Marketing on a Shoestring:
20 ways to raise your profile

When there is uncertainty around funding, continuous communication with your stakeholders and consistent focus on raising your profile is vital. Ensuring those you support, or those who may support your cause, know why you exist and what you do is even more important when funds are tight. As is raising awareness and sharing stories of your impact with potential funders, sponsors, donors, and volunteers.

There are lots of free and low-cost ways to help you be consistently persistent at raising your organisation's profile and spreading the word about the work you do. Use the following as a checklist to identify new opportunities for raising your profile.

❑ Use your email signature as a promotional tool

Email signatures are an easy way to make a professional first impression and Microsoft Outlook and Gmail have easy-to-use templates which can be customised to promote your service, engage with a donor, attract a volunteer, or share your current fundraising campaign.

Check out Canva (canva.com) for templates you can tweak to include a promotional message and buttons to redirect people to your website, donations page or social media. The potential reach is huge! Think about the number of emails your team sends each day. If everyone includes a message in their email signature, you can reach hundreds, if not thousands of people over a few months, all for free. For simple step-by-step instructions Google 'Create clickable email signatures with Canva.'

❑ Enter awards

Entering awards is a great way to put the spotlight on your organisation and your people. Whether it's business awards, volunteer awards, community spirit awards or something else, by entering you are saying to the community 'we know we are good at what we do'. The awards themselves bring publicity. Make sure you piggy-back on the publicity and tell your story about why you are entering. Check out the New Zealander of the Year Awards, Trusted Brands NZ, For Purpose Reporting Awards, Sustainable Business Awards, Business of the Year Excellence in Community Impact, there are also awards for governance, marketing, diversity, use of technology. Also check out the business association or Chamber of Commerce awards in your community. Whether you win or not, awards are a great way to share stories of your impact and raise your profile.

❑ Collab with an influencer

Influencer marketing is big business with some being paid thousands of dollars per post to promote a brand to their followers. When it's done well through a trusted person, influencer marketing can enable your organisation to reach a large and engaged audience in a personal and authentic way. Connecting with an influencer who is aligned with your purpose and values can be an incredibly effective way to raise your profile with your target audience. In the spirit of giving back, some influencers are happy to champion a cause or provide a shout out free of charge. Look for an influencer who embodies your 'why'. Perhaps it's a chef who champions food sustainability. Or a high-profile new Mum who's passionate about maternal health. Find a way to make a connection, ask if they'd be happy to learn about the difference your organisation makes and identify opportunities to raise your profile which work for both the influencer and your organisation.

❑ Guerilla marketing

Gone are the days of over-the-top publicity stunts. Nowadays, guerilla marketing is about catching people where they are and interacting with them in a memorable way. Where can you go to connect with your community? How can you 'surprise and delight' to get people talking? Maybe it's serving zero waste soup at Saturday sport? A pop-up shop or a free concert in the park? Or random acts of kindness for the crowd headed to a concert. Being creative in what you do and how you do it is key, like the budget advisory service who created bookmarks with their key message and contact details and placed them in every book related to budgeting in their local library (with permission of course). UNICEF's dirty water vending machine in New York is a famous example. Watch the video on YouTube (tinyurl.com/4s3h73wf) to see their campaign.

Source: hubspot.com

Create a cool giveaway

Everyone loves the chance to win. A fun or unusual prize is a great way to get noticed on social media. The more unique or novel the prize the better! What prize could you put up for grabs? A never-before-peek behind the scenes? A year's supply of something donated by a sponsor? The chance to name something cool? Or even glamping in your community garden? There are a few things you need to be aware of before you post your competition details, check out the guide to running a Facebook or Instagram giveaway at faceupnow.co.nz .

Try new content ideas

The 80:20 rule is a handy rule of thumb to keep in mind for social media content. 80% of what you share should be useful for your audience – think educational, informative, engaging, inspiring, and fun. 20% about your organisation – for example, the difference you make, sharing stories of impact, promoting your events, or attracting volunteers. Avoid using social media to continually 'make an ask', which is all one-way traffic. Finding fresh content ideas can take time and effort. For a few pointers, email hello@exult.co.nz and we'll send you a copy of 'Building Relationships Through Social Media: 75 awesome content ideas' from Tonic Magazine Issue 53. (Pictured below).

Building Relationships Through Social Media:
75 Awesome content ideas

Need some fresh new ideas to engage with your social media followers? 80% of what you share on social media should be useful for your audience. Think fun, engaging, inspiring, informative, and educational. 20% of what you share should be about your organisation, the difference you make, stories, promoting your events, building your volunteer team etc. Sometimes we fall into the trap of using social media to continuously make an ask, which is all one-way traffic. It is an opportunity to start a conversation and build relationships. A good rule of thumb for posting is 3 x content posts for every ask – content, content, content then ask.

