



MODULE 9

# MARKETING



## MARKETING



### **MODULE 9 OUTCOME:**

*Leaders work with others to implement appropriate marketing strategies.*

## MODULE 9 – MARKETING

- 9.1 Marketing the Benefits of Recreation
- 9.2 Marketing Approaches and Terminology
- 9.3 Marketing Plans
- 9.4 Strategies for Marketing Recreation
- 9.5 Internet and Social Media

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Access resources and research related to the personal, social, economic and environmental benefits of recreation and parks.
- Understand key marketing approaches and terms.
- Access resources to implement appropriate marketing plans.
- Recognize strategies for promoting recreation in remote Northern communities.



## 9.1 MARKETING THE BENEFITS OF RECREATION

Over the past twenty years, people in the recreation field have collected and reviewed information describing the potential of recreation to deliver individual, social, economic and environmental benefits. This research is extremely important for marketing programs, events and opportunities as well as for promoting the social and public good of recreation.

More than one thousand documents are referenced and searchable on the [National Benefits Hub \(url3\)](#). This data has been sorted by themes to illustrate 50 benefit or outcome statements organized under one overall marketing message. Eight key marketing messages show the diversity of benefits and potential impact of recreation.

The National Benefits Hub (2010) provides one key message for the field of recreation to use in promotion and marketing.

*Leisure activities, parks and greenspace are essential to our physical, intellectual, social and spiritual well-being, to our quality of life, to the environment, and to our economic sustainability.*



## 9.2 MARKETING APPROACHES AND TERMINOLOGY

### *Traditional Marketing*

Each of us might think of marketing in a slightly different way. However, for recreation leaders, marketing has typically involved activities designed to create an awareness and appreciation of the programs, events, services, volunteer opportunities and facilities we offer. This type of marketing approach remains a priority because, without promotion to raise awareness of programs and services, even the best programming will result in low participation and limited impact.

Marketing is about communicating the right message, to the right audience, and through the right medium. Using the Marketing Mix of 5 P's (people, product, price, place and promotion) can provide guidance for planning effective marketing strategies.

**PEOPLE:** Start by identifying the benefits of greatest interest or need to the people who may be involved in your program or event. Gather information about this potential market or target audience. Consider where they spend their time, what activities they do on a daily basis, and the types of media they use.

Depending on your revenue sources, you may also need to understand the outcomes or benefits a funder is seeking. For example, a grant from the Health Investment Fund may prioritize increased levels of physical activity among seniors as an end result. Balancing the outcomes of both the target audience and a funder's priorities is not always easy.

**PRODUCT:** Learn from your target audience(s) whether your existing or new program delivers the outcomes or benefits that were originally identified as important. You want to know that these are being delivered and then ensure they align with the interests of stakeholders and funders.

**PRICE and PLACE:** Consider price and place when packaging your program or initiative. Describe the program's benefits and features in a way that directly relates to the needs and interests of your target audience. Describing features means identifying the who, what, where, cost, location, etc.

There is a fine balance between pricing too high and providing something for free. Recreation leaders find that free programs are perceived to have lower value than those for which a nominal fee is charged.

**PROMOTION:** Spread or promote your message using a format suited to your target audience and to your budget. Use a range of activities and media (e.g. posters, word of mouth, Facebook, or newsfeed on your website) to promote the package and the benefits of participating.

## ***Social Marketing***

Recreation has the potential to influence positive outcomes and benefits for individuals, families and communities. Encouraging and marketing these possible benefits is an important task for community recreation leaders. This type of marketing is not focused on specific products (e.g. program, event, volunteer opportunity). It is about promoting a shift in attitudes and behaviours. Marketing that aims to get people more active, to influence awareness about screen time, or to reduce consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages is called social marketing.

Social marketing generally consists of three steps:

1. Building awareness of an issue,
2. Appreciating what the issue really means to an individual or an organization, and
3. Understanding the options for change.

