Marketing connects buyers with products

Marketing is not simply advertising. It’s about understanding your audience; tailoring your products and services to meet your customers’ needs; providing a visitor experience to suit them; and telling the audience about it.

Successful marketers understand their product and know their audience. They know that consuming or experiencing the product will please and improve the lives of buyers.

Marketing is essential to your museum’s long-term survival and growth.

Marketing is about communication

Successful marketing is about communicating what’s unique and valuable about your museum and presenting it to those who want to hear.

It’s about telling them what’s going on, what’s new and what’s interesting.

It’s about communicating things simply: the opening hours, the cost of entry, and what people are likely to find, or experience, once they come through the door.

Think about your audience

Most museums have diverse audiences and draw together people interested in local history, tourists, families looking for recreational activities, schools and education groups, researchers and historians.

Each of these groups are tuned into different media outlets so marketing your museum is about using different methods to capture and attract each group.

The language you use in your marketing materials needs to be understood by each audience, and the ‘bait’ you tempt them with will be valued. Researchers and historians are more likely to respond to hearing about your ‘local history research room’, whereas younger audiences would prefer an invitation to ‘come an use our costume box and dress like a bushranger’ and so on.

The importance of a marketing plan

A marketing plan is the road map of where your museum is going. It should relate to both the Strategic Plan and the Business Plan.

It contains detailed marketing approaches on all aspects of the museum including public programs, education programs, social events and general themes of the museum.

Include the methods you will use to reach your audience segments—mailouts, flyers, posters, newspaper inserts, billboards, press releases, website and paid adverts etc.

Be realistic and don’t oversell yourselves or say you are something you are not.

Think brand awareness

Creating brand awareness is key to developing audiences and is an effective strategy in marketing your museum.

Create a brand for your museum by developing a logo to assist with visual recognition of your marketing materials. To ensure your logo is effective, engage a graphic designer as they are skilled in combining aspects of your museum into a visual brand.
Use the logo widely on printed material, museum signs, advertisements, and on your website.

Using social media can also generate brand awareness. Many small museums have vibrant Facebook pages which are used to share facts about individual objects, describe what’s happening in the museum, announce public events and provide community information.

A press release is not marketing

Press releases are primarily designed for the media; they package your news item or important information into a digestible format specifically for use by radio stations, newspapers or online publishers. Press releases rely on the audience of the media house rather than your core audience.

Relying on press releases is not a marketing strategy in itself and won’t deliver long term audience growth. While well-crafted press releases are an essential part of good marketing, they invariably provide a granular or detailed view of one thing that’s happened or is soon to happen, and have a very short shelf-life.

Don’t underestimate word-of-mouth

M&G NSW recently launched results of their research on museum audiences. Word-of-mouth was the most commonly cited way people found out about a museum.

Good customer service was paramount to the success of their visit, so don’t be shy – welcome each and every visitor, be ready to offer interpretative information if they require it, and as they leave ask them to recommend the museum to others.

You might also like...

Guess who’s going to the Museum?
2015 Museum Audience Evaluation Study

Sample marketing plans:
http://www.museummarketing.co.uk/
http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/research-and-resources/resources/publications/publication/233/your-marketing-plan

Museum Marketing for Non-Marketers
http://www.tronvigggroup.com/museum-marketing/

If you have a hard copy of Museum Methods: A Practical Manual for Managing Small Museums produced in 2002 by Museums Australia, there’s an entire chapter dedicated to Marketing. Have a look.