

CRAFTING A MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY FOR RECREATIONAL CYCLING EVENTS



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Introduction

This paper is about marketing and promoting recreational cycling events and focuses on the four Ps of marketing – product, price, place, and promotion. As you will find there will be references to several steps of event preparation that are really part of developing and implementing the marketing and promotional campaign. The key takeaways will be:

- Understanding why you want to have a cycling event?
- Developing a realistic budget and promotional campaign
- Determining promotional mix and implementation strategy
- Networking, collaboration, and community outreach
- Collecting data before, during, and after the event
- Measuring event outcomes and return on investment
- Planning for next year

Not everything in this paper applies to every type of recreational cycling event but the concepts presented here can serve to foster your ideas about creating a winning promotional campaign. It's up to you to be creative and explore all your options to make for a successful event.

Step 1: Why do you want to have a Cycling Event? The key to designing a successful cycling event is creating a clear sense of purpose. Having the event is simply not enough, so why do you want to have this event and who or what is it for? It's important to define the purpose of your event so you can plan and ensure that stakeholders, volunteers, or employees are working toward common goals. There can be any number of reasons for having a cycling event, such as:

- Raising funds for an organization (cycling club, local non-profit, etc.)
- Raising funds for bike trails
- Wanting to inform and educate the community about a cause (e.g. bike safety) or a need (e.g. bike lanes, bike park(s), etc.)
- Encouraging tourism and specifically sports tourism

When planning any event, the key benchmark for determining its success is attendance. You want to attract enough participants to satisfy stakeholders and sponsors and make it a financial success. It's often been said that the success of anything stems from good planning. So, if you're wondering what will truly make your event successful it's to start by planning months in advance. A good rule of thumb is at least ten (10) months in advance.

Step 2: Pick a Date and Stick with it. This is a critical step because all your efforts are to make sure you're ready by the event date and can attract the number of participants you need to meet your revenue goal. When picking a date, make sure you are not competing with another similar cycling event in your region on the same day. It's alright if several other cycling events are being held on the same day, just so long as they are not

in close proximity to one another. In close proximity means within 75 miles of one another or roughly a one-and-a-half (1½) hour's drive time.

If you're planning to host an "annual" cycling event, make sure to "*claim your date*" (e.g. the 1st Saturday in May). Make sure you advertise it as an "annual" event taking place the first Saturday in (whatever month) even if it is the first annual event. Claiming your date will help other cycling event planners in your region to be aware of the event and hopefully not try and overlap or compete for participants on the same day. It will also help past participants who enjoyed the event to make plans in advance to attend again the following year and encourage others to join them.

Step 3: Determine the Venue and the Route(s). Where you choose to hold your event and pre and post-event activities is critical to maximizing attendance and can have an impact on the budget. First, determine how easy is it for attendees to get to the venue and park on or near the site without adversely impacting the surrounding community or business operations. Also, consider how the site best suited for the logistics of pre and post-event activities, bathrooms/porta johns, and places to sit, relax and eat after finishing. Is there going to be entertainment and where to place them?

When planning the route(s) it is important to consider the placement of rest stops and whether they can be used more than once. The roads with the least traffic make for a safer experience. Routes that minimize car and bike crowding are also important for good community relations. For safety reasons, avoid having cyclists riding in both directions on high traffic roads unless it's absolutely necessary. Finally, be sure to ride the routes to gauge traffic and road surface conditions, and if the rest stop's placement makes sense.

Step 4: Develop a Budget. If you're charging a fee to cover your costs or make a profit, you need to create a budget that details all your expenses and anticipated revenues. Expenses should include the cost of planning and promoting the event, facility and equipment rentals, insurance, licenses, permit fees, credit card fees, website, printing, signs, road markings, mailing, t-shirts, giveaways, entertainment, policing, setup and cleanup fees, food and beverage, and labor cost, reimbursement expenses (e.g. gas for SAG Support & volunteers stocking aid stations) to name a few. Income should include registration fees and community and corporate sponsorships. Community and corporate sponsorships can be in the form of cash and/or donations. Subtract the sponsorship revenue and/or donations from the expenses and set your price.

