

Promoting your public engagement event

The basics



1. Audience

First things first: who is your audience? And where do they get information (offline and/or online)? This is the key thing underpinning successful promotion of your event.



2. Location

Go to where your audience already are! Whether this is in person or online. This could mean anything from putting posters or flyers up at a venue or in the local area, or engaging with particular Facebook or community groups online.



3. Timeline

You should start promoting your event around 6-8 weeks in advance.



4. Purpose

All of your promotional content should convey the value and purpose of your event. Why will people find it interesting? Why is it relevant? What will people get out of attending? Why should they make time to come along?



5. Help

Other researchers or colleagues in your network may have already worked with the audiences you are trying to reach, perhaps they will already have a list of contacts and will be able to support you in developing these relationships. Get in touch with your resident friendly public engagement team. We are here to help you!

Key information

All of your promotional material(s) should include:

- title of event
- date/s and time/s of event
- what the event is (e.g. talk, comedy show, performance)
- venue or online platform
- cost/ a note that it is free
- whether booking is required
- a link to find out more or book

Promotional checklist



Have you...

Engaged with stakeholders to aid in promotion?

- Partner organisations and your venue
- Speakers, performers, panellists or others involved in your event
- Community groups, local organisations, companies and charities with links to your target audience
- Internal colleagues (your institution's events team, press office, public engagement team, publications team, etc.)

Promoted the event via social media?

- Thought carefully about which platforms to use, why and how
- Thought about approaching relevant colleagues, friends or contacts ("influencers") with large social media followings to see if they would be happy to share or talk about your event
- Incorporated into relevant existing campaigns
- Thought about creating your own hashtag for the event
- Encouraged others in your organisation or network to promote via social media
- Asked your community and cultural partners (and other relevant groups, networks and organisations) to promote via social media
- Considered setting up a Facebook event page
- Considered planning content ahead of time and making use of a scheduling tool like [Hootsuite](#)
- Considered targeted paid advertising (ask your marketing colleagues for advice!)

Highlighted the event on relevant websites?

- Your institution/ department websites
- Institution/department blogs
- Other blogs relevant to your research and target audience
- Your venue's website (and mailing list)
- Your community and cultural partners' websites (and mailing list)
- Online calendar listings, such as local 'What's On' listings, city guides and platforms
- Sought out relevant local Facebook groups and other community platforms

Created materials to promote the event?

Remember to seek support and advice from your marketing and design colleagues!

- Poster/flyer
- Email invite
- Email signature
- Web banner/spotlight
- Social media graphics and images

Worked with press and media to gain publicity for the event?

- Contacted and liaised with the marketing, press and media colleagues at your organisation
- Written and distributed a press release
- Sent personalised pitch emails to relevant journalists and editors
- Sent personalised invites to press to attend the event
- Considered having one of your spokespeople write a piece about the event for submission to local media outlets
- Considered advertising your event in local press or other outlets
- Considered approaching relevant podcast hosts to see if you can discuss your research and event in the lead up

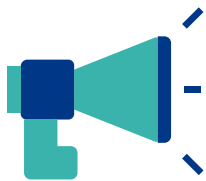
Top tips: calendar and event listings

Online calendar listings, such as local 'What's On' listings, city guides and platforms could be a good place to promote and publicise your event. A quick google (e.g. 'What's On Manchester') will bring up local sites. These will vary depending on the location and content of your event but a few examples include:

- [The Press Association](#)
- [The List](#)
- [Wherecanwego](#)
- [thebestof](#)
- [Arts Council England news listings](#)
- [Culture24](#)
- [Culture Fix](#) (online events)
- [BookGig](#) (literature/ author events)
- [Fantastic for Families](#) (family events)
- [NetMums](#) (family events)
- Regional listings such as [IanVisits](#) (London), [What's On Network](#) (Scotland), [Time Out](#) (London), [What's On Reading](#) and [Reading Culture Live](#) (Reading)
- Subject specific listings such as [The Historical Association](#) and [Diverse histories](#) on Twitter
- [Disability Arts Online](#) (disability arts and culture-related events, exhibitions, performances or touring programmes, or accessible performances)

Why do audiences come to events?

Your target audience is integral to all of your promotional efforts. It's important to think about your audience and their potential reasons for attending your event. Based on the 2020 Being Human festival evaluation, the top motivations for audience members attending festival events were...



To hear more about a topic



To get inspired



To gain a new perspective



To be entertained

Keep these things in mind when communicating and promoting your event. For example...

"Come along to this event to learn more about _____."

"Get inspired by _____ at this hands-on workshop."

"Enjoy an evening of _____ at this free event."

"Explore and challenge new ideas about _____ at this free event."



Putting together your event copy

Here are a few top tips to consider when putting together your promotional copy for your public engagement event:

Event title

Event titles need to be engaging and accessible for a public audience.

