



Generating publicity for your event

A step by step guide to publicising your event

Whether you want to attract your audience or gain recognition for your project/organisation the following pages offer useful tips on publicity and promotion. If you have run events before, much of this will be familiar, but there are enough suggestions for you to try something new this year.

Research

A well-planned, well-managed publicity campaign can be of enormous benefit, but it should form part of an overall event strategy. Before you begin your publicity campaign you must know the nature of the event and your target audience. See *Running an Einstein Year event* (available at www.einsteinyear.org) for more information. Once all that is in place you can begin your campaign.

1. Nominate a Press/Publicity Officer

Choose a good spokesperson: someone who can absorb facts quickly and put across a clear, concise message. Ensure they will be available in the weeks before, during and immediately after the event. Find out what other events are being organised in your area—a joint press office and/or publicity campaign may be possible.

Their role and responsibilities:

- to keep a record of who has been contacted and what was discussed.
- to monitor media coverage before, during and after the event.
- Keep everyone informed before, during and after the event.
- to circulate press releases, briefing notes and copies of all media coverage.
- to keep a note of the media who attend the event—useful future contacts.
- to thank journalists who have given the event good coverage.
- to take into account results of previous evaluations.

The Press Officer will need:

- telephone.
- answerphone.
- fax.
- computer.
- printer.
- internet access.
- plenty of stationery.

2. Research your target audience

To market your event effectively you will need to understand your audience. See *Running an Einstein Year event* for more information on target audiences. Identify their habits and interests. It may be helpful to think of someone, a neighbour perhaps, who represents the target audience.

Some questions you could ask the representative:

- Where do you find out about local events?
- What types of events do you attend?
- What types of event don't you attend?—and why?

The more opinions you collect the better you can target your promotion. Remember that people will tell you what they think you want to hear, so try not to ask leading questions.

3. Market your event

Marketing concerns how the event is presented to the target audience. One event can be packaged in a number of different ways to appeal to different audiences.

An examination of stained glass windows in a church could appeal to the congregation of the church, people interested in local history, and local artists, if marketed differently for each audience. An event that aims to attract members of the general public and has a lengthy title containing subject specific jargon is unlikely to achieve success, but if the target audience includes members of a particular profession, this might be the right approach.

Try to consider how different audiences would respond to:

- imagery.
- vocabulary.
- font style and size.
- size/length of publicity materials.
- serious/fun presentation.

People do not change their habits, routines or preconceptions for one event. It is extremely difficult to attract people who would not normally visit a museum to a special event held there unless there is some compelling reason.

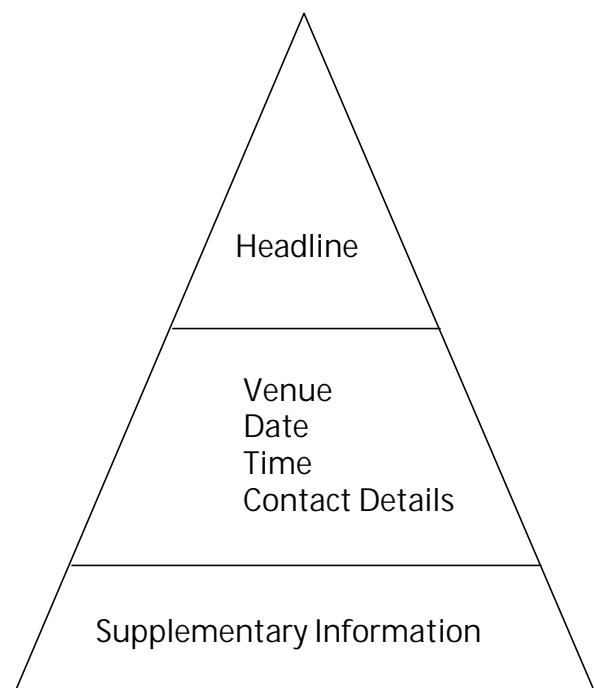
4. Draw up some basic information

A useful first step is to draw up a short text that can be used as a basis for promotion. Nobody wants to read pages and pages of dense text without knowing what it is. Similarly people often throw away unrecognisable flyers.

