

## **MARKETING to Your COMMUNITY.**

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### **AUSTRALIA NEEDS VOLUNTEERS BUT VOLUNTEERS NEED MARKETING**

Community organizations are vital to Australia.

The latest ABS Voluntary Work, Australia Survey (2006)[1], released in July 2007 shows that 5.4 million adult Australians volunteer around 713 million hours each year.

They donate their time to sporting, recreation, community, welfare, education, training and religious groups. Their motivation is to help out, put 'something back' or care for others with special needs.

Yet, despite this enormous annual effort many volunteers, and the groups to which they belong, often struggle to tell their story. They fail the "promotion test" because they are either simply too busy doing the core work of their organization or they lack the necessary PR skills.

However the sad fact is that poor or sporadic marketing can put even the best volunteer program at risk. And these days the potential for your group to continue to survive and grow probably depends as much on the success of your communications as the impact of your operations.

If you want to be a marketing success first start by planning your communication efforts. Your planning does not have to be elaborate, complex or expensive but it does have to be done.

A simple PR plan can discipline and focus your promotional efforts, ensure money is wisely spent and harnesses the efforts of your volunteers towards concrete, measurable actions.

A good community PR plan:

- Sets communications objectives.
- Scans the environment to assess the effectiveness of what you are already doing.
- Identifies the people you need to reach (audiences).
- Identifies those individuals, professions and organizations (key influencers). who can help you reach these audiences.
- Builds and provides evidence for convincing messages that tell your organization's story.
- Details the channels to move your messages to your audiences, eg through the media, events, word of mouth marketing.
- Lays down a calendar of activity.
- Allocates responsibilities for all the PR jobs.
- Sets a budget
- Identifies issues that could derail your PR plan and has responses already prepared.
- Measures effectiveness so you continually improve your communications.

These key points, framed in a three to four page PR plan, should meet the needs of most volunteer organizations.

And remember, a PR plan is a living document and something to be acted upon. It is just as important as your strategic plan and other key documents. So start planning today and keep it short, keep it simple and keep it moving.

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