

Advice for marketing events and selling tickets

1. **Have a plan:** This would outline the audiences you want to attract and how you go about attracting them. The plan will help you avoid last-minute panic and give you clear objectives and a timetable.
2. **Positioning:** What is your unique selling point (USP)? What makes you different and why people should come to your shows? Think about what the benefits are to your customers. Emphasise how important it is to support live events in your community and the fact that your audience do not have to spend money on travelling when the show is just up their street.
3. **Your target markets:** Who do you think will come to see the show? Be honest! Who is your existing audience? Who are you trying to reach? Think about the suitability of your show to attract certain audiences, if it's a family show you may want to target your local school's PTA or school committee.
4. **Resources:** What resources have you got and who can you get on board. Make a list – this could include: time, people, money, expertise, contacts, local display boards, shops, schools etc. The aim is to get you to think about how you move someone from not knowing about your event to buying a ticket.
5. **Finally, get them to take action:** This would be to get them to buy a ticket and come along to the show. Standard tools are social media, posters, leaflets, press, adverts, emails, website. However, 'word of mouth' is often the most successful. Surveys regularly show 50% of any audience is there because someone else told them about it. Word of mouth is so good because someone who already wants to go will persuade other people.



Krosswindz, Wales Puja Committee Event, Penyrheol Community Centre (Image: Nuria Serna Photography)

Tools for marketing

Social media

This is probably the best way to reach your local audience. Facebook is ideal for advertising the event with a poster and other information, you can also share a short clip of the show on your Facebook or Instagram page and tag in #Night Out. Always remember to put the event date and time clearly in your post and the link to get tickets, as once people have seen the clip it will encourage them to book straight away on their phones. X (Twitter) and Instagram can be best for reminding people about the event and sending out snippets of information to keep them interested and ramp up excitement. Encourage people to share your posts.

Posters

When writing posters make sure the text is easy to read and can be read at a distance. Never use all capital letters. Make sure the main title, date and location are the biggest pieces of text, closely followed by time and price and information on how to get tickets. If you can't overprint glueing a pre-printed piece of paper to the poster is fine.

Press

If you think you have a story, send out a simple press release. Remember to include your local Council on your mailing list. Contact your local village or parish magazine for their deadlines.



Websites

Most news organisations have websites, and there might also be a website for your village or community. There may also be local online events listings.

Email

Set up an email distribution list. This does not have to be too high tech. Email addresses can be gathered by collecting them at an event or from a feedback questionnaire. If you are using Outlook or a similar package, make sure you use the blind copy (bcc) feature, so that you do not let everyone see each other's email addresses. Remember GDPR – you have to have a persons agreement to be on email lists and they must be able to remove themselves.

Adverts

As a rule for small events, adverts can cost more than they are worth, though targeted social media can be effective. Good press coverage and listings are free but adverts even in local papers can be very expensive and you will get better value from printing posters and leaflets. If you really feel an advert will help, follow the same principles as for posters.



How to be Brave, Dirty Protest, Eton Road Community Centre Newport (Image: Creative Fez)

Selling tickets

One way of getting people to follow up on their interest, once you have got their attention, is to sell advance tickets. You could give a discount for tickets sold in advance but need to make it as easy as possible for people, and at the same time keep it simple to administer. Advanced sales will ensure that the day of the performance is less stressful for promoters.

Tickets can be sold over the phone but if you have a willing local shop that is a great way of making sure that locals have an opportunity to buy tickets in advance. You can also use an online ticket company, Examples that some Night Out promoters have used include TicketSource, The Little Box Office, WeGotTickets and Eventbrite. Most charge a surcharge on tickets and therefore there should be no additional cost to promoters. The advantage of using online ticketing is that you can put up the link on social media for people to book and you will also have a database of customers who you can target for your next show.

At the event

Marketing does not finish with getting the audience to your shows. The event itself is a great tool for getting people to come back. Making sure that everything runs smoothly and that people know what is going on is very important – if you say something is going to be available, such as refreshments, make sure it is. Do not promise anything you aren't sure you can provide and do not feel you need to compete with the big venues. It is also a great place to collect information, so talk to people, find out why they came, what they liked, what they would like to see in the future. And ask them to join your emailing list! You can also leave short feedback forms on seats, so you can ask questions about; the show they have just seen, what shows they would like to see next and any ideas or comments. It is also a great opportunity to collect email and contact details.



Data protection

If you collect and keep any information, such as email addresses, you need to be aware of data protection. So long as you are only collecting data for your own marketing purposes, you do not need to notify the Data Protection Registrar that you are holding information, but you still need to follow the principles of data protection put in place by the Data Protection Act 1998: In practice these principles are quite simple:

1. Make sure you always get permission when you collect data.
2. Only use the data for the purpose you gave when you got permission to collect it.
3. Do not share data or let other people use it. (So, make sure if you send e mails all your members are bcc blind copy).
4. Keep the data on a secure computer that is password-protected or on a removable storage device if the computer you use is also used by people who do not have permission to use the data.