Think about the way we read (left to right and top to bottom). The most important information should go at the top and the least important at the bottom right—drawing a triangle can help you decide what should go where.

The title/headline should refer to the information most likely to catch the attention of your target audience, drawing them into the key features and information they will need to attend.

Once you have a standard text, you will find it can be adapted to various written promotional methods including: invitations, mailouts, posters, e-marketing and press releases.



Promotional methods

This section examines how and when to use some of the many available promotional methods. Choose the methods that are most suited to your target audience, event and resources to form your publicity campaign.

All printed matter (invitations, letters, flyers, posters, advertisements) should be designed with the target audience in mind—this may mean having a number of different versions for the same event. Local art colleges can be a source of professional design at minimum cost, as students may be interested as part of a project.

1. Networking

Networking is a good way to promote an event. A few phone calls and conversations can quickly snowball into an ever-expanding number of people. Organisations may be willing to promote the event in their own publicity material *e.g.* email newsletter. People you could consider talking to might include:

- personal contacts.
- professional contacts.
- like-minded associations.
- specialist interest groups.
- community groups.
- local businesses.
- local council.
- journalists.
- people who have previously attended events.

2. Invitations

Invitations can be a good way to reach specific audiences such as:

- schools.
- VIPs.
- clubs.
- friends.
- colleagues.

You may wish to include other promotional material (*e.g.* flyers) with the invitation.

3. Mailouts

If the target audience is a small, easily identified group, (*i.e.* local schools), the most effective means of promotion may be direct mail—this involves sending a letter and/or other promotional material through the post.

Mailing to named contacts is the best practice but this is not always possible. If the mailout is going to schools, the Local Education Authority office may allow it to go in their 'black bag', a weekly internal distribution to all schools in the county.

4. E-marketing

This is an effective and inexpensive method of getting your message across to a large number of people, either by direct e-mail, or by indirect marketing through websites.

Text should always be in the body of the message—many servers reject messages with attachments from unknown sources. As well as contacting the same people as you would for networking (see above) you could also try:

- e-mail distribution groups—these can be found on the internet.
e.g. www.mailbase.ac.uk, www.topica.com—list owners may post a message.
- local community, town and county websites.
- free listings websites e.g. www.uk-event-guide.co.uk, www.whatsonwhen.com
- other websites on the subject of the event.

5. Flyers

A well-designed flyer can catch the attention with just a few words. With careful thought this does not have to cost a lot. It doesn't even have to be in colour.

Flyers can be distributed through:

- mailouts.
- handouts.
- displays in prominent places e.g. libraries, shops, schools, leisure centres and clubs.

6. Banners

Banners should be displayed in prominent places—e.g. on the outside of buildings and in town centres. Consider the places your target audience frequents when choosing your sites. Check whether you need permission from the local council before investing in a banner, to avoid disappointment.

7. Posters

Posters should be liberally displayed in as many places as possible. Approach organisations who may be willing to display your posters in their corridors and staff rooms. Remember to put posters up in your own organisation. If you wish to attract the general public it can be useful to focus on public buildings e.g. library, town hall, hospitals. Do remember that fly-posting is illegal.

8. BA What's on

Don't forget to include your event in the BA's what's on section. You can enter all the details through the website www.the-ba.net and they will appear in the fully searchable online programme.

Using the Media

If the target audience is the general public or a large, broad group, local and national media may be a useful promotional vehicle. Ideally, newspapers, and possibly radio and television could run a story beforehand as well as cover the event.

1. Prepare a media list

Many of your local media organisations will be listed in the Yellow Pages and the library may hold good media directories. The Citizens' Advice Bureau and university press offices might be willing to help, too. An internet source is the Newspaper Society: www.newspapersoc.org.uk. The list should include:

- local and regional daily and weekly papers (including free sheets).
- local press and photographic agencies.
- trade journals.
- magazines.
- freelance journalists.
- local BBC and independent radio and television stations.

If the event warrants national coverage, add some national papers and stations to the list. Next, identify the right contacts. For the printed press this is probably the news editor or the features editor, although the event may be interesting to others, e.g. the science or education editor. For broadcast media it is probably best to contact the forward planning department.

