

# How to market your group

Looking for new members? Wanting the public to know more about your organization? People in the 1980's have so many activities to choose from. How will your association attract members and keep your community informed? You've got to get the competitive edge.

Compare your organization to companies in the soft drink industry. Manufacturers are constantly competing for customers. Each company has a strategy in place to encourage people to try or continue to buy their products. These strategies are based on four marketing elements; product, price, promotion, and place.

These four marketing resources can also be applied to your association's publicity and membership drive. Your organization is the product. Your membership fees are the price. Your public relations activities are the promotional component, and the location and timing of your meetings and activities represent place.

The soft drink industry's product is carbonated beverage. Your organization is equated to a product. It may be a youth club, an information-sharing association, a self-help group or a skills development organization. How does your product compare with your competitor's? What does your association have to offer its members and prospective members? Be knowledgeable about the purpose, benefits, activities and accomplishments of your organization.

The price factor for soft drink companies is the cost of the beverage to the customer. The price component for your organization is the membership fee. It may vary from being non-existent to a minimal cost. Manufacturers attract new customers with sale prices. Your association's membership committee may consider offering a special discount rate for new members or giving prizes to members who recruit new people.

Promotion is one of the major elements industry uses to make people aware of their product and increase sales. Companies carefully develop advertising campaigns directed toward specific audiences. Who is your target group? What do they know about your club? How do you reach them?

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Few non-profit organizations have large promotional budgets. Your advertising does not have to be elaborate. Flyers, posters, news releases, word of mouth, and community service announcements are inexpensive promotional avenues. The key to successful promotion is ensuring that the right message is being presented to the right audience at the right time in a professional manner.

The fourth marketing element — place — refers to the distribution or availability of the product. Soft drinks can be purchased everywhere, at stores, restaurants, and pop machines. Where and how can people

become involved in your club's activities? Are there specific requirements for joining? Are the activities held in a central location? Your organization will want to examine the timing and location of your club's activities.

Manufacturers skillfully and successfully use marketing strategies to influence people. Your organization can design a publicity campaign to meet the specific needs of your group. By adapting the four marketing elements — product, price, promotion, and place — you can develop a solid plan. Once your strategy is in place, periodic checks should be made to ensure your plan is on target. With a publicity strategy in place your organization is sure to be one step above the competition.

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