preparation

Advance planning allows your objectives to dictate your events and not the reverse, which is often the case. It also allows for earlier events to publicise later ones, importantly reducing the work required. Running one effective project is always better than running several ineffective ones.

## IDEAS FOR PUBLICITY – ELEMENTS TO A CAMPAIGN

### Activists

*Tips:* Need to be briefed, some time in advance. Should be given a clear idea of what they are expected to do and how much time they are committing. Combine dull jobs with more interesting – or social - “rewards”. Remember to thank them!

*Strengths:* The most effective means of communication.

*Weaknesses:* Need to be briefed, and given notice.

*Timing:* Throughout the campaign.

### Banners

*Tips:* Should be bold and clear when seen from a distance: Use text very economically. Use banners to draw attention to stalls, publicity stunts etc.

*Strengths:* Very visible, relatively unusual, fun to make!

*Weaknesses:* No good for detailed messages, temporary.

*Timing:* In conjunction with stalls, publicity stunts etc.

### Free-standing displays

*Tips:* Use in conjunction with stalls, publicity stunts, meetings, or on their own. Use more graphics than words. Make it interesting! Choose a prominent place: a display is a “shop window” (many Students' Unions have boards you can borrow, but ask well in advance).

*Strengths:* Low maintenance, contain lots of information, visible, easy for new people to access.

*Weaknesses:* Cumbersome.

*Timing:* Throughout a campaign. At an event.

### Leaflets

*Tips:* Use graphics with text. Make sure your contact details are on them. Don't just leave them around, target them at your intended audience.

*Strengths:* They have room to explain complex ideas and work well as invitations.

*Weaknesses:* Expensive. Easily discarded.

*Timing:* In conjunction with stalls, meetings, publicity stunts etc. Leaflets used on their own are best used in the short-term run-up to your target date.

### **Media (including student newspapers and radio)**

*Tips:* The easier you make it for them to make your story into something “newsworthy” or interesting, the less work the journalist has to do, and so the more likely you are to be featured. It's well worth considering getting one of your members to volunteer for campus media, or establish/edit a campaigns page in the newspaper – that way you can have a regular input into a very valuable means of publicity.

*Strengths:* Reaches a large audience. Can give credibility to your message. Finds it's way into people's homes.

*Weaknesses:* The journalist, not you, has control of exactly what gets said. You need to work around their deadlines.

*Timing:* Depends upon frequency of broadcast / publication.

### **Posters**

*Tips:* Use graphics. Clear old materials so that your materials will not be swamped. Place audaciously; in places that can be seen from a distance, or where people gather. Use posters as big as you can. Use Lots. Replenish regularly.

*Strengths:* Have a relatively long life and are relatively cheap.

*Weaknesses:* Short scan time. “Poster blindness” (due to heavy competition). Time consuming.

*Timing:* Early before an event. Preferably all in one go (a “blitz” gets noticed) but keep replenishing.

### **Publicity stunts**

*Tips:* Must make the point and have visual appeal. Combine with other publicity elements.

Accompany the stunt with further information (usually leaflets). Invite media and have someone briefed to speak to them. Make sure participants are briefed on the issues.

*Strengths:* Highly visible and audible. Fun for participants. Newsworthy.

*Weaknesses:* Needs organisation of people and resources. Vulnerable to unexpected events / weather etc.

*Timing:* (usually dictated by events / availability / media deadlines, but early enough to publicise your event / campaign).

### **Speakers and videos**

*Tips:* Use in conjunction with social events and/or meetings (or, for videos, with stalls, if practicable). Make sure the subject matter sounds interesting. Invite media people.

*Strengths:* Can be very inspiring. Provides focus for an event.

*Weaknesses:* Can be difficult to find speakers who know the subject and who are both informative and interesting.

*Timing:* Will not attract people who are not already interested, therefore you must whet their appetites first – use towards the end of a publicity campaign.

### **Stalls**

*Tips:* Use in conjunction with meetings / speakers and publicity stunts. Include free-standing displays, leaflets, well-briefed friendly stallholders, banners. Use petitions (or other quick-and-easy things- to-do) to draw people in. Use sound and/or video. Choose (a variety of) high-flow-through site(s).

*Strengths:* Good visual. Includes people (the most effective means of promotion).

*Weaknesses:* Have to be booked well in advance. Good positions may be unavailable.

*Timing:* In the couple of weeks before the target date.

### **'Walking adverts' (including t-shirts, badges, stickers)**

*Tips:* If you can convince lots of people to buy and wear t-shirts at the same time, then you will have loads of walking adverts, able to answer questions; otherwise stickers / badges are almost as good. Use a bold, short message.

*Timing:* From the start of a campaign.

### **Websites**

*Tips:* Will need to be advertised elsewhere (on leaflets, posters, displays, in articles etc)

*Strengths:* Wide reach. Free once in use. Long lived. Controllable and amendable.

*Weaknesses:* Tend not to work proactively. Can be expensive to develop.

*Timing:* From the start of the "visible publicity" period; so that all other means of publicity can refer to it.

### **Our own imagination**

Think about it, what could you do to get noticed? Which adverts 'grabbed' your attention today? - and why?

### **A final note**

Your target audience is dynamic and hence your publicity campaign must be too. Remember just constantly be open to new ideas, write them down as you think of them and use them. There are no rights or wrongs you just have to give them a go:

Think about what is 'now', what is 'new' what is eye-catching and what is within your means and you can't go too wrong!

Good luck and think publicity, publicity and more publicity!

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