

THE MANSFIELD AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

GUIDE

Come celebrate our

GRAND OPENING



WHAT'S INSIDE



PREPARE FOR YOUR GRAND OPENING WITH THIS CHECKLIST

- Design Invitations
- Prepare your guest list. What's the target audience you're hoping to attend your event? Current clients or prospective clients? Local dignitaries and politicians? Family members and friends? If you are looking to attract a broader crowd, is there a special demographic you want to attract (i.e., students, singles, couples, seniors)?
- Create both an A list and B list. The A list are guests that you have a personal relationship with. These A list persons should be personally contacted by the owner.
- Possible Guests Might Include
 - business partners
 - friends and family
 - financiers/bankers
 - contractors
 - employees and their families
 - customers
 - neighboring businesses
 - elected officials/council members/mayor - Please note that the Chamber does not send invitations or manage responses for you
 - neighbors
 - landlord and building tenants
 - Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media contacts
 - Contacts in your phone, Outlook, etc.



PREPARE FOR YOUR GRAND OPENING WITH THIS CHECKLIST

- Decide on your communications strategy
- Advertising
- Flyer distribution/invitations
- Social media
- Email, digital marketing, etc.
- Press releases
- Agenda or Program. Typically, 20- 0 minutes long, include speaker order
- Emcee or Guest Speakers
- Additional activities (tours, exhibits, posters, activities, games for children, etc.)
- Press Releases
- Caterer
- Photography
- Set Up
- Giveaways/Door Prizes
- Parking Assistance
- Greeters
- VIP Coordinator
- Tour Guides / Exhibits / Activities
- Music
- Microphone / PA System
- Thanking Departing Guest
- Ribbon and Scissors
- Clean-Up
- Sending thank-you notes
- Post photos and video and information on your website, newsletter, Facebook, etc.

25 WAYS TO PROMOTE YOUR EVENT FOR FREE

1. Word of mouth

Start with your current customers, employees, friends, neighbors, and supporters. Use your meetings, regular communications, newsletters, Facebook page, Twitter feed and Instagram account to let them know about your event and encourage them to tell their friends and friends of friends. Word of mouth is still one of the most powerful selling tools because it comes with a reliable, credible endorsement.

2. Tickets

Even better, get the people who are spreading the word to carry books of tickets so that the transaction can be completed in one simple operation. If you do this you'll have to make regular checks to see who's sold how many, in order to calculate how many tickets remain and ensure the money comes in.

3. Email bulletin

Make sure you have your customers, supporters, business partners on email and send a mass email to let them know about the event (where, when, why, cost, RSVP etc). Not only is this a very cheap form of communication, it ensures people are notified instantly, and that they can easily pass on the message to others they think might be interested. You can issue a reminder but don't misuse this power to badger people continually - that's known as spamming.

4. Email signature

Add a paragraph to your email signature to let people know about an upcoming event. Try something like this:

"The Good Cause annual dinner will be held at the Best Western on May 1....

5. Fast forward

In your email to supporters, ask them to forward your message to people they think would be interested in your event or to post the information on any site or notice board they think would be appropriate. It's amazing the way people have access to networks that you would never think of or have access to yourself.

6. Posters

For local events, whether a fete or a garage sale, use the tried and true poster.

Photocopy your event details (preferably onto A3 paper, if your copier runs to it), add color, and stick up copies wherever regulations allow. (A word of warning here. Many local cities have a zero-tolerance policy on posters on city or public property, declaring even community groups flyers as graffiti, so check first before putting posters up on public - rather than private - property.) Areas with lots of pedestrian traffic or car stops are gold. And remember to take your posters down after the event - it's good etiquette.

7. Shop windows

Many local shops will be prepared to display your information in their window if you ask politely. And even if they don't want it in their window, they might agree to put it up in their staff lunch room. Again, collect your posters afterwards. Don't forget libraries, office noticeboards, cafes and laundromats - basically, anywhere people gather.

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8. Signs

Catch the passing trade with a large sign. If you're a prominent local organization such as a school, you might be able to get a local real estate firm to donate a sign and a sign writer. Otherwise, ask for a volunteer from among your members to put their painting skills to the test. Put your sign up in a high traffic zone and add balloons and flags. (Check with your local city first.)

For a good cause

9. Other people's space

You've got nothing to lose by asking for freebies. Some advertising agencies take on pro bono work for good causes. And because the big agencies spend so much with media organizations, they can sometimes call on favors for space for something they support.

10. Other people's mail

Why not ask for a free ride? Approach local businesses that do regular mail outs and ask if they would mind including a sheet advertising your event in their next mail out. What's in it for them? Research on buying patterns has shown that people respond to companies and products that support community causes, so make sure the businesses you contact know this. For businesses that are unable to support your group financially, in-kind support may be a good alternative.

11. Other people's reading

With enough advance notice, you can chase up the editors of newsletters even vaguely linked to your area, or your area of interest. Ask them to plug your event in their next issue. It could be the newsletter of a school, a local progress association, an arts organizations, a peak body, or a similar group in the next town or suburb.

12. Local politicians' newsletters

Most elected officials put out regular newsletters on what is happening in the electorate (some more often than others). You're paying for it, so you might as well ask for a plug. While you're at it, ask whether you can leave brochures or put up flyers in your local representative's office.

13. Local city publications

Most cities produce regular bulletins telling residents what is happening in the city/district. Most have a section on upcoming events. If you are well-organized, you can get your event listed in a publication delivered to every household in the area. They normally have a long lead time, so you'll need to plan ahead.

