



What is marketing?

Marketing is any activity that promotes your group's offer. Marketing is best used to recruit new participants or communicate what's happening, when it's happening and who it's aimed at. It can also engage your local community, volunteers, businesses, and funders.

Four major tools you can use to market your group are:

Social media	A great way to promote what your organisation does. Facebook tends to be a good place to share information in the form of posts, videos and photographs. You can also use Instagram, twitter or YouTube to bring your organisation's activities to life.
Public relations	A way of sharing information via the media. You can write press releases and invite photographers and journalists to events with your organisation that would be of interest to their readers. Note that your funders/sponsors might require you to attain press coverage as a part of a sponsorship/funding agreement.
Your website	The most important part of your marketing toolkit. This is the first place that people will look to find out what you do and when you do it (in some cases groups use their Facebook page as their main website).
Email	A direct way of reaching participants.

Objectives

Before you start, decide what your objectives are. Do you want to attract more participants? Approach new audiences? This should help you to focus your marketing in the right place.

Not sure what your objectives are? [Request volunteer support from the Sported Hub](#) to clarify your business plan and/or marketing objectives with a Sported volunteer.

Considerations

Before you start to promote your organisation, here are some key things to consider:

- **Your competitors:** Who in your local area is competing for the time of young people/adults, not only in sport but in all general leisure opportunities?
- **Price:** What are people in your community able to pay, if anything? What are your competitors charging? Understanding your market price vs. others' is important when considering your messaging.
- **Product:** How do you make your offer stand out from your competitors? What can participants do at your group that they can't get elsewhere in the community?
- **Market:** Who are you providing the opportunity for and do you reach them? Consider youth groups, schools, referral networks, etc.
- **Promotion:** Which forms of advertising and promotion are available to you? Think about leaflets, posters and social media.
- **Features and benefits:** Tell people what's great about your organisation and who it's for.
- **Keep talking :** You want to be communicating regularly with your participants via social media or email.
- **Budget and return:** Track how people hear about you, so that you can learn what has worked for you and why. Keep a close eye on the budget and use it where you are most likely to achieve success.
- **Funding partners** – Keep track of the coverage you attain and the number of participants you attract, to feedback to funders.



How to write a marketing plan

After you have considered your competitors, your budget and what your organisation can offer its participants, the next step is to write a marketing plan.

Complete the following questions/actions to guide you in the creation of a marketing plan:

Background to your organisation

- Who are you and what do you do?
- What does your organisation aim to achieve and how?
- What is your vision?
- What are your aims and objectives?

How to measure success

- How would you know if your marketing was a success? Setting KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), such as an increase in new participants during a specific marketing campaign is a good way of measuring what your effort has achieved.

What kind of participants are you looking for?

- How large is your potential market of participants? e.g. if you're running a project for local young people, how many of them would be available to take part?
- What barriers would the participants need to overcome in order for them to take part in your activities?
- How old are they and how does that affect what kind of activities they can participate in?

How can you reach out to your intended participants?

- How do these individuals or groups spend their leisure time?
- Do they respond to social media such as Twitter and Facebook?
- Do they take part in other sports or community activities?
- Is there another organisation that has particularly good clout with them? e.g. school, youth clubs, sports clubs, referral units.

Activity features and benefits

- What's your 'Unique Selling Point' (USP)?
- What makes you stand out from the crowd?
- How would you promote your organisation over your competitors in the local area?

Marketing options

- What marketing routes could you use to reach your target audience? e.g. leafleting, posters, content on your Facebook page, paid-for ads online, PR, video, a stand at a local event, or creating your own event.
- How are similar organisations in your area promoting themselves?

Sum up what's great about your organisation

- What would potential new participants want to know about your organisation? e.g. will they get fit, meet new friends, learn new skills?
- Is your activity inclusive to disabled and non-disabled people? Consider incorporating the principles outlined in [Activity Alliance's Inclusive Communications Guide](#).
- Are your potential participants looking for a specific kind of environment to exercise? e.g. women only, LGBTQ safe space, multi-lingual.

Advertising and promotions

- Detail exactly what your promotional material will look like (e.g. size and specifications) and use a local printer to create your physical marketing materials.
- Is there someone in your committee or group with graphic design/communications experience?



Identifying opportunities

Can you highlight any gaps in the sport or activities in your area to identify the need for your organisation?

Put a marketing budget together

Break down spend and allocate funds across the financial year for marketing, keeping in mind your income and cashflow. If something works, do more of it. If it doesn't, don't spend any money on it. You can use [Sported's cashflow document example](#).