Timing is crucial. TV, radio and the printed press all work to different fixed deadlines and features generally need more preparation than news items. Find out the deadlines for everyone on the list and work to those. See also the table **Timing Guidelines** below.

2. The printed press

There are various ways to inform and involve the press:

- previews.
- briefings.
- photocalls.
- press releases.

It is important to choose those most suitable for the event—lectures do not make interesting photocalls. Remember that the needs and interests of the journalists are different to those of the audience.

Timing: Feature articles in a magazine may work a few weeks ahead of publication. Daily papers work on the next day's paper, and weekly papers usually have a Tuesday deadline for a Friday publication. Once again ensure the information is provided well in advance.

Press Releases

This is the journalist's introduction to a story. It needs to stand out from all the other news items: the crash, the crime, the court case, as well as regular features such as fashion and entertainment. The press release should be delivered no later than five working days before the event (bearing in mind the deadlines).

A sample press release is included in the appendix, but a few points to consider are:

- use one and a half or double line spacing.
- leave wide margins.
- use a maximum of 2 pages.
- use capital letters for names, with titles in lower case, *i.e.* director.
- if a celebrity is involved, state the nature of their fame - e.g. actor John Cleese.
- refer initially to people by title, first name, surname, and designation, e.g. Professor John Smith head of the department of physiology at the University of Bath. Thereafter, refer to them only by their title and surname.
- write short sentences and state facts rather than opinions.
- avoid technical terms, jargon, exaggeration and flowery prose.
- day and date of release at the top.
- the title and first paragraph should be concise, relevant and capture the reader's attention.
- who? why? what? when? where? and how? are the most important elements.
- include a short quote from someone closely involved in the project.
- include your name and contact details (address, telephone, fax, e-mail and www) at the end.
- a 'note to editors' can add practical details e.g. exact location and directions.

For best results, telephone 2/3 days after sending in the press release. Check whether it was received and if anyone will attend/cover the event. This can significantly improve the level of coverage; it is also an extra opportunity to sell the event.

Press briefings

This is an event to inform the media about what you will be doing. A weekday morning a couple of weeks before the event is the best time to arrange the briefing. A suggested format follows:

- invite the media by email/fax a week in advance.
- ring a few days in advance to confirm who will be attending.
- prepare a press pack containing:
 - press release(s).
 - information about the organisation(s) and event(s) concerned.
 - contact names and telephone numbers.
- set the room up as an auditorium, with a top-table for the speakers.

- ensure a slide projector, a microphone or overhead projector etc. are provided if required.
- ensure that the briefing lasts a maximum of 30 minutes with a further 15 minutes for questions.
- journalists may wish to talk to the speakers afterwards, so ensure they are available.
- make sure there is an empty, quiet room available for radio interviews afterwards.
- an introduction from a chairperson, followed by a brief explanation from each speaker.
- a mini-demonstration can help bring an event to life for the media, e.g. chemistry experiments that the local school will be staging as their event.
- post the press packs to anyone who does not attend.

Photocalls and photoshoots

The ideal subject for a photocall is a simple, bold image. One or two people interacting with a visually striking exhibit generally works well. Small, intricate experiments or hoards of people moving about do not have the same visual impact. Photographers have their own ideas about which shots will work. A sample photocall invitation is in the appendix. A suggested format for setting up a photocall follows:

- Schedule a weekday morning before the event or at a specified time during the event.
- Send the invitation to the picture editors of organisations on the media list.
- Provide details about the subject of the photograph and a press release about the event.
- Organise your own photographer.

Take good quality digital photographs. Send them out the same day on e-mail or on CD by 1st class post to the picture editor of publications that did not attend the photocall. Include details, a caption and a press release. If you do not have access to a digital camera you will need good quality 5x7" black and white prints, sent in a board backed envelope to prevent bending.

It is good practice to get the subjects' permission in writing. For minors you will need to get their guardian's permission.

Advertising

Sometimes the media are more prepared to include a piece about an event that is also advertised with them. Advertising means accurate exposure is guaranteed for a particular time and place.

Find out advertising rates for the organisations on the media list and make a choice based on cost, readership/listeners and date of publication or broadcast. It is worth discussing the possibility of a discount, particularly if taking out a number of advertisements. Many papers also have charity discounts. Check whether the paper lays out the artwork. Send the exact wording and suggested layout in digital and printed format. Always ask to see a proof if possible.