14. News - local newspapers

Your local newspaper is always looking for 'news' to fill its pages, so with the right pitch and plenty of time you should be able to get an article in. Work your media list and try out stories over the phone to see which gets the best response. Send your press release out as far in advance as possible, on letterhead, and include professionally prepared photos. Your release should not be written like an advertisement. It must be concise, newsworthy, of interest to the public, and informative, not overtly promotional.

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15. News - major papers

The art of getting free advertising lies in converting advertising copy into 'news'. It's much harder to get into the metropolitan papers than the locals, but it's by no means impossible. If you have a big name involved in your event, try to get them to do some pre-publicity, offer a snippet to the columnists, or look for a link between your event and other news. Your first question must always be, 'What's the hook?' And after that, 'What's the story?' And after that, 'Where's the picture?' If you get all three right, you'll increase your chances of getting a run.

16. News - radio

Send your media release to local radio stations as well - to the news desk and also to program hosts. Look for more than one run: aim for multiple appearances, but understand that you will need to think of a different story line for each one, or a different timeslot. One popular way of getting your message across is as a talkback caller - just ring in and give details. Most presenters frown on callers using their time for free ads, but they tend to be a lot more sympathetic if callers are plugging a genuine good cause.

17. News - TV

The problem with TV news is that reporters need footage to illustrate their story, so they tend to report on things that have already happened rather than things that you want to happen. Unless you've actually involved the network as a sponsor, you are going to have to work hard to get the cameras involved, and that means setting up a picture opportunity or TV stunt that is so spectacular, so colorful, so active and so much fun that they can't resist. Failing that, invite the TV stations to the event itself - it won't help you to sell tickets in advance, but it might help your chances of getting a run next year.

18. Newswire Services like Newswire.com

These services allow subscribers to publish their media releases via their website for a small fee. The releases don't get distributed (you have to pay extra for that) but you will be amazed at how many players in the industry - people at radio stations, newspapers, newsletters and websites - rely on this service for content, often because they can't afford to subscribe to the full AP newswire. Even if you get only one interview as a result, it's probably worth the two minutes it takes you to upload your media release, particularly if you have already paid the subscriber fee.

19. Community service ads - newspapers

Most major newspapers run community service ads for community groups as "fillers". The ads do exactly that: they fill space where advertising doesn't quite fit. The competition for space in major media is quite fierce and event plugs are rare - more often the space is used to feature the group itself. But if you produce an ad that points to your website, and your home page features a big reminder of your event, it can't hurt. Most newspapers require completed, properly designed ads, and they tend to fill space in the back pages of the papers, but a free ad is a free ad and every little bit helps.

20. Community service ads - TV

Television networks provide free airtime for community service announcements. Securing a spot can be tough going, so check before you spend time and money shooting an ad. You might provide a simple message to be read out by TV presenters, or you might need to provide promotional video. Check with the network to find out where you should send your announcement and in which format. Even if your community service announcement is broadcast at odd hours of the night and day and doesn't quite have the ratings of the Oscars, it will still be seen. And even if the people who see it they don't turn up to your event, at least they'll know who you are and what you do. Community TV stations are another good option - they may even shoot an ad for you if you ask them nicely.

21. Community radio

Most community radio stations are very keen to support local organizations and tend to be underutilized by groups looking for local media. www.tunein.com
Can we come in for an interview?
Can you help us to record a free announcement to be aired during the week? Different stations will have different attitudes to this. Some stations will be able to assist you to make your announcement for free, some will charge a small fee to cover time and costs, and others won't have the resources to do it at all. But it's worth asking the question. Alternatively, you could approach the media department in your local TAFE college or university and suggest they help your cause. You get the ad, they get to produce a real ad. Some secondary schools are also very experienced in media production and could be helpful.

22. What's On

Major papers have a "What's On" section in the body of the paper or in a special weekend supplement or in both. This is an often-overlooked resource. One small non-profit told us,
"Getting your event listed in the Calendar of Events is the easiest and most effective free advertising you can do. In my estimation, if the papers charged the same for a quarter of a page ad and a listing in the Calendar of Events, I would lean towards the Calendar of Events. It works!"

23. **Online What's On**

Many websites have general calendars of events, just like newspapers; some of these are aimed at particular markets, such as tourists, and some are put up as a public service by municipalities or government agencies. Your chamber of commerce has a public calendar as well. Add all of them to your media list. See our web promotion help sheet for a few of these sites.

24. **Facebook**

Of course you should use your group's Facebook page to promote your event. But look beyond your own page - there are Facebook pages for almost any issue you think of. Look for the ones related to your cause or event and post your details there as well.

25. **Websites**

It might sound like a no-brainer, but be sure to put the details of your event on your website, preferably on the home page. Anybody who hears vaguely about the event is likely to go to your website (or google it) and look for the details. Update your home page regularly - out-of-date websites create a very bad first impression.



**Make sure and add your event to the
Chamber Calendar!**



YOUR OPENING SPEECH...

Below is a basic basic script for an owner:

Welcome to _____! Today we celebrate the grand opening of our _____ business. We are so thankful to so many of you, who have been with us every step of the way, so that this day would finally come. My name is _____, and I am the owner of _____.

I would like to introduce a few special persons to you (may include anyone you want like family members, employees, dignitaries, elected officials, etc.).

Next on our agenda is the ribbon cutting ceremony, which will be followed by a tour or opening of our facility (which can be either guided by a member of your staff, or self-guided if your time is limited.)

Instructions:

Assemble the persons you want in the photo. Two persons will hold the stretched ribbon, the owner or other persons will then pose for a picture behind the ribbon. Make sure the scissors are open, to make it appear the ribbon is about to be cut. This is your opportunity to take several pictures (before cutting the ribbon). Then simply cut the ribbon after all the pictures are taken.

Let us now cut the ribbon.

On behalf of _____ we would like to thank each of you for taking time out of your busy schedule today. Thank You.