[Download Sported Marketing plan template](#)

How to use social media

Choose the best social media platform for the audience you are trying to attract e.g. young people are more involved with Instagram and Youtube, while parents are more involved with Facebook. You will want to develop a clear strategy on what you post, who is responsible for updating content and who will be responding to queries. The aim is to keep all content fresh and updated twice a week per platform.

Social Platforms



Facebook - facebook.com

- Set up a Facebook page and use it to share information with participants.
- Create engaging content that gets your participants to share it - include video and images (get proper permissions).
- Include up-to-date information on session times, upcoming events and fixtures.



Twitter – twitter.com

- Create a relevant twitter handle and use hashtags (#) to get involved in relevant conversations.
- Follow people who your target audience might be interested in and who might promote your services to their followers. The aim is to get your content into other people's networks.
- Tweet info about upcoming sessions, activities and events.



Instagram – instagram.com

- Create an Instagram business account and share photos of your sport in action (again, ensure you have permission).
- Include a link in your bio and a brief description of your organisation.
- Use tags for location, event or campaign, as a way to expand your audience.



Youtube – youtube.com

- Share short films on Youtube that are funny and likely to be shared. Youtube will allow you to easily share your content on any platform and increase chances of people searching your website if included.

General Social Media Tips

Monitor your social presence

Keep track of the number of likes, retweets, blog visits, video views and 'favourited' content to help you understand what's working the best and where you should spend your resources.

Make your organisation more inclusive

Different communities experience different barriers to activity and communication. If you are looking to make your organisation more inclusive, consider [reviewing our inclusion resources on the Sported Hub](#) and connecting with the relevant organisation via social media.

Get younger members involved

Encourage younger members to play their part, by posting relevant content for people their own age (ensure you check the spelling and tone of any content they post). Give them simple goals for each month and help them to track progress.



Important safeguarding information

Review the [Child Protection in Sport Unit's guidelines](#) relating to online safety and social networking before setting up a social media account.

The CPSU include a template for an 'online safety policy' and an 'acceptable use statement' which all organisations with an online presence should have.

How to use public relations (PR)

A great way to understand all the media opportunities available to you is to sit down and write a list of the local newspapers, websites, radio stations and TV stations. Then review the sports pages of the local press and note down any names of sports correspondents and editors so that you can start building relationships with them.

Send/email the relevant media a press release when you have something exciting for them to write/talk about and follow it up with a call. It must be newsworthy e.g. a player who has overcome major barriers to play nationally or a community event based around a relevant news topic.

Sample press release

For immediate release:

<Date>

<Your organisation name>

<Attention grabbing story headline>

<Name of group>, a local group focused on lowering barriers to physical activity for girls aged 11-18, today announces that it has a potential olympian in the group.

<Name of group>, will be showcasing her talents in X on Monday evening at Y.

Anna Smith, Head Coach said, (write a quote along the lines of, "we are thrilled that X has been noted for their talent and invite local people to see their skills first-hand in a speed challenge/other event".)

This is all part of our exciting new initiative to foster local talent. <write 2 short lines about the programme and where to find more information about it>

ENDS

Enquiries:

<Name of group>, Anna Smith <landline> or <mobile number>

Notes to Editors:

<Name of group> (describe what you do in a sentence or two). Other projects include (list a few which you are happy to promote). For more information, visit <insert your group's website address/Twitter/Facebook>.

Sported press release tips

1. Make your press release interesting
2. Steer clear of jargon or acronyms
3. Include the most important message in the headline of your press release
4. Keep control and be prepared when interviewed
5. Remember to thank funding partners or sponsors
6. Share photography with the media (but make sure to have permission from parents/participants)
7. Choose photos that positively portray the mix and number of participants within your organisation
8. Encourage members and participants to email or tweet the media
9. Invite the media to events that will show your activity/club in a positive light
10. Communicate with the media before and after you send your press release
11. Retain cuttings and copies, and save digital articles
12. Gather information on circulation figures, etc. to demonstrate 'reach' to your sponsors



How to use your website

Your website is the most important marketing tool that you have. It should clearly communicate what your organisation does, who it's for and when its activities are happening.

Most organisations already have their own website but if you don't it is worth the investment to create one. As it is a specialist skill, find out first if any of your members may be able to help or recommend someone they know. If you engage a professional web company to do this for you, ensure they use a simple package (e.g. WordPress or squarespace) that you or one of your members can easily update.

