

# 11 Creative Ideas for Event Marketing



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## Table of Contents



Your Audience	3
Your Logo	4
Sponsors	5
The Venue	6
Social Media	7
Direct Mail	8
Print, Television, Radio, and Signs	9
Guerrilla Marketing	10
Media Sponsors	11
Press Releases	12
More from Sponsors	13

# Your Audience

## Guess who

# 1

The secret to marketing, for an event or otherwise, is knowing exactly who you're marketing to. Knowing your audience is essential to marketing success.

### ***Who leads to where***

Before you go on a wild goose chase looking for *where* your audience is, get clear about *who* they are. Once you understand this, it will be easier to figure out where to focus your marketing.

Try this. Close your eyes and imagine that your event is a great success. Who do you see in attendance? Who do you envision as a sponsor? What would be their incentive to attend or to sponsor the event? Take time to ponder on this. If you have an event committee, have someone else help you, or take turns having each committee member give their opinions.

To start, ask questions about the members of your audience:

- Are they men or women?
- How old are they?
- What's their ethnic background?
- Where do they live?
- What's their relationship status?
- Do they have children?
- Do they work?
- Are they students?
- What's their income level?
- Are they educated? To what level?
- Do they exercise?
- How do they get around?
- Do they vacation? Where?
- How do they dress?
- Where do they shop?
- What do they buy?
- Do they have hobbies?
- What television shows do they watch?
- What kind of music do they listen to?
- What do they like to read?



The more specific you are, the more specifically you can know where your audience is likely to be. Think about where they'll be during work days, during free time, and during drive time. Then, make sure your event is promoted in these places!

## Your Logo

### Think outside the bun (to the wrapping around it)

# 2

Displaying your event logo in print ads and flyers seems like a no brainer. But there are more creative places you can try!

Are you hosting a sporting event? Talk to local sports bars about having your event logo printed on their basket liners. We offer “short run” custom pieces, so it’ll be affordable for a single event.

Maybe your event is targeting business professionals. Is there a popular deli or café that many of them go to for lunch? Consider having your event info or logo printed on their to-go bags, deli wraps, and so on.

Restaurants may agree to do this at no charge if you provide them with basket liners, food bags, or other materials, because it saves them the cost. Or they may consider doing it in trade for sponsorship benefits, such as having their logo included on other event marketing materials.

There are plenty of other places to display your logo or ad:

- Food menus and place mats
- Bus stops and benches
- Restroom stalls
- Taxis or buses
- Median signs
- Elevators
- Subways
- Airports

# Sponsors

## Other businesses might like your audience, too

# 3

Now that you know your target market, think of other businesses that are trying to reach the same audience. Then, use the fact that you'll have a large number of these people gathered in one place (your event!) to entice sponsors and advertisers.

You can provide great incentives for sponsors of your event. You could offer to highlight a sponsor, for example:

- In table or marketing displays
- On your deli wrap or basket liners that will be on all of the food sold at the event
- On a banner or sign
- In other event marketing and promotion (newspaper ads, TV ads, flyers, food packaging, gift wrapping, etc.)
- On the gift wrapping for door prizes, raffles, or auction prizes
- On shirts or apparel
- In radio ads leading up to the event



# The Venue

## Location, location, and the third thing

# 4

The venue may also be a great source of event marketing. If it's a popular venue for other events (such as sporting events, concerts, etc.), or if it gets traffic on a daily basis (such as a park, restaurant, etc.), then you'll want to make sure everyone knows that your event is coming up at the same venue! Here are some suggestions:

### **Banners, flyers, or signs**

See if the venue will allow you to display signage leading up to the event. Some may do this free of charge, others may do it for a fee, or others may not allow it at all. It never hurts to ask!

### **Promotion on food packaging**

Does your event venue have concessions or sell food? This is a great opportunity to provide them with custom food packaging that promotes your event. It can be used leading up to the event, as well as at the event itself.

### **Get in their existing ads**

Does your event venue advertise? They may already be including your event as an upcoming feature. If they do not do this, but do advertise, offer to split some of the advertising costs if they will feature your event information in their current ads.



