Transportation Outreach Planner

Public Outreach Strategies

Promotional Campaigns and Discounts

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Recommended Target Groups

Education
College Education
High School Diploma
No High School Diploma

Language
Creole
Other
Spanish

Disability
Hearing Impaired
Other
Physically Challenged
Sight Impaired

Income
Low Income
Middle to Affluent

Vehicle Ownership
Non-vehicle Owner
Vehicle Owner

Race and Ethnicity
Race and Ethnicity

Age

Seniors

Working Age Adults

Youth

Strategy Class

- General

Strategy Types

- Promotional

Description

The term "promotion" refers to any activity designed to increase awareness of a product or service. The objective of a promotional campaign is to capture the attention of the target audience, educate them of the product or service, and persuade them to take a desired act.[1] Since repeat exposure is the key to successful promotional efforts, most campaigns call for a promotional mix that includes discounts, advertising, public relations activities, direct marketing, and personal marketing.[2] Discounts make up one of the most important components of the promotional mix since they create a powerful incentive for action.

In the area of transportation, promotional campaigns are part of what is known as "social marketing." Social marketing follows the same principles as commercial marketing, with the exception that it seeks to influence social behavior for the benefit of the community at-large. Like commercial marketing, the goal is to persuade people to act through the four "Ps" of marketing: product, price, placement, and promotion.

Special Uses

Promotions and discounts can be used to: [3]

- Introduce a new service, project, or policy
- Create awareness
- Correct false impressions or counter negative perceptions
- Persuade people to modify behavior

When to Use

In the transportation field, promotional efforts and discounts are usually offered as an incentive to increase the use of public transit and reduce single occupancy vehicle use. However, promotions can also be used to encourage public involvement in transportation related issues, help launch a project, and create awareness of policies.

Cost

* * * High ($10000 to $50000)

Promotional campaigns can be expensive. The cost of advertising, printing, and disseminating the information can be significant, particularly if television, radio, and print advertisement are used. Although it may be possible to get public service announcements, these types of advertising do not get prime viewing and are offered on a limited basis. Costs can be reduced by requesting government rates from advertisers, partnering with other agencies or organizations, using creativity to identify free ways of advertising, and developing a strong public relations effort that aggressively seeks media coverage.

If discounts and price promotions are used, agencies also need to consider the financial costs of these types of promotions. For example, the increased sales in transit fares that may be gained from a promotional discount also signify a loss of revenue. As such, the costs and benefits of discounts and price promotions must be assessed carefully.

Low (up to $999)	*	*Disclaimer:* The cost estimates provided are intended to be a
Moderate ($1,000 to $9,999)	* *	guide. Project costs will vary depending on the size and nature

High ($10,000 to $50,000)	* * *		of the project.
Very High (Above $50,000)	* * * *		

Time
* * 6 months to a year

A comprehensive promotional campaign can take up to six months to develop and implement. Developing the promotional strategy, creating the message, and designing and producing the promotional material are the most time consuming aspects of implementing a promotional campaign. The timing of the promotions depends on whether it is a long-term campaign or a one-time promotional activity.

1 to 3 months	*	*Disclaimer:* The time estimates are approximations. The
6 months to a year	* *	duration of a project may vary depending on various factors,
Multiyear	* * *	including size and budget.

Implementation Guidelines and Suggestions

The following serve as recommended guidelines and suggestions for implementing a promotional campaign and discount initiative:

- **Identify the target market for the promotion**. Determine who the promotion is intended to reach. The more information that is available regarding the target market, the better it will be to tailor the promotional message and the method of communication. If the target market is heterogeneous, it may be necessary to "segment" the target audience into smaller groups that are more homogeneous. Segmentation allows the marketing message to be tailored to specific target groups to ensure greater receptiveness.

- **Determine the objectives for the promotion**. Before undertaking any type of promotion, an agency should determine what response it seeks from the target market. The success of the promotion will be based on whether those objectives are met. Agencies can use the following list to help identify the objectives they are trying to achieve: [4]

    - Create awareness
    - Establish brand or organizational recognition
    - Improve public image, change attitudes, or correct false impressions
    - Increase ridership or usage of a service
    - Increase attendance at public meetings and public participation activities
    - Persuade the public to change behavior (e.g. ride bicycles, walk more frequently, etc.)

- **Develop a clear, concise, and persuasive message**. The message must motivate people to take a desired action. The promotional message consists of two parts: the content and the format. [5]

    - The content refers to the words and images. It should be simple, clear, concise, and persuasive. The content should communicate how the product or service will meet people's needs or benefit them. Only the most important information should be included in order to avoid information overload. Although it is important to be innovative and creative, the message should be what people remember.

    - The format refers to the element in which the message will be delivered to the target market (e.g. direct mail, print advertisement, television commercials, etc.). The format in which the promotional message is displayed should be carefully selected to make sure it is appropriate for the target market. Each type of communication has its own requirements and standards. Before designing the message and the images for a promotional campaign, it is important to know these requirements.