The intention of social marketing is to modify values, shift attitudes and ultimately promote behaviour change. Although this type of marketing is important for a group or organization, it plays a critical role in achieving social good. This means that recreation leaders need to incorporate traditional and social marketing approaches. On one hand, traditional marketing involves making a sales pitch to encourage individuals to participate in programs, events, services, volunteer opportunities and facilities. On the other hand, social marketing is necessary to position recreation as a benefit to the public good and a means to address broader societal issues.



ParticipACTION's goal is to get Canadians moving more. ParticipACTION is a Canadian and world-renowned example of social marketing. Their website offers a number of infographics and access to communication materials which recreation leaders can use to promote participation in play and physical activity.

For more detail on social marketing, refer to *The Community Toolbox* ([url49](#)). The resource describes social marketing and includes techniques for developing and conducting a campaign designed to promote, support and maintain behaviour change.

### ***Branding***

Whether you know it or not, your organization or community already has an identity. Your brand is everything that everyone sees and hears about you.

Branding refers to who you are and what you do, and is packaged clearly and memorably. It is your community's or organization's look and feel. More than a logo, branding is what the world sees and hears about you. This includes the font and colours used, your website, social media, letterhead, brochures, registration forms, signage, business cards, PowerPoint presentations, the signature on your email, how staff are perceived, taglines, and even how your phones are answered.

This blending of the overall image, mission and focus of your organization with the core marketing message(s) is what helps the public identify and relate to you. Consistency in your look and feel is very important.

Each initiative, organization or community is different, and we need to be able to communicate that uniqueness as clearly and concisely as possible. If we don't know what makes us unique, we need to figure it out. One of the best techniques for thinking about your brand is to ask, "What three words would you use to describe your organization's brand?"

### ***Features Versus Benefits***

Effective marketing requires an awareness of the features of your programs, events and facilities, and an understanding of the benefits these deliver. The most common mistake made in marketing is to emphasize features when we should be selling the benefits or outcomes. While features such as time, location, duration and cost are important, benefits will motivate buy-in because they respond to the "why" rather than the "what".

In order to motivate local residents to participate, marketing and promotional efforts must always answer the question people ask themselves, "What's in it for me?"

Create marketing messages that provide answers to this question, such as:

- achievement and accomplishment
- learning something new
- challenge and risk, excitement and exhilaration
- connecting to others (friends, family, meeting new people)
- creative expression and curiosity
- improved health
- relaxation and relief from stress and tension
- self-exploration and self-discovery, growth of self-worth and self-confidence
- a sense of belonging

Think of recreation as a fortune cookie and market the fortune (the benefit) not the cookie (the features).





## 9.3 MARKETING PLANS

How do community organizations make marketing, branding and social media a reality when they are often under-resourced, tight for time and overwhelmed by its complexity? Too often our tendency is to simply start creating marketing tools like a website or poster. However, if you start by developing a marketing or communication plan, the time spent planning will make better use of scarce resources.

Create a marketing plan in six steps. Each of these steps is explained in more detail in the marketing workbook at this link ([url50](#)).

1. Determine marketing and communication priorities.
2. Clarify target audiences and key messages.
3. Prioritize your marketing voice, look and feel.
4. Select general marketing approaches or strategies.
5. Prepare an implementation plan.
6. Develop and apply the marketing tools and tactics.

Once information for each step has been gathered, develop a Marketing Plan with the following elements:

- background and context
- vision, values and outcomes
- target audiences
- key messages
- goals, strategies and deliverables
- budget
- implementation plan
- evaluation

*The Nonprofit Marketing Guide* ([url52](#)) is an online source that offers resources, tips and training related to marketing and the nonprofit sector.



## 9.4 STRATEGIES FOR MARKETING RECREATION

In the North, there are many different ways to promote recreation programs, facilities and services without a huge expense. Get to know your community and use a blend of several tools to increase the likelihood of being noticed. For example, if very few people own computers or if Internet services are poor, social media (e.g. Facebook) may not be a good choice. If there is one grocery store in your community, then a bulletin board or flyers at the cash register may get more attention.