Step 5: Set Your Price. Price "accordingly" – understand your customer, your competitors, and the perceived value of your event offering. Deciding the right price for tickets is one of the most important aspects that define the success of an event.

Research – One way is to research what other similar events are or have charged. While it shouldn't be the main basis for which you make the ticket pricing decision, it doesn't hurt to take a look. It also doesn't hurt to reach out to other event planners and ask how well their event was attended and how they determined their ticket price. This can help you get an idea of the demand out there and can serve as a good starting point. Also, when researching other similar cycling events, it can provide you with insight into the event's marketing and management as well. It never hurts to ask!

Cost Basis – Another pricing strategy to use is the cost basis approach. If you have a good understanding of your event costs, you can apply a realistic attendance target. The cost basis approach is determined by taking the total event costs divided by the anticipated number of tickets sold. This gives you the cost per ticket to break even on your event. Every ticket will need to be priced higher than this to cover costs and achieve your revenue goal. How much you charge over this amount is really at your discretion and what revenue goal you wish to achieve. If the cost per ticket seems low, you can always charge more but if it seems high, you may need to cut costs to reduce the ticket price and possibly reconsider your revenue goal.

Note: Your ticket sales strategy plays a role in achieving your attendance and revenue goals. ***It is never too early to start selling tickets!*** You certainly don't want to rely on last-minute ticket sales to make your sales goal. So, how far in advance should you sell tickets? As a general rule the sooner the better, but at least six (6) months in advance is ideal and, if not possible, no less than three (3) months before the event.

Generally, there are two types of cycling event ticket sale approaches; general admission and tiered pricing. What method you choose will impact your promotional campaign strategy.

- **General Admission/Full Price Ticket** – doesn't matter when you register, the ticket price will always be the same. This is used but it does not provide any incentive for immediate ticket purchases. Sales may be last minute as people wait to see what the weather forecast will be on the event day.

Simply determining the price of a General Admission ticket and then working backward to create a cheaper tier of tickets is a tried and tested formula that the public has come to expect.

- **Tiered Pricing** – provides participants an incentive to sign-up early to take advantage of lower admission fees because over time the admission fee will increase. It is natural to procrastinate, having set price increases in place provides motivation to sign up sooner. Those that sign up earlier can be built-in marketers because people often want to share experiences with friends and family. It is important to be clear when increases occur and as a rule, you want to avoid weekends for price increases.

Examples include:

- **Early Access Tickets:** made available exclusively to past attendees granting them access to tickets in advance of the general public. If your audience knows your previous event was sold out, chances are they might feel rushed to get their tickets early for the next event you host. Early Access tickets are typically sold for a short duration over two weeks before the launch of Early Bird registration.
- **Early Bird Tickets:** participants who register well in advance of an event, are rewarded with a cheaper ticket than those who purchase later on. This ticket may or may not be higher than the Early Access ticket if one is offered. One thing to keep in mind is that you should never extend your early bird rate. By

doing so, you are training your audience to wait, instead of acting, which is the whole point of the early bird strategy.

- **Advance Tickets:** prices are increased above the Early Bird price, but it is still cheaper than the General Admission/Full Price ticket. This price increase usually comes about 30 to 60 days after the Early Bird sales and typically lasts up to two or three weeks before the event.
- **General Admission or Full Price Ticket:** participants who register closer to the date of the event will pay the full price of admission. People wait for many reasons, including watching the weather, friends talking them into going, or they just decide to attend.
- **Day of Ticket:** is higher priced than the General Admission ticket and is for those who decide at the last minute to attend. Unless there is some reason like COVID, you should consider selling day-of-event tickets because these people are willing to pay more and want to participate. Also, how you treat them could make them repeat customers and they may recommend your event to others in the future.

Event Ticket Policies – life happens and a lot can happen between the time a ticket is purchased and the event day. Include a clear policy for how to handle ticket transfers, people getting sick or death, and what happens in the case of inclement weather the day of the event (is it a rain or shine event, or is there an alternative rain date).

