

MARKETING 101:

Tips for a Stellar Humanities Event



Marketing Your Humanities Events

Marketing 101 is a free publication to help Michigan organizations better promote their cultural programs to the public.

The Michigan Humanities Council's mission is to connect all people and communities by supporting quality cultural programs. We cannot do this without your assistance—please consider sending your event information to the MHC for posting on its statewide calendar of humanities events.

Visit www.michiganhumanities.org for more information.

This publication was created in partnership with the Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs. MCACA strengthens arts and culture in Michigan by increasing its visibility, supporting arts education, encouraging new, create and innovative works of art, and broadening cultural understanding. For more information, visit www.michiganbusiness.org/community/council-arts-cultural-affairs.

Table of Contents:

Identify Your Key Message.....	2
Knowing Your Audience	2
Marketing Your Event.....	3
Press Release/Media Outreach.....	4
Flyers	5
Social Media.....	6

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Identifying your Key Messages

Before you can begin promotion of an event, you must identify the key messages that will attract an audience. These messages will drive all promotion and audience segmentation. Keep them simple and jargon-free.

Once you identify your set of key messages – share them! Create brand ambassadors – share the messages with everyone you communicate with about your organization and start promoting by word of mouth.

- Your event messaging should be designed from the audience perspective – why should they attend? What will they gain?
- Be disciplined. Make sure you are using three, five or seven messages that truly reflect what makes your work distinctive.
- Key messages drive headlines and copy of your brochures, signage, press releases and other communication.
- Do you have an event series? Consider branding this with a name, logo and short slogan that connects to your key message.
- Key messages should attract, inform and engage an audience.

Knowing your Audience

We know you want a successful event and to grow your organization name, but the “general public” is not your audience. Looking at your key messages and event – who should care? Segment your audience by hobbies, lifestyles, demographics and age – if you try a broad list, you will reach no one.

- Understand that your audience can and will likely change from event to event, especially if the subject matter and venue changes.
- What needs or challenges do they have that your event addresses?
- What will drive them to attend?
- What media might this audience most interact with?



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of an event, you must identify
the key messages

Marketing your Event

There are many ways to market your event, but be sure to consider your targeted audience and current distribution method when creating a promotion plan. Do your current supporters respond well to email but not mail, or vice versa? Ensure you are promoting in a way that will engage your targeted audience.

First and foremost to remember in your promotion – credit! Did you receive a grant for this event, or partner with another organization? Make sure you are providing credit where credit is due, and make sure this comes up in media interviews.

Methods of promotion may include:

- Email flyer
- Print flyer
- Postcard
- Press release
- PSAs
- Calendar listings
- Time on your radio call-in show
- Social media posts and events
- Appearance on TV
- Print and mail newsletters
- Paid advertising

Does your Marketing Plan Include:

Outreach to media: First notice 1-2 months in advance, dependent on size of media market and deadlines, and then a reminder as the event gets closer (perhaps a week before)

Distribution of a press release: 2-3 weeks in advance of the event

Social media postings: As soon as 1-2 months out, and up to the day of the event with live-event posting

Flyer or postcard distribution: Distribution a month out from the event – whether by mail, email or personal hand-out.

Note: Save the Date messages are also an idea for larger events – approximately three months in advance – and can easily be sent by email through pre-made templates, or mail.



Disseminating a Press Release

The first step in media outreach is the standard press release – which tells the who, what, where, when, why and how of your event. Just like you had to segment your audience, you must segment your media outreach based on your event. Then follow up with a did-you-get-our-message call or visit.

Know your media outlets – and deadlines – to determine when you should distribute the press release.

The following guidelines will help you in preparing a strong press release.

