



There are many reasons why effective marketing is essential for the success of a community and its community vibrancy. If a community can market itself as an experience that must be had, it cannot only increase visitation from locals, but also increase tourism. In turn, this will increase the amount of money being spent in the community. Not only the community, but local businesses and residents will benefit from the increased revenue and taxes collected.

1. **Develop options for what your community is/can be known for.** A committee/task force should organize to determine your community's strength(s). Community support in early stages is key to not wasting time and resources later. Use TATT's Community Assessment Tool to get started. Initially strive to make your community's name synonymous with just one strength to maximize marketing spend. *(For example, Napa Valley is synonymous with wine.)*
 - Marketing an emotion, experience, or feeling, not just the destination. *(For example, Napa Valley is known for wine, but they are marketing the quiet and relaxing atmosphere the wine is enjoyed in.)*
 - Narrow your marketing focus to promote one strength. A lot of effort can be wasted trying to market your community for several items and you become spread too thin. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis can help to narrow the focus and find a community's points of differentiation.
 - For more insight, check out this CommunityMatters video that gives insights and examples on developing a marketing brand for your community. vimeo.com/94605487

2. **Determine the audience(s) to whom you will be marketing your community.** Examples:
 - Local residents & business owners – it is very important to get broad support for the message you will be marketing from individuals, town leaders, organizations & businesses in your community
 - Regional locals - those that could easily make a 'day trip' to your location
 - Tourists – those from outside a 200 miles radius who are looking to make an extended stay in our region or community
 - Prospective new businesses and residents

3. **Discuss a marketing budget.** Discuss the costs and possible funding sources, then you will have a better idea of what marketing channels are accessible. There are several ways a community can fund their marketing budgets:
 - City/County funding
 - Local businesses, economic development office, etc. may be willing to partner with the community to help increase tourism. Hotels, historic sites, restaurants, and other businesses would benefit from their community becoming a tourist destination.
 - Grants
 - Tourism and hospitality tax
 - In-kind gifts/donations

4. **Evaluate Marketing channels.** You need a sub-committee, local city employee or knowledgeable volunteer to put together a Marketing Plan for the first year to get your efforts started. This is the details of how you will reach your audience(s) with the channels you can afford given your budget. Possible channel options are:
 - A logo and tagline (slogan) is a good first step to launch your marketing. It should complement the strength you are trying to become known for. The vimeo video mentioned above has some great tips on this.
 - Your community website - must reflect the strength/message you are promoting
 - Social media (ex. Facebook page, PinInterest site, Twitter account) -inexpensive but takes someone with time and experience to leverage these digital channels effectively. Interns from local universities could be a great resource for handling social media and digital communications.
 - Apps - develop a mobile app to incorporate your brand into a notification system for calendar events, festivals, community news, "feel good" stories, etc.
 - Contact Area/Regional Bloggers that have a good following - ask them to write a piece about your community or upcoming event and push to their network. Small short pieces are best; you do not need a textbook, just short posts that people can read in less than 3 minutes.

- Regional newsletters, calendars and online properties or offices managed by State/Local government, Economic Development office, Visitor Bureaus, Chamber of Commerce, Merchant Associations, Arts Council, Real Estate companies, etc. (ex. TATT's Weekly Upstate Information Hub or Visitor Information Centers) - to get your message out
 - A festival or event that focuses on the community's strength would be a great way to gain momentum with your residents, market the community and draw in others locals and tourists. (See TATT's Event Guidelines document for help with this)
 - Area newspaper adverts
 - Local radio station promotions
 - Flyers (1 page) as a start, then later Booklets/Pamphlets (multi-page), as you have more momentum & support
 - Area signage/billboards
 - Partner with other local or regional organizations that are marketing their towns or events. This co-marketing can lower your costs and give you visibility to your audience
 - Submissions to Awards Programs sponsored by Local/State/Federal organizations –great way to get your community visible to a broader audience whether you win the prize or not
 - Region radio and television ads – probably a longer term item due to expense
5. **Determine the success of the marketing campaign.** Find ways to measure the success of your campaign. There is no need to waste time, energy, and money on a campaign that is ineffective. Consider using the following methods for measuring effectiveness:
- Create and distribute a survey to locals and tourists to determine effectiveness.
 - What prompted you to visit [insert what is being marketed]?
 - How did you hear about [what is being marketed]?
 - Is this your first visit to [what is being marketed]?
 - When you hear our [what is being marketed] name, what is the first thing that comes to mind?
 - Measure traffic into the community prior to and during/after the marketing campaign.
 - Measure community revenue and/or accommodation tax prior to the marketing campaign and then again during and after the campaign.

LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES

- Find out what your community is already trying to improve or promote and build on that momentum. Find out who is working on this and come together collectively to help promote the community.
- Think about what you can do to promote the local economy. Spartanburg's "Love Where You Live" campaign works to promote their businesses. The businesses in turn are more likely to promote civic and nonprofit organizations that improve the community.
- Use several different methods for marketing; it will allow you to reach a greater audience.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **What unique methods should I use to market my community?** Consider car stickers and magnets. They will then be seen by everyone the car passes. Also utilize all forms of media, including social media.
- **How can my marketing campaign be as effective as possible?** Collaborations and partnerships with other community organizations. Combine all aspects of the community into one campaign and everyone benefits!

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Charlotte (<http://www.charlottesgotalot.com>) Official website for this NC city. Moving away from the “Queen City” tagline to something more experiential, this marketing focuses on the large amount (ie. “got a lot”) activity (ex. travel, tourism, career) that is available in the area.

Las Vegas (<http://www.lasvegas.com/>) The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority has had a wildly successful marketing campaign. They are a prime example of using a slogan as an effective marketing tool with their “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.” slogan.

Pure Michigan (<http://www.michigan.org/>) The state of Michigan has successfully marketed their state through the use of television ads depicting their scenic state and the activities they offer and a robust website full of places to stay, shop, eat, and play in their state.

This How-To: Marketing Guide is part of the How-To Guides for Community Vibrancy, an initiative of Ten at the Top’s Community Vibrancy Task Force. The task force includes stakeholders from across the Upstate with a goal to maintain and reinvigorate the vibrancy in our region’s small towns and urban areas. For more information about Ten at the Top, please visit www.tenatthetop.org.
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