



How to Use Expos & Special Events for Group Promotion

Expos can provide an opportunity to introduce your group to the wider community and to highlight the various issues that the group faces. An Expo also provides that personal touch as you interact with people who approach your stall. A special event such as a public meeting can achieve a variety of objectives including free publicity, referral, attracting new members, gaining media coverage or educating the community about your particular issue. Another way of getting recognition and gaining support is to seek out guest speaking opportunities at functions held by organisations such as the Rotary and Lions Club.

1. EXPOS

Exhibiting can be costly, so you may want to consider why you want to exhibit, what you want to exhibit and to whom. Find out whether the Expo actually targets the audience you are hoping to reach and before deciding to go ahead, ask the Event Coordinator for an audience profile based on actual research. You may also want to ask them which forms of media have been approached and whether publicity has been arranged. Write down what you hope to achieve and later measure the success of attending.

Choose your stand carefully. Visit the venue or obtain a map of the layout in order to select the best location. The cost of the stand will increase depending on where it is situated. Take note of refreshment stands, seating and toilet areas as this could have an impact on people visiting your stalls.

Most expos charge a stall fee and you may have to rent display boards and promotional materials.

Create a visually appealing stall by displaying a colourful banner that grabs people's attention. Show a video, or display photos, graphics, charts or illustrations which are visually interesting. Display an information board with large text in bullet points, with your most relevant information. Keep in mind that visitors will approach many stalls, but will remember only ten or twelve. Stalls with activity or movement attract the biggest crowds.

Ensure that those attending the stall have a good knowledge of the group and issue and that they promote a friendly, well groomed and professional image. Network with people from other stalls as it will be a good opportunity to promote your group.

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2. SPECIAL EVENTS

The starting point for a special event, conference or public meeting is to establish clear objectives, such as exploring an issue, lobbying for change or gaining support and media attention. Guest speakers with specialist knowledge are usually invited to speak at special events. Holding a special event can be a lot of work, so it is a good idea to form a sub-committee to organise the event. You may also want to consider joining forces with an established association that could assist with the organisation and promotion of the event.

The following is a mini checklist for organising a special event:

- *Select a theme or topic*
- *Seek out funding possibilities*
- *Establish a sub-committee to organise the event*
- *Set a date and time*
- *Book a venue*
- *Finalise the list of subjects to be included in the topic*
- *Choose speakers—confirm their availability early so that their names can appear on the promotional material, and brief them on the topic to be discussed*
- *Promote the meeting*
- *Re-confirm details and bookings*

3. GUEST SPEAKING

Offering to give a talk to other groups such as the Rotary Club is a very good way of informing the community about your group and gaining their support. The more you speak in front of an audience the easier it becomes. Here are a few tips:

- *Clarify at the time of booking how much time has been allotted to your presentation and any equipment or material requirements, e.g.; a microphone, lectern, overhead projector, data projector and screen for PowerPoint presentations*
- *Re-confirm the details a day or two before the presentation*
- *Have some of your group brochures available for handouts*
- *Arrive early as this helps to settle the nerves and gives you time to survey the scene*
- *Try to avoid a classroom setting. A circle is preferable, more informal and promotes eye contact*
- *A great way to initiate feedback is to invite participants to ask questions at the end of your talk*

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