Step 6: Develop a Brand. What separates a good cycling event from the best cycling event? Some people will say the routes and road markings, ease of checking in, the swag, the event atmosphere, the aid stations, the post-ride food, and the entertainment. When you think about it, it's everything and it boils down to providing an exceptional experience to everyone involved and standing out from the crowd of events. The perception and reputation of the event all come down to its brand. Some Virginia cycling brand examples include Lynchburg's Storming of Thunder Ridge - a road bike event, the Loudon County 1725 Gravel Grinder, and the Shenandoah Mountain 100 – a mountain bike event, to name a few.

An event brand is simply a marketing practice in which a company or organization creates a name, symbol(s), colors, messaging and imagery that distinguishes a unique identity for an event. Elements that go into the brand are your logo, slogan, colors, graphics, and fonts. The event brand should stand out from the competition to make it memorable to its audience and have a long-term appeal. When the event is over the experience and underlying message will be what your participants remember, and an outstanding event brand will help attendees recall positive emotions related to your event.

Step 7: Create an Event Page. With your routes planned, a ticket pricing strategy developed, and the event brand complete, it's time to turn your attention to the event page. Your event page is the most important communication platform to invest in. This is where your stakeholders, sponsors, and participants can access information about the event. It is the best sales tool as it is working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so it must be informative and attention-grabbing.

- The site should answer key questions (where, when, who, what and why)?
 - Where and When is the event being held?
 - Who is the organizer?
 - What is the purpose of the event?
 - What are the route options?
 - Why should you attend?

When developing your event page content put yourself in your customer's shoes as a participant who wants a great experience.

- Consider who's going to attend: newbies, weekend warriors, veteran riders, and pros.
- Consider preferences for attending the event as some want:
 - a well-organized event;
 - a course that is easy to complete so they can feel like they can finish;
 - a challenging course to feel like they have achieved bragging rights;
 - to discover and explore new places;
 - to escape, relax and regenerate;
 - to have social interaction and the novelty of participating in the event.
 - Some pick an event solely based on stylish t-shirts and jerseys.

Your event can't be everything to everyone, but as a rule of thumb is try and please as many as possible. People also want to know they are getting value for attending so highlight the perks - swag, rest stops, SAG support, entertainment, pre and post-event perks (post-ride food, discounts at restaurants, places to stay, etc.). You also need to manage rider expectations and be clear about what the event provides and what participants are expected to provide for themselves.

- Have answers to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section and provide details (rider expectations, SAG information, etc.). Have a way for people to contact you with questions that are outside of your posted Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).
- Include photos and video clips (e.g. old mill, historic buildings, smiling faces, towns riding through, views and vistas, participant interviews, drone footage or videos of people riding in past events).
- Have a clear call to action – Registration, make it easy to spot, and put the registration link in more than one place. Also, don't keep people hanging – If registration hasn't started then be clear when registration begins – never take your customers to an inactive or previous year's registration site – it's a letdown! If the registration date is to-be-determined (TBD) then provide a checkback date or provide an option for them to be notified when registrations begins. Remember, these are potential customers who will help promote your event.
- For those coming from out of the area make it easy for them to find accommodations and things to do (provide a link to a host hotel/campground and/or your local tourism website which will have most of this information, but may or may not have campsites listed).

Be sure to add key words that enhance Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to help your website become more discoverable. This includes a category, description, and event words

such as century ride, mountain biking, gravel grinder, etc., and also includes the location where the event is taking place.

