



## Chapter 10

# Promoting the Program

One of the biggest benefits of your campus programming experience is the added value it can give you in the eyes of a potential employer. While your skills as a programmer are transferable to any number of real-life work situations, some of the most widely recognized are those skills developed as part of the contract negotiation, program planning, and publicity and promotion aspects of campus activities programming. If your programming board is lucky, you might have members who are studying journalism, advertising, marketing or public relations. These students would be natural choices for your board's publicity and promotion committee because their involvement will provide them with potentially relevant career experience.

Delegating your board's publicity duties to a publicity committee can be a wise decision. Event promotion can be very complicated, and your publicity efforts will be more effective if your campus media know they can depend on dealing with one or two individuals for all your board's news and program announcements. Later in this chapter, the section titled "Using Your School's Student Experts" will discuss the pros and cons of delegating your programming board's publicity and promotion tasks to fellow students who

serve the programming board in a type of internship or cooperative education role.

First, however, it will be beneficial to discuss the basics of how to run an effective promotional campaign. Next, we will examine how to effectively incorporate technology into your programming efforts, along with discussing how copyright law affects your creation of promotional materials. At the end of the chapter we will briefly discuss how your programming board can combine its publicity and promotion needs with the goals of cooperative education students interested in careers in the communications field or media relations.

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## Planning Your Promotional Materials

There are certain information components you must include on all promotional materials you create for an event. These are:

- **Date**—Include both the day of the week and the calendar date.
- **Time**—Be sure to list starting times for all elements of the event, indicating whether the times are am or pm.
- **Location**—Include the building name and room name or number, if needed.
- **Admission**—Be clear about the prices for students and non-students and whether students and/or faculty and staff must present a school ID.
- **Contact Information**—Give your students a telephone number to call for additional information, questions or directions. This number should be staffed during normal business hours, so callers will be able to speak with a real person. Give your organization's Web address, as well, if your site will contain additional information on the event.
- **Sponsor's Name**—Acknowledge the hard work done by your group and any co-sponsors. Not only does this provide additional name recognition, it also helps people contact you, if necessary.
- **Brief Synopsis**—You can further sell the event by giving a descriptive statement or two about it.

In addition to these items, you will need to give some thought to the design and colors used in your publicity materials. Your promotional flyers, posters, ads, table tents, etc., will need to compete for the attention of your fellow students who are exposed to numerous, visually sophisticated ads promoting the many other events occurring both on and off campus. Needless to say, photocopied flyers on florescent-colored paper will no longer attract a large audience.

Along with a professional-looking design, your flyers will need to use eye-catching color combinations for the highest impact and best readability. In addition, your programming board should make it a goal to develop a consistent image and project a specific style in all its promotional materials, advertisements, and on its Web pages. Have you noticed how logos are used in the entertainment industry? Many nationally known musical artists and groups have their own logos and hire designers to create unique stage displays for their tours. Your programming board can achieve similar results with an updated logo design and a "look" that is unique to its publications. A hip logo can work wonders in communicating a vibrant,

contemporary image that will soon become identified with your events in students' minds. To achieve this goal, consider forming a partnership with students who are majoring in graphic arts or commercial design. Such a partnership will give your board the advantages of hiring a professional design studio at little or no cost while simultaneously giving your fellow students an opportunity to create sharp designs they can include in their portfolios.

## Pulling Together an Effective Publicity/Promotional Campaign

An effective publicity plan is well-articulated, creative and clear in its message. For your message to stand out from all of the other posters and flyers on the campus bulletin board, there must be a strategy for publicizing the event. Renzulli (1999) recommends three initial steps, which are summarized here:

- **Determine your audience**—You need to tailor your message and your strategy to suit the event. In addition to considering who will attend your program, consider possible collaborations with other departments on campus, both academic and student life, when appropriate. For example, a speaker talking about effects of alcohol abuse on college campuses would probably be of interest to staff in campus residence halls, counseling and health centers, and related academic departments, such as nursing or psychology.

### **TIP:**

*In addition to creative new methods of publicity, do not forget about the tried and true methods, which include sending press releases to your campus and off-campus media announcing your event, and securing radio and TV PSAs (public service announcements) whenever possible. If necessary, purchase or barter with your school newspaper for advertisements announcing your event. Proven promotion methods also include posting event announcements on your programming board's Web site, along with posting any suitable printed materials supplied by the artist or agency—or those created by your publicity committee—such as posters, table tents, postcards, or flyers around campus.*

- Brainstorm for ideas—Traditional approaches can be combined with innovative, and possibly outrageous, publicity to really get your event noticed. Allow factors such as the newness or uniqueness of the event to guide your choice of publicity. If you need help jump-starting your brainstorming sessions, consider utilizing silly objects such as toys to help your students “think outside the box.”
- Choose your methods of publicity—Starting with two or three ideas that your group feels are the most effective, begin to select the various avenues of promotion you might use. Remember, however, that most kinds of publicity, whether in the form of printed advertisements, public skits, or giveaways, need to get their message across quickly to reach today’s over-scheduled students. As the various avenues of publicity are discussed, the group should also be thinking in terms of specific requirements to produce this publicity. For example, how many volunteers will it take? How much does your budget allow you to spend? Who will develop or make what items? Does the method match the event? Will your method stand out on campus?