# Social Media

## One *billion* people use Facebook

# 5

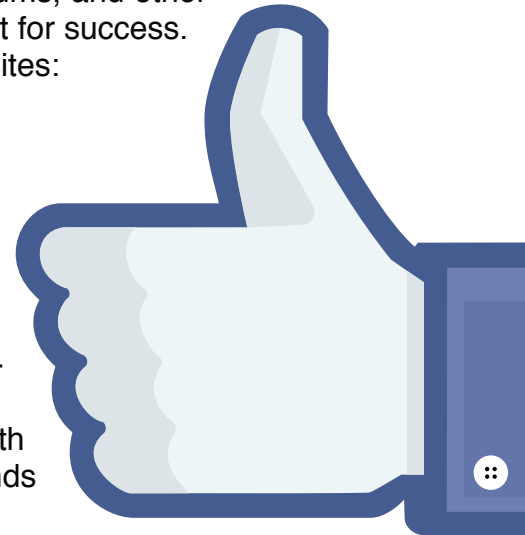
Social media has certainly changed event marketing for both organizers and attendees. Depending on your reach, posting your event on Facebook might be more effective today than handing out paper flyers was years ago. It only takes a few minutes to post, and there are no printing costs!

If you have the ability hand out paper flyers and talk in person about your event, then you should do this also! But you can save time and spread the word quickly through social media. Through sharing, your event might even “go viral” and reach far beyond the confines of your own friends, followers, and fans.

There are a number of popular social media websites, with new ones becoming more popular each day. If you have time to research the websites, forums, and other online hotspots that your audience frequents, this is your best bet for success. If not, here are a few tips for the most popular social media websites:

### Facebook.com

- Create an “event,” which allows you to invite friends.
- Have every committee member (and anyone else involved) post your event information and flyer on their Facebook page, and ask all of their friends to share.
- Post about the event regularly (but not too often).
- Create a page dedicated to the event with the event logo, picture, and details.
- If this is an annual event, post photos of last year’s event with comments. Tag people in these photos so that friends of friends will see them.



### Twitter.com

- Tweet about the event! You can post updates about the planning, new sponsors, and news of the event’s progression. You can also post links to register for the event.

### Pinterest.com

- Pin photos from last year’s event or of the current committee in the planning stages.
- Pin photos of your event venue, pretty shots of the city, photos of the food, custom food packaging with your event logo, or anything else that can be linked to your event.

### LinkedIn.com

- Let your colleagues and business associates know about your event by posting status updates about it, or joining groups and discussing it on LinkedIn. Ask them to share with their contacts as well.

*Image courtesy of Wikimedia user Enoc vt.*

## Direct Mail

### Pretty postcards persuade people, perhaps

# 6

Marketing your event through direct mail can be effective if it's done correctly. However, if it's not a well-thought-out campaign, it can be very costly.

As we discussed, targeting your audience is essential in marketing. However, it is particularly important when you are paying for printing and postage.

An established event will have a database of mailing addresses from previous attendees and sponsors, so this is a good start. If it is your first event, then you'll have to be a little creative. Here are two suggestions for compiling your mailing list:

- If your event is supporting a non-profit organization, they should be able to provide you with a mailing list of volunteers, donors, and supporters. These people are more likely to be interested in your event because they already have a connection to the organization.
- Consider using a direct mail marketing company. They can provide you with a mailing list based on demographics or geographic areas.