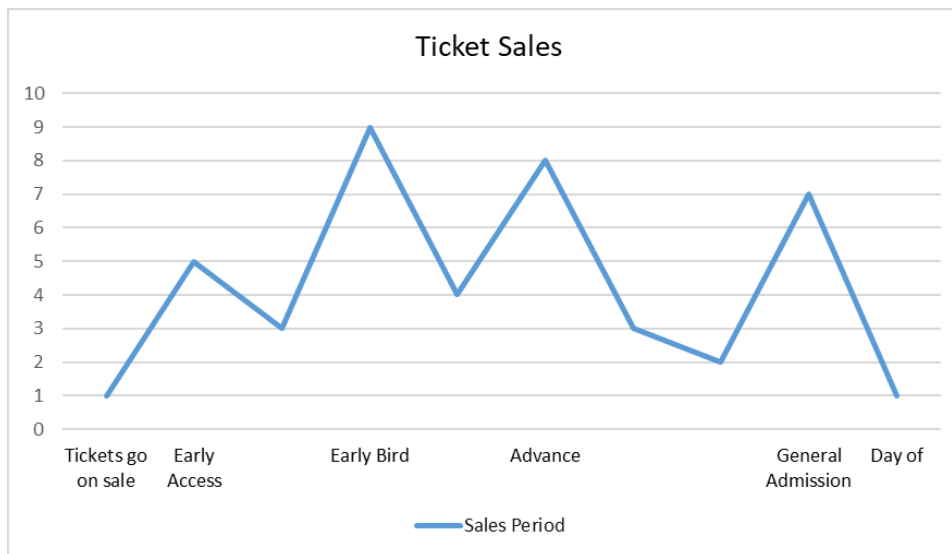
Step 8: Promotion – Spreading the Word

Never underestimate the time and effort required for the successful promotion of an event. You don't want people to look at your promotional campaign you want them to register and attend! The types of methods typically used are advertising, direct promotion, online promotion, public relations, and sales promotion. To ensure a promotional campaign's success, you need to follow conventional techniques, but make the application unconventional because that is how you'll stand out.

Sample Promotional Tactics

- Develop press releases for local newspapers, radio, and TV stations
- Electronic – Event Calendars/Social Media/Email
- Print – Posters/Flyers/Direct Mail
- Cross Promotion (business, civic, governmental, media, nonprofit)

There's no such thing as too much pre-ride buzz. The key is to keep the momentum going and make sure your event stays on top of people's minds throughout the ticket sales period. This means you need to keep in mind the buying habits of some of your customers – the budget-minded, timely deciders, fair-weather friends, and the procrastinators. And your promotional strategy needs to appeal to these customers throughout the sales period.



- **Budget Minded:** people who genuinely like the event being offered for a host of reasons, and will buy early to save money (pre-sale & early bird ticket purchase). They can be locals but also those that live further away and want to ensure they have accommodations and may also make plans to extend their stay.
- **Timely Deciders:** those that like the event and see value in attending and will buy before the price increases further (advance ticket purchase). They can be locals

but also those that live further away and want to ensure they have accommodations and may also make plans to extend their stay.

- **Fair Weather Friends:** are typically your locals who will wait to see what the weather report will be a week or two in advance of the event before signing up and waiting until the last possible minute to make a purchase before the price increases again (general admission/full-price ticket).
- **Procrastinators:** people who would rather wait and pay more money in case they get injured, have a schedule conflict, or just decided to attend at the last minute (general admission or day of ticket sale).

Just before registration begins, send out a press release to local media (newspaper, TV, and radio stations) by mail, or the preferred method by media is to cut and paste the release in an e-mail and not include it as an attachment. Then follow up by calling to make sure they saw the release and offer to answer any questions. Then send additional releases one month and one week before the big day.

General rules for writing a press release:

1. Keep them brief
2. Use attention-grabbing headline
3. Include the release date
4. Convey key facts in the first paragraph (100 words maximum)
 - When is the event?
 - Where is it taking place?
 - Purpose of the event?
5. Expand the story – add color & interest
 - History of the event
 - Anticipated attendance numbers
 - Past economic impact
 - Event is for everyone (novices, families, pros, and mileage)
 - Include a photo
6. Include some quotes
 - Past attendees
 - Local Economic Development and/or Tourism Office
 - Major Sponsor
7. Add background and contacts
 - Key facts about the event organization & organizer
 - Brief background about the organization
 - Primary contact (name, address, phone, email)

Event Calendars

Online event calendars help to create brand awareness and increase visibility of your event. Once the event date has been confirmed, add the event to cycling or sporting events calendars. Calendar listings help to boost your website's search engine authority through quality backlinks. Search engines decide how important a page is by the use of backlinks which help your site to achieve higher rankings. There are several types of event calendars to consider including cycling clubs, statewide sites like Cycling Virginia, state tourism,

local tourism, and a national event calendar like Gran Fondo Guide and Trailforks to name a few.