Supplements

Many publications produce monthly/weekly supplements around specific themes. Find out the schedule and you may be able to contribute with editorial content or advertising.

Other options

Two other sections of the local paper could be useful:

The listings or “What’s On” page is often free although it often has a long lead time—a sample listings entry is included in the appendix.

The Letters to the Editor page can also be used if features and news journalists seem reluctant to cover the event, but you will need to link the event to an issue of local topicality.

A local paper or radio station might be interested in collaboration (e.g. a coupon collection for discounted entry, a quiz, competition or challenge that highlights the event).

The broadcast media

Organising radio and television coverage is very similar to working with the printed press. Having identified the relevant contacts from your media list they will require similar information to that in the press release. Again deadlines need to be observed although the broadcast media is often more flexible—local radio can run an interview at a few minutes notice, although this is not recommended; a television film crew needs time to arrive and set up.

Interviews

Before an interview gather some basic information:

- Prepare the main message to get across—having three main points keeps it concise.
- Is it a live or recorded interview? (live is more challenging as you have to be right first time, recorded is more flexible although you have no control over the final editing).
- Who is the audience? How much will they already know about the subject?
- How long will the broadcast last?
- Where will the interview take place? Would the crew be prepared to go to the spokesperson? If for radio, could it be conducted over the telephone?
- Discuss and confirm the subject of the interview. Ensure the interviewer has all the necessary information. Check what the first or the main questions will be.
- Be aware of any sensitive issues that might crop up.
- For telephone interviews request that the interviewer calls your number and then pass the call to the interviewee yourself—this avoids the risk of the interviewee being unprepared.

The interview itself

- Speak slowly and clearly, keep it simple and avoid jargon.
- Be relaxed, treat the interview as a conversation
- Be positive and enthusiastic.
- You can explain how your event is part of Einstein Year—a UK wide event.
- Do not forget to mention the name of your institution or organisation and any sponsors.
- Give the venue, date and time of your event.
- If on TV, avoid dark glasses and patterned clothes—particularly stripes which look fuzzy on camera.

Syndicated features and interviews

A syndicated feature is an article/broadcast that appears in a number of publications/programmes of a particular media group; they are a good way to get identical coverage in a number of different media.

It is worth finding out a media group's policy on syndicated features before approaching them as some publications are highly competitive and would not accept identical articles.

Send a letter with full details to the syndicated features editor suggesting they might like to use the information as a basis for a feature. Bear in mind the different ways of packaging the event that

might appeal to the editor. A food based event could form part of a feature on healthy eating, which would work very differently as a news story.

A syndicated radio interview is very similar. There are commercial companies who produce a short taped interview and sell them to radio stations to play. A local independent radio station may be able to suggest someone to contact.

Timing

At what point should you start publicising your event? As with many things the earlier the better—people's diaries fill up quickly. All media organisations have their own deadlines to work to and these will need to be considered in planning your strategy—see the table ***Timing Guidelines*** below.

Data Protection

Whether posting or emailing the data protection act may well apply to your promotional activities.

Appendix

Timing Guidelines

4-6 weeks before	Send out listings release. Design flyer and send to printers. Check design with sponsors if necessary.
2-3 weeks before	Circulate flyers and posters. Begin e-marketing. Begin writing press release, get all quotes checked. Arrange photo opportunity/press briefing if necessary.
1 week before	Send out press release for editorial/feature articles. Send out photocall and briefing invitations. Send out e-marketing reminders.
A few days before	Call to confirm attendance at photocalls and briefings.
On the day	Take own photos. Follow up media enquiries. Collect evaluation forms.
After the event	Thank all those involved and media who covered the story. Analyse evaluation forms for contacts and ideas for next year.

...and finally

Working with the media is fun and rewarding. There are no guarantees of its success but even if you are not lucky this time round, you will have succeeded in making them better informed about you in the future.

Generating your own publicity is written and produced by the BA's National Science Week team.

National Science Week Team
The BA
Wellcome Wolfson Building
165 Queen's Gate
London
SW7 5HE
020 7019 4941/37
nsw@the-ba.net
www.the-ba.net/nsw