Key website considerations

Search Engine Optimisation

SEO is a complicated phrase that describes something simple - the activity of ensuring a website can be found in search engines for words and phrases relevant to what the site is offering.

The easiest way to improve this is the consistency of language. Choose the words that best reflect what your organisation does (e.g. basketball for beginners, boxing for teens, cricket for girls) and repeat those throughout your website and any marketing communications. You are building a brand.

Expert tip: there are a number of cheap wins that can move your website up the list in a search engine. For example, interactive content (e.g. images, videos) moves you up the list, but slow load times send you down. The key is a balanced website.

Professionalise the website

From a look perspective, you want to make sure that text and media are presented cleanly (especially sponsor logos) and that you can navigate through the website easily.

There should also be an opportunity to contact you via an organisation specific email address, if there is a question or to capture interest.

From a reputation perspective, this means your website security certificate is up-to-date on your website, your company/charity number is shown, partners are clearly listed and your safeguarding policies are included if possible.

Sported website tips

1. Use the home page for a brief introduction to the group
2. On the home page, outline what activities you offer, who they are for (age, gender), what they cost and most importantly the time/length of each session
3. Make sure the content is up-to-date. Always add a date and time to web content so participants know what is current
4. Develop content with the committee that you think would appeal to your ideal participants
5. Appoint a few volunteers to refresh the content
6. Use case studies to illustrate successes at the group
7. Avoid using off-putting language e.g. disadvantaged, elite, anti-social behaviour (save this for reports to funders)
8. Apply the KISS principle - keep it simple stupid - this means making it easy for all to understand
9. Use as much photography and video as possible to show people enjoying activities at your group (make it representative of the demographic you are trying to engage)
10. Make sure your contact details are clearly displayed
11. Make sure your load time is fast - you want there to be diverse content (e.g. images, video) but you also need the page to load quickly
12. If you have National Governing Body, check to see if they have a specific offer with a templated website provider.

If you want a Sported volunteer to review your page for its effectiveness, [request Volunteer support via the Sported Hub](#).



Traditional marketing

Local marketing in the area(s) where you deliver can often be extremely effective. You can try some of the simple marketing tools below to generate awareness of your offer to your community.

Flyers

A cost effective way of promoting your organisation's events and activities. Again, it's very important to keep it simple. For regular sessions, use a lively photo of people enjoying the activities, then a 'call-to-action' (e.g. turn up, call to find out more, visit your website). For one-off events, include details on the date, time and what will be happening. Local services may be available for delivering the leaflets (door-to-door delivery is quoted at a cost per thousand) or you can split the delivery between your members and volunteers.

Posters

Also a good promotional tool. These must be simple and clear with a prominent 'call-to-action'. Ask schools, shops, supermarkets, social housing receptions, community venues, council officers and leisure centres to display them for you.

Signage

Helpful in directing people to your organisation, particularly if it's not visible to passers-by or is inside another venue. Vinyl banners are a good option, again with a short and simple message and contact details.

Marketing in the community

Local events

Make sure that you know what is going on in your area, such as festivals, fairs, charity events, community activities, etc. You can use this as an opportunity to showcase what you do in your organisation e.g. footballers to do 'keepie-uppies', netball/basketball players to shoot hoops, athletics members can perform field events. Encourage people to test their skills or their children's abilities and if they are willing, give them a flyer and take down their details to contact them later.

Your events

A great way to make sure people turn up is to approach established groups to compete in a challenge e.g. the local police vs. the ambulance service. It is likely that they will bring people to support them. Then collect their details and invite them to future sessions.

School engagement

Where possible, build a relationship with your local schools to encourage them to give your organisation a try. You could speak at assemblies or even create an activity relating to your sport that ticks the school's boxes such as well-being, fitness, mental health, management and sportsmanship. Make sure to check how it fits into the national curriculum and/or specific school's policies.

Important data protection consideration:

It is extremely important that any data (i.e. names, addresses, email addresses, mobile numbers) you collect from participants is given willingly and that those who supply it know how it will be used. They can request to have their personal data removed from your files at any time. The [Sport and Recreation Alliance](https://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/gdpr) has a free GDPR toolkit for all sports and physical activity providers, which can be accessed via their website: [sportandrecreation.org.uk/gdpr](https://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/gdpr)

Need more guidance?

If you have questions about this guide or would like to work with a Sported volunteer to develop your marketing plan, [request volunteer support from the Sported Hub](#).

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