When promoting your recreation program, event or facility, choose several tools from the list below.

- ads in community newspapers or on local radio stations
- banners at events
- brochures, flyers or posters placed in relevant settings (e.g. schools, grocery stores, libraries, First Nation's office, etc.)
- bulletin board displays
- community meals (e.g. potluck dinners, lunch and learn)
- an award competition (e.g. poster design)
- give away free tickets or discounts to your programs and events
- host free events or an introductory program such as Come Try Yoga
- newsfeeds on websites (e.g. Northern Links) ([url40](#))
- network with other groups
- newsletters
- open communication channels appropriate to your community (e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, a toll-free phone number, live chat on your website, email, forums, etc.)
- organize joint activities with other organizations (e.g. community recreation fair showcasing all groups and their activities)
- promotional items (e.g. stickers, pens, t-shirts, etc.)
- staffed table at a community event or trade show
- testimonials, success stories ([pdf42](#)) and reviews
- word of mouth



In small communities such as those in Yukon, it is likely that word of mouth is the best form of advertising. Chat with the locals at the coffee shop, community hall, seniors' centre, post office or bank. Talk to teachers and students in the schools, stop in at the First Nation's office, and visit various clubs and groups. People are naturally social and will always talk about issues or community problems. When recreation leaders take the time to visit with community members, they build trust, interest and respect. These are essential prerequisites for promotion and participation in recreation.

Small communities with one recreation director may be very limited in their ability and resources to market recreation. By understanding the difference between outbound and inbound marketing ([url51](#)), recreation leaders can design a marketing plan and tools that are more relevant to their community, less costly and more effective in terms of time.

Outbound marketing is more traditional, using many of the marketing tools listed above (e.g. radio ads, flyers and posters). It tries to capture people's attention. However, with its en masse focus, outbound marketing can be quite costly and not very effective.

Although inbound marketing is less expensive and more successful at reaching the target audience, this type of marketing requires an online presence. Inbound marketing entices people to find out more about your products, services, or programs by giving them something that already interests them. For example, you may choose to post an article on Facebook about the benefit of walking and then another about using pedometers. These posts capture the interest from people who may choose to participate in a program your organization offers. With its attempt to engage others through shared interests and passions, inbound marketing is a better fit with the kind of relationship building that is essential for community recreation.

Manitoba's *Recreation Director's Handbook* ([pdf11-15](#)) and the *Community Recreation Handbook for Northern Saskatchewan* ([pdf12-7](#) and [pdf12-8](#)) include sections and templates for marketing and promotion.



## 9.5 INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Internet and social media offer a range of marketing opportunities. Even the smallest community needs a website to showcase community programs and events. When websites, databases and guides already exist, they may need to be promoted more widely. As the goal is to involve as many people as possible in recreation activities, websites should include:

- information about formal activities (e.g. programs, scheduled events, facility hours, etc.);
- references to informal activities (e.g. map of playgrounds and trails, drop-in activities, etc.);
- a calendar that allows stakeholders to post their own updates; and
- a database that lists contact information for local clubs, events, programs, services and facilities.

Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest and blogs need to be considered as options for marketing. Before beginning your adventure with these computer mediated tools, find out if your organization has a policy about social media, then refer to [\*Advice and Tips for Nonprofits on Social Media \(url53\)\*](#). Recreation leaders who need to develop a social media policy and guidelines for their workplace can use this [\*PolicyTool \(url54\)\*](#) that was created by a leading authority in Canada.

As the [\*Nonprofit Marketing Guide \(url52\)\*](#) explains, social media takes time to master. It can be overwhelming to set up and manage Facebook, Twitter and other accounts. If social media is outside your comfort zone, seek a volunteer with the skills and passion to help.