- **Determine the type of promotion that will be used, and maximize exposure to the public by implementing a mix of promotional activities**. Below is a description of the types of promotional activities that can be offered: [6]

    - **Discounts and Price Promotions**: These are consumer oriented promotions intended to motivate people through financial incentives. Discounts and price promotions are effective for building customer

relationships and generating excitement. Examples include a reduced pricing, coupons, refunds, and frequent user incentives. To encourage transit use, many agencies offer free admission for children, veterans, and senior citizens, as well as reduced fares for students.

- **Advertising**: Advertising refers to any form of paid communication used to convey a promotional message. Agencies often advertise on billboards, bus stops and transit stations, as well as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and social media platforms, such as Facebook.

- **Public Relations**: Public relations refer to non-paid coverage. It is free publicity that is generated through press releases, special events, community activities, and other types of activities that create goodwill and can attract press coverage. Examples of promotional activities that can get press coverage include the presentation of a prestigious award, a major investment in a county project, and the introduction of a new technology or program that will benefit the public. Even if press coverage is not obtained from these actions, agencies can use newsletters, their websites, and other forms of communication to inform the public.

- **Direct Marketing**: Direct marketing provides a means of directly communicating with your target market. Such promotions include direct mail, catalogs, and social media. Direct marketing promotion is very effective because the message is delivered directly to people in the target group. It is also possible to measure how well people respond to the direct marketing promotion through the use of coupons or promotional codes. For direct marketing campaigns to be effective, the creation or acquisition of a reliable mailing list of the target market is necessary.

- **Personal Marketing**: Personal marketing refers to one-on-one contact with individuals to promote a product or service. The intent is to inform people of what is being offered and persuade them to try it. The one-on-one contact helps to establish trust and rapport. This type of promotional activity is useful when the public is skeptical and is not receptive to other forms of promotion. Examples include door-to-door campaigns and group presentations.

- **Establish the budget**. To develop the budget, determine the frequency of the promotions and the type of activities that will be undertaken, keeping in mind that repeat exposure is the key to a successful campaign. It is also important to set funds aside for pilot tests before launching a large-scale campaign.

- **Determine the timing of the promotion**. For a promotion to be effective, the campaign needs to be timed to maximize the extent of the reach. Research should also be done to ensure that the promotion does not conflict or compete with another activity or event. For television promotions, experts recommend at least 30 days of exposure, but agencies should work with their local media outlets to determine what is best for their target market. For events, time sensitive discounts, or other activities that have a set schedule, promotions should start at least two weeks in advance, with a more intense promotional push prior to the activity. [7]

- **Develop a method for measuring results and monitoring how well objectives were met**. In order to determine whether the promotional campaign was effective, it is necessary to develop a system for monitoring results. Agencies need to develop a method of measuring the objectives, whether it is increased ridership, ticket sales, attendance at meetings and events, etc. It is also important to collect information prior to the promotional campaign and create a baseline of what is being measured in order to determine if the campaign made a difference. The success of a promotional effort should be based on how well it achieved its objectives and its cost effectiveness. The following is a list of items to consider when evaluating a promotional effort: [8]

- Should the promotion be done again?
- Should the promotion be permanently adopted?
- How did the target audience perceive the promotion?
- Did it achieve the set objectives?
- Did it generate positive media coverage?
- What needs to be improved?
- How well did it reflect the organization?

Recommended Demographics

Promotional campaigns can be tailored to any demographic group. However, agencies also have the option of using

psychographics to select their target market. Through demographic data, agencies can target specific segments of the population based on population characteristics including gender, age, education, household income, marital status, employment status, type of residence, and number of children in the household. Psychographics refers to consumer personality traits, beliefs and attitudes, personal interests, and shopping habits. If agencies want to reach a certain segment of the population or people within a specific geographic area, demographic data will be most useful in identifying the target market. Psychographic data is useful when it is necessary to identify the target market based on interests or behavior (e.g. internet usage, transit ridership, etc.). However, the acquisition of such data may be expensive. 9

Agencies can obtain psychographic data from syndicated research services such as Experian Simmons Market Research (Experian Simmons), Mediamark Research, Inc.(MRI), and data brokers. Some of the most commonly used psychographic data used in marketing and promotions include the Values and LifestyleS (VALS) system, generational cohorts, and product/brand usage behavior.10   Below is a brief description of each method:

- **Values And LifestyleS (VALS)**: This system categorizes U.S. adult consumers into one of eight segments based on responses to the VALS questionnaire. Each segment has a unique set of psychological characteristics. The eight segments are listed below (for complete definitions visit http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/ustypes.shtml):

    - Innovators
    - Thinkers
    - Achievers
    - Experiencers
    - Believers
    - Strivers
    - Makers
    - Survivors

- **Generational Cohorts**: This data is based on research that categorizes generational cohorts according to similar experiences, social views, attitudes, and values. Generational cohorts in the U.S. are:

    - Baby Boomers (people born 1945-1964),
    - Generation X (people born in 1965-1978),
    - Generation Y (people born between 1979 and 1994)

- **Product and Brand Usage**: Consumption behavior is used in Product and Brand Usage data. This type of data is very specific, but provides some of the best means of identifying the target market, since the person who is likely to consume the product is being directly targeted. Indeed, research indicates that "the twenty percent who are heavy users account for eighty percent of the sales of a product." 11   Such information can be purchased from syndicated research firms and list brokers.