#### Don't neglect the design

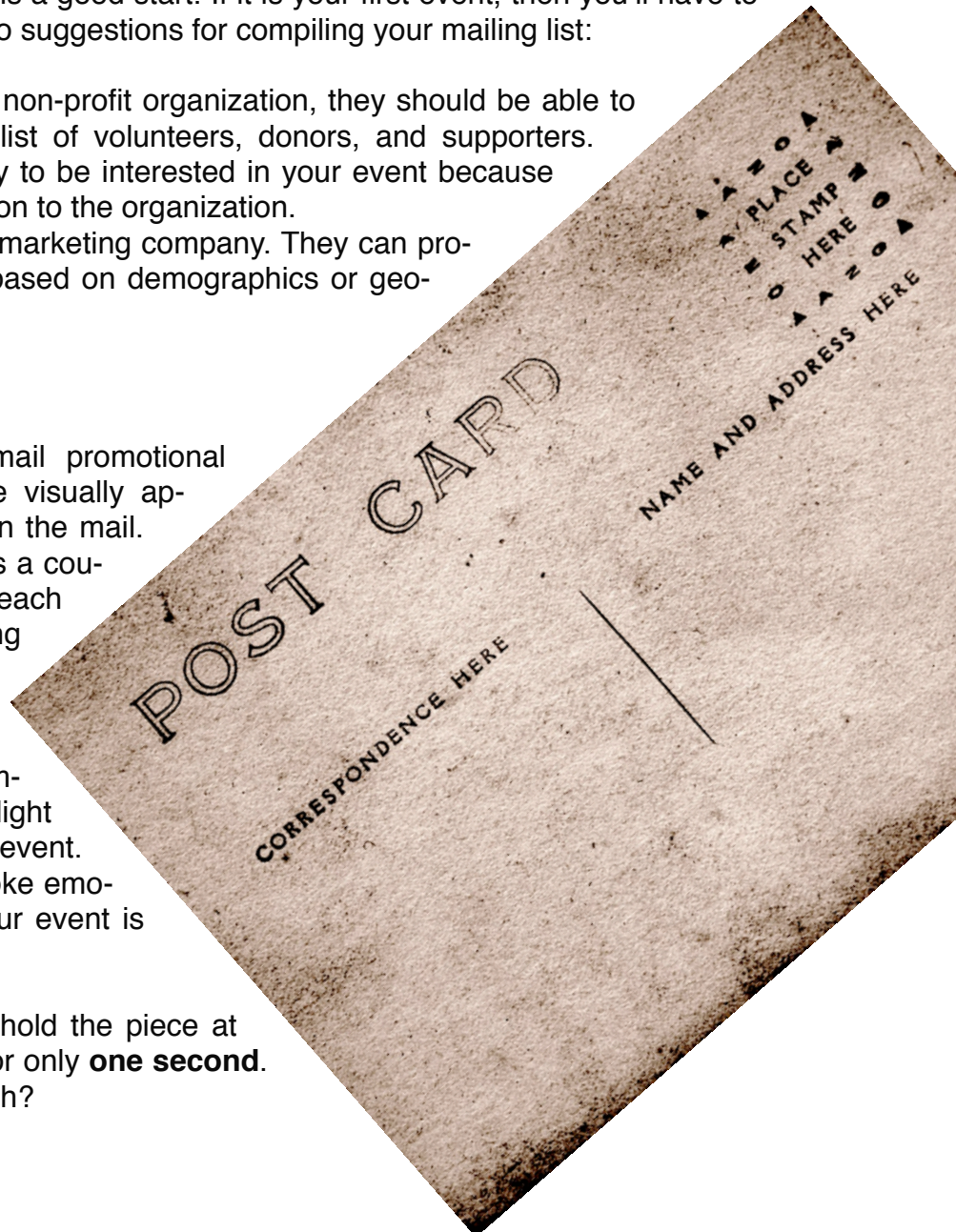
The design of your direct mail promotional piece must stand out and be visually appealing or risk getting buried in the mail.

The average person only gives a couple seconds of attention to each piece of mail before deciding whether to toss it.

If a graphic designer's fee won't fit in your budget, remember that simple is best. Highlight the most enticing point of the event. Use pictures or words that evoke emotion. Show the reader why your event is important.

When you think you're done, hold the piece at arm's length and glance at it for only **one second**. Does your message get through?

*Photo courtesy of D Sharon Pruitt.*





## Print, Television, Radio, and Signs Traditional, but effective?

7

If you have an advertising budget, traditional advertising methods may be a good option for getting the word out. Typically, “traditional” includes:

- **Print** – newspaper, magazines, and other publications
- **Television** – television networks and cable companies
- **Radio** – stations sell air time or offer endorsements by talk show hosts
- **Signs** – billboard companies, bus benches, live sign holders, median signs, ads on vehicles, etc.

If you speak to an advertising sales representative, they can provide you with information about their audience. For example, a radio station can tell you the demographics of their listeners (age, gender, income level, etc.) and approximately how many people your ad will reach. With this information you can estimate the cost of the ad per person and decide if it’s worth your investment.

With the advent of newer advertising methods, traditional advertising has more competition and therefore fewer advertisers. Print, in particular, has seen a decline in advertisers since the popularity of the Internet.