As you are thinking of ways to promote your events, don’t forget to announce your upcoming events on the programming board answering machine. For instance, this brief message can highlight a week-long theme in conjunction with week-long events. Publicize your event in unusual areas of campus where students will take notice, such as the gym, basketball courts, or on cafeteria cups and trays, as well as advertising on sidewalks and pathways. You might also consider giving away door prizes at the end of your program, publicizing this fact in your promotional materials. In addition, you might host a contest on your board’s Web page to generate more Web traffic.

Another publicity technique now commonly used on some campuses is to send a system-wide voice mail message for all students, faculty and staff that announces, or reminds, the campus community of an upcoming event. The use of this kind of notification, like the use of e-mail notification, may need to be restricted to those activities or events

that are significant and of nearly universal interest to your campus community. The use of voice mail, or e-mail, as a promotional tool is best discussed with your advisor, who may feel it necessary to gain approval from an administrator, such as the dean of student life, before its initial use.

## Working with Campus and Local Area Media

Getting publicity with your campus or local area media can sometimes be problematic for student organizations, particularly when the organization is unfamiliar with the process. One way to ensure consistent results from your campus and local media is to designate one or more individuals on the programming board to serve as the publicity committee. Ideally, these individuals will have an interest in learning how to work with the news media and will have had some rel-

**For Immediate Release**  
**August 6, 2002**

**Contact: Board Member’s Name**  
**999-999-9999**

### **School Program Union to Sponsor Songwriting Workshop and Free Concert at Riverside Park—Guest Artists to Include Melody Sweet and Mitchell Lowry**

*Your city, State*—The My School Program Board at the University of My Hometown, US, today announced it plans to sponsor a Songwriting Workshop and Concert to be held Nov. 4, 2006 at Riverside Park. The workshop will culminate with a free concert by recording artists Melody Sweet and Mitchell Lowry, who are also the workshop facilitators.

Scheduled to begin at 9 am on Saturday, the workshop will focus on various aspects of marketing, copywriting and publishing music as an independent songwriter. There will also be a panel discussion on recording label contracts, along with the advantages and disadvantages of starting your own recording label. At 7 pm on Saturday, Sweet and Lowry will give a one-hour concert, which will feature some of their latest duet work from their newest joint venture album, *Songs From the Heart*.

The workshop is open to all singer/songwriters. However, pre-registration is required and space in the workshop is limited to 56 participants. The cost to attend is \$75, which includes lunch. For more information on the workshop, or to reserve a space, call the Program Union Desk, telephone: 999-888-7777.

The Union Program Board is the University’s largest student-run campus activities organization. Staffed by 36 student volunteer leaders, the Board produces an average of 52 events each academic year. It was formed in 1953, 10 years after the founding of the University itself.

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*[Note: The “###” signals the end of the release. In addition, “-30-” can also be used to signal the end of the release.]*

*Example 10.1: Sample Press Release*



evant coursework, or related experience, in an area such as journalism, marketing or public relations. At least one person on the publicity committee should have strong verbal/writing skills, which will be invaluable when it comes time to write press releases or ad copy for posters and flyers, and also when talking with media representatives over the telephone or in person.

As a programming board, you want to utilize the potential for free publicity available through the print and broadcasting media. Your events, the programming board's name recognition and the ability to get news stories or announcements published will increase substantially if you become known to your campus media as a regular, dependable source of information. The primary vehicle for communicating with your campus and local media is probably going to be a press release. By knowing the standards and accepted format of a well-written press release, your board can often "get its foot in the door," even when other groups are unable to do so (See Example 10.1). A good press release:

- is single- or double-spaced
- includes a contact person and phone number at the top right of the page
- is sent on the letterhead of your programming organization
- uses either an attention-getting or straight-forward descriptive headline, depending on the subject matter and intended audience
- begins with a strong opening paragraph that provides the five W's: who, what, where, when, and why
- is concise and to the point
- closes with a brief, standard paragraph (known as a tagline) that gives some very basic information about your programming board and the size of your student body, etc.
- indicates a continuation onto another page by centering "-More-" at the bottom of the page
- ends with "-30-" or "###," centered after the last paragraph.

