



Top 10 Tips: Promoting Your Event

You've done all the work to organize your group's event – put together an exciting line-up of entertainment and activities or a thought-provoking program, set the date and time, found the perfect location, arranged for refreshments and other details, and organized a cadre of enthused volunteers. Now you just need people to show up. An event is, after all, all about turnout.

Give your event the best chance of success by applying these pointers.

1. **Plan ahead.** These days, everyone is busy. Allow ample time to promote your event. As soon as you know a date, get it on the calendar. Six to eight weeks before an event is none too soon to start spreading the word through “save the date” activity. Send out formal invitations to your target audience and media releases three-four weeks ahead of time. The more lead time you give the better.
2. **Determine who needs to know about your event, and why.** Identify your primary audience – like residents of your neighborhood or parents with young children. Also identify other groups – and a contact name for each group – who may have a stake or interest in the event. These groups could include government agencies, private social service organizations, schools, church groups and others. Clearly identifying who you want to reach will help shape how you reach them.
3. **Sell the event to the people you most want to attend.** Solidify and clarify your message. Know in advance what you want from those attending. Honor and respect their time by making sure you can deliver what you promise. Then use short, concise bullet points to tell them what's in it for them and what they can expect to gain by attending.
4. **Tell people about your event, then tell them again.** Plan your publicity carefully. Organize your efforts by listing the groups you plan to contact, how you plan to contact them and when. Get all your ducks in row by making sure the right people know about the event in the right order. Remember, one communications piece seldom gets the message out all on its own. You'll need to repeat your message several times in several different ways. Consider using the phone to follow-up or email as reminders.

5. **Get your message out in a variety of ways.** Use all communications channels available to you that are appropriate for your audience. Take advantage of free or low-cost avenues of publicity, too. Consider using:

- Postcards or other forms of invitations printed and mailed to those you most want to attend. Invitations should go to both your primary audience and stakeholders groups.
- Fliers distributed door-to-door or through pertinent local schools or other groups. (Ask targeted groups about their policy for disseminating information.)
- Fliers or posters posted in public areas and given to area churches, businesses, schools, and libraries to post for you.
- E-mail invitations and reminders to those individuals who have email addresses.
- Media releases (printed or electronic) to pertinent contacts at *Des Moines Register* and local TV and radio stations, especially those who host community calendars, either on line or on air. Private organizations and associations can also serve as an outlet. Some publish on-line or printed community calendars and may share information about your event with their email contact lists. Share information with local neighborhood associations, too, for inclusion in their newsletters.
- Your group's website, if you have one, a source of information.
- Word of mouth.

6. **Make your invitations inviting.** Colored paper stock or a clever, eye-catching image can get your event invitation to stand out. Keep text to minimum. Use graphics to break up space. Use catch-words or phrases to emphasize the perks of attending. If it's free, say so – in bold type or graphics. Don't forget to highlight the other enticements you're offering – refreshments, prizes, on-site child care, convenient parking, etc.

7. **Include all pertinent information in your communications.** This includes the day and date of your event; time; location including street address; directions, if needed; contact formation, etc. Consider setting this apart by putting it in a box, highlighting key detail in bold letters, or outlining it with bullet points.

8. **Identify a spokesperson.** You'll need one person willing and available to answer questions from interested attendees or the media and who can speak about the event on your group's behalf. Then identify this person in your communications by name and include a phone number.

9. **Recognize your supporters.** Give credit where credit is due by acknowledging those groups and individuals who are helping you launch your event, either financially or through an in-kind donation. List them by name, if possible. Double-check to make sure you have included all of your sponsors and that the names are spelled correctly.

10. **Remember next time.** Your group may want to host another event some day or have people come back for a second meeting. Do what you can to pave the way for the future. Pay attention to details so your event runs smoothly. If you promise to do something in the future, do it. And don't forget to thank people for coming – and for helping.