Despite the shift, if you have the budget, you should not rule these methods out for promoting your event. They can still be very effective.



## Guerrilla Marketing

### Surprise! You just saw an ad.

8

Sometimes it's not easy to reach your target audience in traditional places. You might need to think of creative ways to reach them in their own environment. For example, a vodka company came up with a clever stunt to reach corporate executives who work 80-hour weeks in high-rise offices. The company had someone pose as a window washer in a business suit. He used giant flashcards to communicate a funny, effective message ([watch the video clip here](#)). Although this type of stunt may be slightly out of your budget, the idea of going to customers in their environment is still a useful one.

#### Create a unique business “card”

There are many creative ideas for business “cards” that will make you stand out. For example, every employee at Lego® has miniature figurines featuring their name, phone and email. If you're in the music industry, a guitar pick could be your business card. Think of inexpensive ways to generate word of mouth while ensuring people hang onto your “card.”

#### Transform your packaging into an ad

Your customers can be walking advertisements for you if you give them the tools. [Food wrappers](#) or bags that draw attention to your customers as they walk the street are great opportunities for you. If you use unique packaging, it entices customers to tell their friends or post pictures on social media. If you're a retailer who uses bags, get creative and make them serve as more than just a container.



Bag: “Reach out to children with autism.”

#### Use the element of surprise

A key element of guerrilla marketing is catching people off guard. The Discovery Channel used a great visual to surprise for beachgoers. They placed washed up surfboards along the shore, all of which had giant “shark bites” taken out of them. Printed on the boards was information about the upcoming Shark Week.

The idea is to surprise people so they'll take notice, tell their friends about it, or snap photos. Think of something that relates to your event and let your imagination run wild!

## Media Sponsors

### Exchange advertising

# 9

You might be able to convince media outlets to be a media sponsor for your event. Under this arrangement, you might get free advertising in exchange for promoting the sponsor at your event.

Here's how it works. Contact the marketing or promotions director of your local newspaper, radio station, or television station that best reaches your target market. Draw up a "media sponsor agreement" which outlines the benefit to the media sponsor and the requested number of advertisements you are asking for. Be willing to negotiate on this, as the cost of advertising may vary. Even a little free advertising is better than none.

Offer to put the media outlet's logo on all your event material and advertisements. Also, offer to provide mention, signage, and a marketing table at your event for the station or publication.

Many television stations will consider a request for a live appearance by a news anchor at your event. Although this doesn't guarantee you free advertising, the news anchor will often mention that they will be attending your event during one of the newscasts leading up to it.



### Check into PSAs

If your event is benefitting a non-profit organization, you can often receive free traditional advertising through public service announcements. Radio and television stations are required by the FCC to air a certain number of PSAs per year. If you talk to them about your event, they may offer to run a few ads promoting the event as PSAs (which means there is no charge to you).

# Press Releases

## Be your own journalist

# 10

Press releases are an absolute must for any event! They're a great way to get free exposure online and in print. Here are some tips for writing a compelling press release and getting the most exposure out of it:

### 1. Use the proper format.

Create a strong headline and a captivating opening sentence that sums up the most important details of the message you are conveying. Write in the 3rd person (as if you are a reporter), and make sure your statements are reporting the "facts," not opinion. Make sure to answer the five "W" questions (who, what, where, when and why). If possible, include a quote from the event organizer or appropriate representative.

**2. Keep it concise.** Keep a press release to one page, as most reporters don't want to read more than that. They will contact you if they need anything else.