Before purchasing any data to develop a list of the target market, however, agencies should conduct an assessment of the data that they have available. In some cases, agencies may already collect some of the information they are seeking, but the data may need to be reconfigured to use in a promotional campaign. For example, if an agency wants information on automobile drivers who use transit service on a regular basis, they may be able to use the data they have for people who buy monthly parking permits at transit stations.

Lessons Learned/Challenges

A comprehensive promotional campaign can take up to six months to develop and implement. Developing the promotional strategy, creating the message, and designing and producing the promotional material are the most time consuming aspects of implementing a promotional campaign. The timing of the promotions deBelow are key points to keep in mind when implementing a promotional campaign and discount initiative:

- **Obtain feedback from as many stakeholders as possible in the development of the promotional campaign**. This will help to vet the campaign message and will ensure that the process is inclusive. Stakeholders should include staff, advisory boards, community members, and other agencies.

- **Before launching a full promotional campaign, test the promotional mix to see what works best**. By testing the promotional mix, agencies will be able to determine what type of promotion works best, how the message is received, and where resources should be spent. Although testing takes time, it can help to ensure that a campaign avoids costly mistakes.
- **Learn from other promotional campaigns and adopt what works**. Pay attention to other promotional campaigns to identify new trends, and identify strategies that succeed or fail.
- **Seek to be creative and innovative, but make the promotional message the centerpiece of the promotional campaign**. If people cannot remember the message, it does not matter how artistic or creative the promotion was.
- **Make sure the agency is set up to deal with the extra demand generated by the promotion**. First impressions count. People who respond to the promotion will be evaluating their experience, and that experience generally determines if they will be repeat customers. As such, agencies need to be prepared. Sufficient staff and resources must be available to meet the increased demand. Staff must also be knowledgeable of the promotion so that they may answer people's questions or deal with any problems that arise.
- **Consider using social media platforms and mobile phone technology, such as Quick Response (QR) Codes, as a way to quickly and inexpensively disseminate promotional information**. Social media and mobile phone texting provide a quick and inexpensive way for agencies to reach a large audience for less than what it costs to conduct direct mail. Other smart phone technology, such as QR codes can be used to provide instant access to information. QR codes are two-dimensional bar codes that smart phone users can scan to obtain information. These codes can be used to disseminate information on discounts and promotions. They are free of charge with the download of an application. Use the following sites to generate free codes: [12]

    - ShareSquare – http://www.GetShareSquare.com
    - BeQRious - http://www.beqrious.com/
    - Delivr- http://delivr.com/

- **Partner with private employers by offering transit discounts and other promotions to their employees**.
- **When using discounts to promote transit use, agencies may want to consider giving discounts and special promotions to regular riders in order to reward frequent use of transit services**. Many agencies have adopted a plan to provide discounted fares for working individuals who use public transit to commute to work.

Case Studies

The City of Palo Alto adopted a comprehensive on-going promotional campaign to encourage its employees and the general public to use alternative modes of transportation. The Employee Commute Program, for example, offers discounts and other incentives for employees who commute to work by means of transit, vanpools, carpools, bicycling or walking. Approximately 15 percent of eligible employees participate in this program. The Way2Go promotional campaign also partnered with private companies and local to encourage the general public to try different modes of transportation. The events include: Walk to School Day, Bike to School Day, Bike to Work Day, the Mayor's Bicycle Rides and Special Events, and Senior Transit Tours. The City of Palo Alto received a Certificate of Recognition from the Environmental Protection Agency for the Commuter Choice Leadership Initiative for its efforts (http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/news/displaynews.asp?NewsID=206&TargetID=107). [13]

Transport Canada includes several case studies which illustrate how social marketing promotional efforts helped to bring changes in public transportation choices. One case study, called the "CarboPOINT" program, shows how monetary incentives to employees encouraged the selection of environmentally-friendly ways of getting to work. The other case studies also show how promotional campaigns and other marketing strategies can be applied to changing attitudes and behavior related to transportation (http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/programs/environment-urban-menu-eng-2054.htm). [14]

Valley Metro, Arizona conducts an annual "Design a Bus Wrap Contest" for high school students. The contest calls for students to create a bus advertisement that promotes public transit use. This contest serves as a promotional campaign by engaging students and promoting transit use among the general public (http://www.valleymetro.org/transit_education/bus_wrap/). [15]

For Further Information

The Community Tool Box: The site offers a guide on social marketing and basic marketing and promotion principals (http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/section_1321.aspx). [16]

GFK MRI: The site provides access to white papers, webcasts, and a quarterly newsletter on market research (http://www.gfkmri.com/News.aspx). [17]

Strategic Business Insights: The site periodically offers complimentary copies of reports, presentations, or white papers from VALS.? (http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/store/free.shtml). [18]

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