Once your press release has been reviewed, and edited if necessary by your advisor, it is a good idea to check your school's policies regarding press releases before your programming board sends the press release to off-campus media. Either way, it is advisable to send a copy to your president's office and to your school's public relations office, as well. Your public relations office may be able to help your board get a news story run in the local newspaper or on a television station—in addition to assisting with on-campus distribution and publicity.

If you've done your job correctly and your event has news value, at least some of the media may respond

and say they are interested in attending. Once you confirm their interest, be sure to arrange to have name badges (press passes) prepared ahead of time and on hand at the event if access is restricted to ticketed attendees only. In addition, identify ahead of time where members of the press should park and secure any necessary parking permits. You will want to have decided in advance who will serve as host for the media. This person will be on hand to greet them and should be ready to introduce the media representatives to featured guests, faculty members, or administrative personnel.

## Using Technology in Your Promotional Efforts

The use of Internet technology as a promotional tool is an option open to programming boards. The Internet has developed into a tremendous marketing vehicle for virtually every major entertainment company and record label in the marketplace. In addition, many artists who perform in the college market have Web sites featuring sample song and video clips. Not only can your programming board evaluate potential artists to bring to campus, these same Web sites can serve as promotional tools to generate campus interest in an upcoming performance by providing links to the Web sites of upcoming artists and attractions.

After you've booked an artist and are gearing up to promote them, there are several items that you can find online to help with your promotion:

- Artist profiles and pictures—Some artists post professionally developed materials specifically designed for use in promoting events. However, before you use any material you copy from an artist's or agency's Web site, be sure to get written permission (See the Copyright Considerations that follow for more information).
- Post copies of your programming board's publicity materials—Include copies of your posters, online versions of any programming calendars or newsletters your board publishes, and copies of e-mail announcements and press releases sent out by your board.
- Discographies and performance histories—Most artists' Web sites contain sound and video clips of previous recordings and performances, along with a listing of where the artists have performed. By linking to these sites, you allow your students easy access to a large amount of additional information about the artist you are bringing to campus.
- NACA artist/agency member Web sites—Many agency and artist members of NACA maintain their own Web sites with idea files of the most

creative publicity created by campuses for their artists. Check the NACA Web site for links to a significant number of NACA artist/agency member sites.

- Graphics, logos and art—Designs that are associated with the artists are often available online and use of them can greatly increase student interest in your event. However, there are two cautions you must observe: 1) You must obtain permission from the artists' representative first before using these images—especially if the images are copyrighted. 2) Assume all images you find online are copyrighted until you learn otherwise.

### Copyright Considerations

The World Wide Web makes it remarkably easy for student programmers to copy material from the Web and then use this material in creating promotional materials (such as posters, table tents and flyers), or to copy sound or video clips and then post these clips on your programming board's Web site. Unfortunately, without permission from the person or organization that owns the copyright, it is illegal to do so. The following tips summarized from Heller (1998) will help programmers make sure their promotional activities stay within the law.

#### A Note on the Use of E-Mail

Use e-mail sparingly as a promotional vehicle, only. It can be an effective and appropriate means of communication when the program has a large enough interest potential to warrant a mass mailing. Ask yourself these three questions when considering an e-mail announcement:

- Would you appreciate receiving this unsolicited e-mail?
- Are you offering something of real value to your students, faculty or staff?
- Is this the only, or single best, way to alert people to news of your upcoming event?

If you didn't create the material you wish to post, you must have approval from the copyright owner. This one common-sense rule of thumb can keep you from knowingly making the most egregious of copyright violations—plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs when you use someone else's words or music without permission, or without giving proper credit to the creator.

On the other hand, most record companies will grant limited permission (commonly called "rights") for a program board to post copies of music and/or video clips from an artist who will be appearing on campus. When seeking permission to post musical clips, first contact the promotion or publicity department of the recording label that released the music. They can direct you to the appropriate party. Always remember to secure written permission from the copyright holder to use the material *before* you use the material. In most cases you will be given verbal authorization by the appropriate person and this will usually protect you—provided it is confirmed by a return e-mail to you or in an e-mail sent from you.

Please note that these copyright restrictions do not apply to publicity photos sent to you by the agency or artist. These photos are sent with the understanding that you will use them to promote the artist's performance. Nevertheless, if you have any questions about your intended use of a publicity photo you receive from an artist or agency, call and discuss it with them. Otherwise, you need only run a copyright notice if one appears on the photograph itself or on a label attached to the back. In cases where you need to run an accompanying photo credit/copyright notice, be sure to reproduce the copyright notice exactly as it appears to the side of, or directly beneath, the photo.