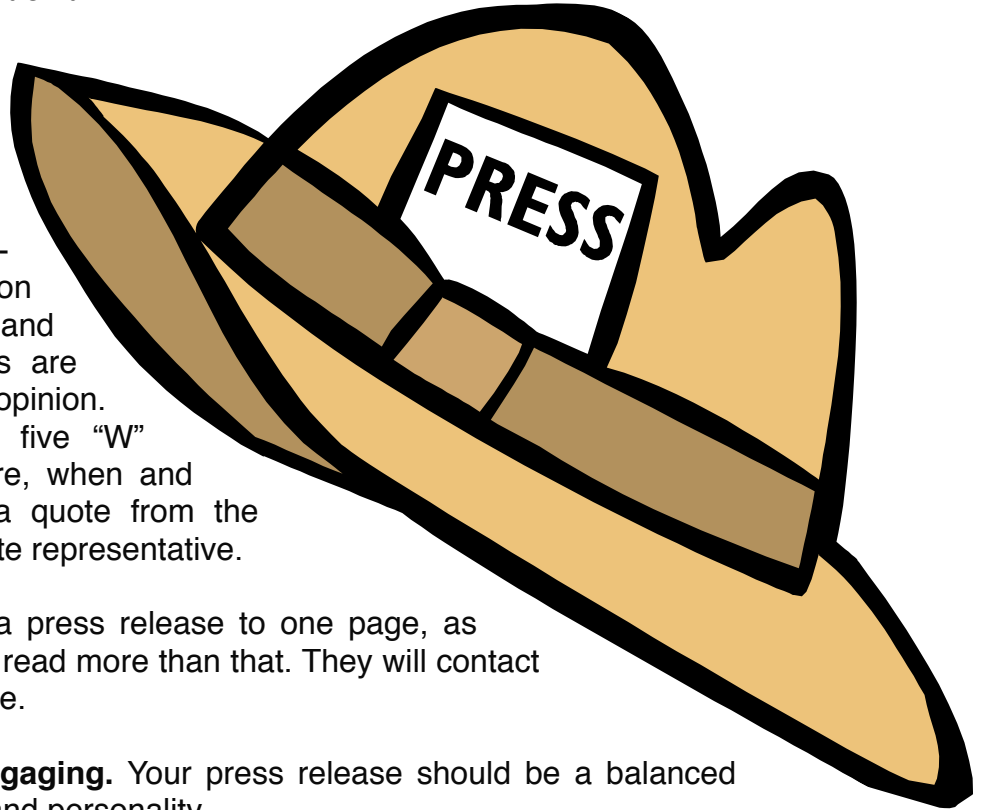
**3. Be professional, yet engaging.** Your press release should be a balanced amount of hard information and personality.

**4. Think about your media audience.** Put yourself in the journalist's shoes. Ask yourself what's newsworthy about your story.

**5. Make sure your release can be accessed easily.** Use plain text, PDF, Word, and links to websites. Don't use formats or technologies that can't easily be opened.

**6. Post your release online.** There are several free PR websites that will let you post your press release online at no charge ([www.prlog.org](http://www.prlog.org), for example). Make sure you are being search engine savvy by including a keyword phrase relevant to the event in the title and body of your press release.

**7. Don't forget your contact information!** At the top of the press release, make sure to include a "Media Contact" section with information for the person the media should contact. Also include an "About" section at the bottom of the press release with a brief overview of your organization.



## More from Sponsors Packages, plans, and perks

# 11

Your sponsors can provide more than sponsorship money! Make sure you ask your event sponsors to help you with the marketing and promotion of your event as well. If it's something that they care enough about to spend their hard-earned profit on, then most likely they will be willing to help you promote it as well.

### Custom packages

Create a sponsorship package that details what you are looking for from your sponsors. Saying what you want is one of the best ways get you want. You can also use this package as a sales tool for building interest, initiating conversations, and leveraging the list of sponsors or partners that have come on board. Don't limit yourself. Ask prospects to discuss their marketing objectives as well. Then, you can develop a custom proposal that meets both your needs and the goals of your sponsors. Keep an open mind to new, creative ideas!

### Help them help you

Without a leverage plan, your sponsors' results will be minimal. Consider including something such as "thought-leadership messaging" as part of your sponsorship package. This could be anything from including content in your blog to a video that can be shared with their customers and sponsors. Interacting with your sponsors before and after your event will show them that you are willing to support and help their industry in return for their help and support.

### Think of creative sponsorship perks

If you look at event sponsorship packages of events similar to yours, you will often see a lot of the same incentives. True, things like inclusion in advertising, or a presence at the event may be enticing to sponsors, but try including some creative perks of sponsorship that they may not be used to seeing in standard event sponsorship proposals. Incentives such as including their label on the [sandwich wrappers](#), basket liners, or other food packaging at your event, is something that may stand out to them as a unique perk. These types of incentives will help to set you apart from other events that may be soliciting that sponsor.



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