Share others' content too, things you see that you know your followers will love, that they can share too. We've also heard the 80/20 rule applied here, share 80% content from others, 20% of your own unique content. It can make finding content much easier... as can these awesome ideas. 75 of them!

Meet the team, share about the people who make your organisation great

Tell the story behind your organisation's name and logo

At the start of the year share your goals and priorities

Talk about what your fundraising efforts will be used for

Post a motivational story

Introduce the person/team who looks after your social media to new followers

Host an AMA (ask me anything) and answer people's questions

Share a recipe

Post a meme

Share your fundraising goals and progress so far

Share a motivational story you've read about someone else

Post a Tuesday Tip

Post a 'Thursday Throwback'

Share your 'why' - your organisation's vision

Share the tools you use in your sector

Share an inspirational quote

Post photos of your mission in action

Share an infographic

Do a behind the scenes tour

Share a resource or tool that you love that your followers could benefit from too

Share a win or success (yours or someone else's)

Post 'a day in the life' of someone in your team

Share how your organisation was founded (with photos if you have them)

Share something new you've learned recently

Share a lesson learnt (yours or someone else's)

Do a giveaway

Post a 'fill in the blank'

Answer FAQs

Share a statistic that surprised you and any advice you can add to it

Post a sneak-peek of a new programme or activity

Get one of your team to take over posting for the day, or for the week

Share your favourite social media tools or hacks

Let people know about new content on your website

Promote your newsletter

Create bite-sized video clips

Post a blooper – something that went wrong behind the scenes

Host an interview with someone your followers would love to hear from

Post Monday Myth Buster or Monday Magic Maker!

Give a supporter a shout-out

Post a Friday Funny

Profile your board or committee members

Promote other organisations

Ask your audience what you should post next, or what they'd like to see more of

Share a team photo

Profile a new team member

Share details of other organisations who share great stuff on social media

Share your team's favourite books, apps and podcasts

Post a 'how to' video

Share your statistics and how they have made a difference

Post about trending topics when they are related to your organisation and why you exist, or when they are related to another organisation who does great things, use as an opportunity to give them a shout out

Show a before and after photo (office refresh, new team t-shirts, even a dramatic hair cut)

Share your organisation's core values

Post seasonal content – daffodils flowering, leaves changing colour or summer sunshine

Do a neighbourhood or community tour via social media - shout out to your favourite cafe, bakery, store, organisations, park etc.

Play a game – like 'match our team to their pets'

Ask someone you admire to do a guest post for you

Share a printable or downloadable you've found helpful

Take a poll

Share your experience in the sector

Post a glossary to explain commonly used terms, jargon or acronyms

Share a system or process you use that has helped you be more efficient

Show behind the scenes photos at an event

Share a countdown to an event

Share fun facts about your organisation (and other organisations)

Share 'new news' no matter how small, on what's happening in your organisation or your community

Praise your awesome volunteers

Thank your followers

Post each of your team's 'words to live by' or personal motto

Post a challenge

Talk about the issue or cause your organisation focuses on

Profile a product or any merchandise you sell to raise funds for your organisation

Share testimonials from your service users, volunteers, supporters

Share your 'what' - your organisation's mission

Share, pin, retweet and regram often and cross-channel share too!

At the end of the year share the year's highlights

Tell your story in person

Identify service organisations (e.g. Altrusa, Zonta, Soroptimist, Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions) and networking groups (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Young Professionals, BNI) in your community. They are often looking for interesting speakers for their regular meetings. It is a great opportunity to share your purpose, what you do and stories of the difference your work makes in the community. If appropriate, having a client join you to share their story in person can really make an impact. If that is not possible, share a short video story. Make sure you take information you can leave with people who ask.

Tell your story online

There are lots of places you can share your stories online and lots of different ways you can do it. Start by including some stories with relevant photographs on your website, then think about how you can introduce video stories as well. Make the most of your social media platforms to share stories and then point people back to your website or donation page. Video stories don't have to be polished and professionally edited, but if you can afford it, hiring a professional videographer is worth the investment. They know exactly how to put a clip together for maximum impact.

Network online

Join local Facebook groups and LinkedIn Local. Choose a Facebook group which fits with your purpose and target market. This is not about call to action. Think about ways you can add value to the group. Share ideas and information that helps group members understand your purpose and connect with your values (people support people they like!). Local Facebook groups often give social enterprises and charities more room to promote, talk to the admins about the rules of the group.

Network in person

A clever marketer I know believes networking is the best way to raise an organisation's profile. In fact, he sets himself a goal whenever he starts a new role to meet 100 people in his first 100 days, connecting with funders, clients, volunteers, team members, council members, trustees, local journalists and even the neighbours. Sometimes it's for a coffee, or even just a phone call to introduce himself. He tells me that even he's surprised at how simply making a connection - without making an ask, opens doors for his non-profit and leads to new opportunities.