### Using Your School's Student Experts

If for some reason your programming board decides it would be best to delegate the organizing and running of its publicity and promotion campaigns to students outside the board, it may wish to consider establishing a type of internship position in conjunction with your school's journalism or public relations school.

According to advisor David Tomeo, his programming board faced a persistent problem in maintaining a high level of quality in their publicity materials while he was the board's advisor at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. His board had a practice at the time of having each committee produce their own publicity and advertise their events independently of each other. This resulted in many missed publication deadlines with the campus newspaper and a rather haphazard approach to promotion. Through a cooperative effort with the communications department, the programming board at his school was able to establish a position that provided one communications student an opportunity to earn one hour of academic credit for a semester's service to the board.

The benefits for his school's programming board included much needed consistency in their publicity efforts, providing one or two points of contact for the

# Creating a Publicity Timeline

By Christy Phillips Renzulli

One of the most crucial aspects of any promotional effort is timing—knowing what to do when in order to best convey your message and attract attention to it. The best way to tackle this aspect of your plan is to take an empty calendar, write the date of the event and work backward from that date. Your group needs time not only to prepare materials, but also to build excitement and anticipation for the event. Also, students and others on campus need enough notice to be able to schedule your event into their busy lives.

Set realistic goals for the tasks your group must accomplish and follow through with each deadline you set. Here is a basic timeline you might follow:

## One Month Before the Event

- Include the event on campus-wide activity calendars.
- Request any materials that the artist or agency may be able to give to you. Always ask for free posters, ad slicks and photos that they may be willing to provide.
- Start word-of-mouth publicity. Tell everyone you meet about the event and begin to build excitement about it.
- Order any professionally printed materials. (Be sure to request a proof for review and approval before the final materials are printed.)

- Order promotional items and giveaways.

## Two–Four Weeks Before the Event

- Choose the best and most effective way to publicize your event based on the materials available and the audience you'd like to reach.
- Prepare materials for distribution.
- Delegate responsibilities to students according to their talents or interests. Let those in the group with artistic ability paint banners, etc. This not only keeps costs down, it also showcases student talent.

## Two–Three Weeks Before the Event

- Contact other student organizations, residence halls and academic departments who may be interested in your program.
- Contact school and community newspapers about pre-event coverage.
- Put up your first set of posters, creative teasers and flyers.
- Distribute giveaways.
- Prepare banners for hanging.

## One Week Before the Event

- Select specific areas on campus to promote the event
- Replenish posters, distribute table flyers.
- If your previous publicity included only teaser information, give complete information at this point.
- Contact your school newspaper for post-event coverage.
- Make sure that all web page information about the event is correct.
- Hang any banners you plan to use.

## Two Days Before the Event

- Set out table tents.
- Do any creative last minute publicity stunts/efforts, i.e. having people dress in costumes or wearing billboards, placing flyers on cafeteria trays, presenting interactive skits or holding last-minute giveaways.

## Day of the Event

- Conduct a radio or live interview with the artist. (This will need to be arranged a few weeks earlier.)
- Set up teasers in high traffic areas. These will reach the greatest number of people in the shortest time. (These will also need to be arranged in advance.)
- Place a sign to welcome and direct guests to the site of the event.

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campus and local media, and providing many new ideas and energy to the board's promotion efforts. One of the significant drawbacks, however, is that this kind of program depends heavily on the cooperative education student's level of experience and expertise. Not all communications students will be able to provide the level of work your programming board may be seeking. Delegating your board's promotion duties in this manner may be beneficial to your board, par-

ticularly if it is plagued by poor promotional campaigns. However, the cooperative education student will require additional supervision time from your advisor and may require close supervision from other board members, as well. Your programming board will want to carefully weigh the costs and benefits of such an arrangement before committing to the significant time investment for establishing such a position.

## Shameless Self-Promotion

Lastly, while you are busy promoting your program board's events, don't forget to do a little personal self-promotion of your own. Stay focused on the long-term benefits of all the good work you are doing for the programming board by continuing to remind yourself of the valuable skills you are learning as a volunteer. Your student development transcript is a listing of all your relevant co-curricular and volunteer experiences and the skills you've developed as a result of these experiences. By frequently reviewing and updating this transcript, you can be sure to have a well-documented summary of your significant educational and volunteer experiences, along with a summary of the accompanying "real world" skills you have developed along the way—ready for you when you start preparing your résumé.

When used as an ongoing assessment tool, the student development transcript, or co-curricular transcript as it is also called, can help you consciously choose those activities and experiences that will give you the skills and knowledge you will need when it comes time to enter the work force. Your school's career counseling, residence life department, or your advisor can help you get started compiling your co-curricular transcript.

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