

The Anatomy of a Promotion.

It's a question that we often get at the Main Street office "how do I promote my business/organization?" We generally have to determine if a member is talking about marketing their business, advertising their business or holding a promotion. Those three categories may be vastly different for different businesses, but for this articles purposes, we are simply going to focus on promotion.

Promotional events can improve brand recognition, highlight a new product or service, increase foot traffic and promote sales IF done properly. Below are some highlights generated from the last Kansas Main Street quarterly training and some personal experience with promotions.



Set Goals- Before starting a promotional activity, ask yourself what you want to accomplish. Are you looking for increased sales in a particular category, increased foot traffic, improved awareness or some other goal? Be specific. Set quantitative measurable goals that are realistic. When the event is over, refer back to the goals to determine the success of the program.

Communicate with your staff and customers/members- Ideas can come from many sources. Talk about your goals with staff members and your customers to determine ways to meet your goals. This interaction leads to "buy in" and can generate both internal and external excitement about an event.

PLAN, PLAN, PLAN!- When is the best date for your event? The best time? What do you need to produce a successful event? Who will be in charge of different aspects of an event? What is your budget? What is your marketing strategy? How will you advertise? What is your mission and vision for the event? Start answering these questions early so you don't end up with a time crunch during the event.

Does this event support your brand?- Stop and think about this for a moment... Your brand identity is what? When people think about your business or venue, you want them to think____? Event's can pull in people, but if they don't pull in YOUR target customers an event can lead to brand confusion and have a minimal effect on sales. Determine what your business or organization is all about and make your promotions support that brand identity.

Find Partners- One business or organization can get overwhelmed with a large event. Can you share responsibilities with local competitors? Yes, I said share with local competitors. A good relationship with local competitors or complimentary businesses can help market and promote an event while creating cross traffic between businesses. As long as everyone is clear what their responsibilities entail so an actual "equal partnership" is created, bringing more minds and budgets to the table is an important task.

Find Sponsors- Do you have a supplier that would benefit from your event? Can you partner with local media? Finding a good sponsor or sponsors can help with labor, advertising, prizes and add legitimacy to your event. Sponsors will typically want something for their involvement, so be prepared to answer the "what's in it for me" question. If you hold multiple promotional events, it is important to rotate sponsors to avoid burnout and avoid alienating other suppliers.

Make it FUN!- A successful event generally MUST contain some sort of entertainment to drive positive word of mouth. Games, music or other forms of entertainment are important to generating something memorable.

Develop a clear marketing and advertising plan- Who is your target market and what are the best ways to access that market? Repetition through internal communications, traditional advertising and social media is important to a successful event. If you don't have people at your promotion, most of your goals will remain unfulfilled.

Analyze the event with your partners after the conclusion of a promotion- While everything is fresh in your mind, what can you do better? Gauge customer response during the event and ask what they want to see. If you have problems, successes or ideas write them down. Did you meet your goals? If not, why? If you exceeded expectations, why? Consistent input and realistic planning creates better promotions.

Service businesses, retailers, restaurants and non-profits can all take advantage of promotions to improve brand recognition, increase traffic and improve sales/donations/membership. Above is a basic overview, but for more specific information contact the Emporia Main Street office. We have a resource library, hand-outs and more information waiting for YOU.

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