Have a stand at trade shows, expos or events in your community

Look for opportunities to exhibit at trade fairs, expos, conferences, conventions or other events in your community. Buying space can be expensive but often events will set aside a space for community and non-profit organisations for free or at a reduced rate. Or you might make a polite ask of organisers to set up in the lobby or make use of an unsold space. If they say yes, make sure you add a sign to your stand thanking them for providing the opportunity. You could also consider sharing a stand with another organisation. Being at large events is an ideal way to get in front of lots of people.

Start a podcast

Last month 39% of Kiwis listened to a podcast, according to NZME. Starting your own podcast isn't as expensive or complicated as you may think. You need a computer, a quality microphone and podcasting software which will enable you to conduct interviews, record, edit and stream your podcast. StreamYard (streamyard.com) and Buzzsprout (buzzsprout.com) both have free offerings with 2-hours of recording and limited features, so you can try it out for free. Paid subscriptions offer more features.

Buzzsprout also offers tips for getting started. First define your concept and test it will work by sketching out what you would cover over 10 episodes. More defined concepts such as 'mental health advice for teachers' work better than broader concepts like 'mental health' which are already well-served. If you would like to explore the idea of a podcast more, Buzzsprout have a complete how-to-start a podcast step by step guide on their website.

Set up a show-stopping display

Source: payacharity.com

Water display in the Saks Fifth Avenue window, in Manhattan. Source: Vanityfair.com

Is there an empty shop window in your town or shopping centre? Contact the Council, centre manager or landlord to ask if you can use the space for a window display. They should be happy to oblige if it brightens up an empty space and is tidied away afterwards. Put up posters with a QR code linking to your website, set up a display to creatively share what you do and the difference you make for those you support or your cause.

❑ Host an event

Events tick so many boxes and are a great way to make a personal connection and to give people the opportunity to support your cause. There are endless event ideas: from a simple fundraising afternoon tea or open day through to grand gala dinners and glittering balls.

❑ Run a webinar

People appreciate information-sharing, and a webinar is a great way to share your advice and insights and grow your visibility and influence. Webinars can be live or pre-recorded, and the audience participate by submitting questions, commenting, or responding to polls. You could share practical tools and tips, success stories, learnings from the field, or explain research findings. If you use Microsoft 365, you can record your webinar via Teams. If you have Zoom, record yourself via a Zoom meeting. For more webinar tips check out goto.com/resources/how-to-create-and-host-a-webinar.

Get back to basics

Don't discount these ideas as being too simple to work as these bread-and-butter tasks can often make all the difference.

❑ Review your SEO

It's tempting to put SEO in the 'too hard basket', but search engine optimisation can be the difference between your website sinking or swimming. The difference to whether you pop up on the 1st page, or the 99th page of a Google search. SEO isn't as complicated as you'd think and doesn't require technical internet know-how. Through Digital Boost (digitalboost.business.govt.nz) Business NZ offer a brilliant, free self-paced online training course focused on websites. Set up a login, if you haven't already, click on Websites and check out the Search Engine Optimisation course. It also includes a session about Google Ads, check it out too, as you can also apply for Google Ad grants for non-profits (google.com/grants/get-started/).

❑ Check your social media settings

Social media expert Leeann Bassett says not having your social media profiles set up correctly will stop your marketing success in its tracks! Even if you've had Facebook or Instagram on the go for years, it pays to check your settings to ensure they're still fit for purpose. Leeann has a handy step by step guide on her website - faceupnow.co.nz/blog/why-social-media-profiles-set-up-correctly.

❑ Set up a Google My Business page

Google loves using Google My Business to help promote local organisations. It will help you be found when people search for you on Google. It's free and easy to set up. To have a Google My Business page and you don't need a physical address. Simply Google 'Google My Business' to get started and create a Google My Business page which links to your website and tells Google who you are.

❑ Create brand guidelines

'Be consistent' is the number one rule when raising your profile. Your audience needs to see your brand 16-20 times for it to sink in for them. While that sounds like a lot, the numbers get even higher if you keep changing the branding and messaging you use. It's important to be consistent and clear brand guidelines will help your team to confidently share your brand. Guidelines don't need to be complicated, one or two pages explaining the look, feel and sound of your brand with examples of your logo, language, images, colours, fonts and templates for often used materials. Repetition builds reputation (see what we did there!). Arm your team with what they need to use the guidelines whenever they share information related to your organisation.

❑ Give your space a spruce up

If you have physical premises, walk through your space as if you were a client, funder, or new team member. Is it organised and ship-shape or are the cobwebs winning? First impressions really do count, so grab the team for a working bee. Wash down your road signage, pull any weeds and tidy away the boxes in the corner. Ask for donations of flower cuttings or shrubs to pop in pots by the front door. You never know who's driving past and well-tended premises always make a great impression.

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