1. **Write a strong headline:** The headline should be strong, yet simple, that emphasizes the event's purpose and will draw the reader's interest.
2. **Develop an enticing lead:** The opening sentence of a news release is very important. It's the attention getter that draws in the reader or journalist. A good lead will answer questions of who, what, when, where, why and how for your event.
3. **Share the event's overall purpose clearly:** Focus on how your event will improve the lives of people attending, or impacted by it.
4. **Give credit:** If you received funding for this event, or have collaborative partners, be sure to include the organization names and grant amount.
5. **Event details:** After the opening, the successive paragraphs would include non-technical summary information on why this event is important. What makes it different from similar events? Why should your audience care to attend?
6. **Feature spokespersons:** Your release should include brief and direct quotes from key spokespersons that offer additional, or newsworthy information.
7. **Review:** Always triple-check your release to ensure that it includes all vital information, is easy to read for the general public, and contains no misspellings.

The first step in media outreach is the standard press release



Flyers

Flyers, whether sent out via email or printed for distribution, can be easy promotional tools in the months and weeks before your event. Many desktop publishing software programs have free templates for use, or work with a freelance designer to create a clean promotional tool for your event.

Four Easy Steps to a Simple Flyer

Step 1: Compile Images

- Select a few images that relate to your upcoming event. Use images you have on file from previous or similar events.
- If you need images, check the web but beware of copywrited images! Look for royalty free stock photos online – like www.moregufile.com, or do an advanced search on Google for free images. Note: It is best practices to give credit when you can, even on royalty-free images.

Step 2: Create and Add the Headline

- Start your flyer with a catching headline – quick and inviting.
- Prospective attendees will take a quick glance and decide why attending your event will be entertaining and relevant to them.
- Less is more so keep copy brief!

Step 3: Remember your W's

- Provide brief descriptions of the event topic, time and location.
- Use accent colors that are subtle in overall design but make details stand out.
- Use bullets in your design for a quicker read – you can then repurpose content from other materials.

Step 4: Fill it in!

- Conclude the flyer with boilerplate information about the event and your organization.
- Be sure to include a phone number, email and website address for more information, as well as social media icons.
- Don't forget to provide funding/partner credit if necessary!

Left: ©David Green/State Line Observer

Right: ©Kerrytown BookFest



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Social Media

Social Media tools are increasingly becoming effective promotional tools, and best of all, they're free! Use of platforms will vary based on your experience, time commitment and audience, but they can all be effective.

For those with limited time, having the ability to schedule posts in advance is ideal. Facebook has a built-in scheduling tool (when posting from your page) – which also sends data back to the Insights Page for link tracking. For Twitter, a free service like HootSuite is a great resource. You can schedule tweets in advance and with a built-in link shortener (ow.ly), you can also receive a click summary. Another popular link shortener that can be used on both sites is <https://bitly.com> – which allows you to save a shortened link and track the lifetime of clicks.

When posting to Social Media, remember to:

- Use language that is authentic, conversational and enthusiastic,
- Post pre- and post-event photos and/or video; and
- Tag your sponsors, partners or venue to help spread the work and recognize all involved
- Update your sites on a regular basis – don't be static; be dynamic.
 - For Facebook, post at least weekly but not daily
 - For Twitter, post multiple times a day if possible. Content is quickly lost so don't be afraid to also re-post previous content

Facebook

- Follow the 70/30 rule – 70 percent of content about your organization, and 30 percent of content shared from other organizations, news articles, etc.
- Create an event and invite fans of your page (and refresh the content briefly before the event).
- Link to news articles about the event, or post relevant content.
- Promote the event on your news feed.

Twitter

- Share timely news and opinions – like Facebook, make sure it's a mixture of your organization/event content and shared from others.
- Link to an event page on your website, or the Facebook event page.
- Share the pre- and post-event pictures.
- Live tweet from the event – you can event create a special hashtag (#awesomeevent) to include and make it easy for people to follow.



Remember

- Analyze your past outreach to discover who makes up your audience.
- Celebrate your organization and what makes it distinctive.
- Appeal to your audience's values with messages that attract, inform and engage.
- Evaluate your outreach and tweak strategies for future events.



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