- Keep your event title under 60 characters
- Remove all unnecessary punctuation (colons, semicolons, hyphens etc.) so the title forms one short bite size chunk
- Remove all names e.g. of speakers and academics, and focus on the content
- Make them fun and appealing to non-specialist audiences

An example of an unsuitable title: 'Discoveries and Secrets: Dr Jane Smith's exploration of consumables in Dickens' literature – global interpretations'. An example of a suitable title: 'Come dine with Dickens'.

Event description

When putting together the promotional description of your event:

- Ensure your description is no longer than 160 words
- Indicate who your event is for (e.g. 'come along if you're interested in X or Y', or, 'this event is suitable for families and children aged 8+')
- Say what the event is (e.g. craft workshop, screening, walking tour) and outline what attendees will be expected to do (e.g. 'create your own zine')
- Remove all academic and specialist language
- Remove long bios/ profiles of academics/ speakers/ artists involved in the event
- Sell your event - make it sound interesting, relatable and a good use of someone's free time

Photographs / promotional images

Try and use images related specifically to your project or event. Think about relevant visual content that brings your research to life in fun ways (e.g. archive snippets, pieces of artwork, interesting objects and items, historical buildings, photos of previous events) and try to tell a story about what your event might look like.

Social media top tips

Always keep in mind who your target audience is and where they get their information online. A lot of academics love Twitter, but Instagram and Facebook are more widely used by the general population in the UK. It's great to promote across all platforms, but if you're short on time you may need to concentrate your efforts. Here are some of our top tips for using social media to promote your public engagement event:

1. Don't re-invent the wheel



It's normally not worth setting up a new social media profile to promote your event. Instead you should make use of existing platforms that have an existing audiences and followings (a public audience is better). Think about making use of channels run by: your community or cultural partners; your organisation or university; your venue; and anyone else involved in your event such as speakers, artists and other collaborators.

- When asking other platforms to tweet or post for you, make sure you give them plenty of notice. Save them time and draft up a tweet or some messaging for them, it will make it a lot easier and quicker for them to share.
- When posting always remember to mention other profiles such as your organisation, your partners and your venue by tagging them – this will encourage them to retweet and will extend your reach.
- Consider approaching “influencers” with large followings relevant to your target audience to see if they would made sharing your event.

2. No po-faced promo



- Remove all academic and specialist language. It's very important to always use plain English in communications so that everyone can understand what you're saying.
- Try and create a playful presence online as people respond well to humour.
- Be clear about what your event is and what it will entail. Draw in interest by emphasizing what people will do, create, learn or come away with.

3. Call to action



- Always include a call to action. What do you want people to do? Visit your website? Read a blog? Book on to your event? Comment with their thoughts and questions?
- Support your call to action with a link e.g. blog, event page, booking link.

4. Use hashtags (wisely)



- Consider creating your own hashtag for your event. Keep it short and snappy. The hashtag can also be used later for analysis. Include it on all of your promotional materials and encourage attendees to use it before, during and after your event.
- Do a bit of research into popular hashtags in your area or with your target audience (this is particularly useful on Instagram).
- Remember to keep an eye on what's trending.

Social media top tips continued...



5. Be topical

- Public engagement is all about showcasing how humanities research is relevant to people's everyday lives. Does your research link to something topical or something happening in the news?
- Digital communication is a reactive medium. While scheduling is an excellent way to help you plan content, you also need to be able to respond to news and followers who engage with you.
- Repost articles and news pieces relevant to your activity. This is about drawing connections between research and people's everyday experiences.
- Creating a Twitter thread telling a story can be a fun and engaging way to share your research and in turn promote your event.



6. Plan ahead

- Consider and plan how many posts you are going to make and even consider preparing some content ahead of time. Think about how your posts and stories will string together.
- You could make use of scheduling tools like Hootsuite.



7. Stay visible

- When scrolling through their timelines, people are far more likely to stop and engage with an image rather than just text, so always try and use eye-catching imagery in whatever you do.
- Twitter and Facebook will automatically convert hyperlinks into 'cards' and will select an image from the linked page.
- Check the organiser area of the website for downloadable social media graphics or consider creating your own promotional graphic.
- Again, think about relevant visual content that brings your research to life in fun ways (e.g. archive snippets, pieces of artwork, interesting objects and items, historical buildings, photos of previous events) and try to tell a story about what your event might look like.
- Optimal social media image sizes:
 - Facebook timeline image: 1200 x 630 pixels
 - Facebook event Image: 1920 x 1080 pixels
 - Instagram: 1080 x 1080 pixels
 - Twitter in-stream image: 440 x 220 pixels
- You can use an online tool like [BeFunky](#) to resize your image.

Links and resources

- NCCPE resource: ['What works: Engaging the public through social media'](#)
- NCCPE ['Marketing' web page](#)