Radio & TV Stations. Ask a local radio station if they will do a community announcement letting people know the event is taking place and mention the event's purpose and key sponsors (like local government, and businesses) supporting the event.

Ask a local television news reporter to do a brief community-focus piece and interview you about the event. Also, ask the local meteorologist if they would include mentioning the event and what the weather will be leading up to the big day.

Social Media & Email. Social media is a pillar of many people's daily lives since 84% of Americans use at least one social media network. However, you have to have a strategy to raise your event's "brand" awareness to connect and engage with potential customers. You need to consider which channels are right for your audience. The most popular and largest social media platforms in 2022 are Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram with each having over one (1) billion users. These are currently the best platforms to reach the cycling audience of all ages. However, to stand out, you need quality content, photos, and/or videos. Good posts are those which have a purpose, create an experience, provide a unique angle, or develop a story.

Content Examples

- Tell a story (what is the event about; why attend; where is it; who does it benefit)
- Host training rides
- Announce bi-weekly gift giveaways to those who have registered that can be retrieved at packet pickup. (Work with a local bike shop to get donations or purchase small items at cost)
- Promote a raffle of a few special items for those who have registered by a specific date(s)
- Create a highlight reel from prior events with photos or videos
- Create a simple graphic and use it as a visual testimonial with quotes or comments from participants.
- Post-behind-the-scenes photos and videos of the venue and surrounding area
- Post photos of important local sites and attractions
- Post images of event signage and swag
- If applicable post an image/video of the charitable organization that benefits from the event and how the funds will have an impact. Include a brief interview with the organization asking people to participate and support the cause.

Facebook – go to the site and create an event page and once you've chosen the event type, you can add all of the event details. You should also add SEO information to help your event become more discoverable. This includes a category, description, and keywords (e.g. century ride, mountain biking, gravel grinder, etc.) and also includes the location where the event is taking place in the SEO. Use as many SEO words as are relevant to the event so the next time someone searches "century rides, etc." they could find your event which potentially increases your chance of registrations.

Consider using Facebook Stories to increase your brand's image. Tell a story to get your audience's attention and increase engagement with photos and videos. Your Story

duration should be between one (1) second and two (2) minutes in length, with 15 seconds being the sweet spot.

Stories on Facebook and Instagram help you connect with your audience through full-screen photos and videos in their stories feed. After you post your content, it will be visible for 24 hours.

Instagram – a survey was conducted on Instagram users and the data showed that carousel posts get the highest number of likes and comments on the platform. An Instagram carousel is a post containing more than one photo or video, which users can view by swiping left on a post through the phone app. Desktop users can view a carousel post by clicking on the arrow button on the right of a post. Think of it as a slideshow of posts that users can control.

When creating Instagram posts, you want the right type of message for your campaign. A survey revealed that the perfect captions are those of under ten words. More than ten takes away from the engagement rate. Essentially, you want to pique interest and drive people to your Facebook event page or website. The ten words do not include hashtags.

Hashtags are a vital tool associated with Instagram that can help get images noticed and are like SEO words as they help people find your content when they search for these topics. Use hashtags effectively! When it comes to Instagram hashtags, the general rule is that less is more. A recent Instagram post recommends using three to five hashtags instead of adding 10 or 20. Suggestions for hashtags you should use are the brand hashtag (name of the event), a tag about the type of event (century ride, gravel grinder, etc.), and a location hashtag.

YouTube – is essentially a search engine for videos that uses complex ranking algorithms for user content. Including keywords in your video titles that are relevant to the subject matter is crucial. To get started you will need to create a YouTube channel for your event and connect it to your social media accounts for easy sharing and post them on your website.

You will need to write a compelling video description and create a natural flow of words that will be picked up by the YouTube algorithm, but enjoyable for people to read. Like Instagram, you should use the same hashtags to help your video content rank higher in search engine results. Unlike Instagram, you can use a larger number of tags up to 400 characters.

Email – with all the emails that people receive daily, it can be hard to make yours stand out from the crowd. But creating a high-performing email campaign is crucial when it comes to email marketing. Email campaigns can be a great way to drive traffic, and increase sales– as long as you write them in the right way. With good email campaigns, you can build trusting relationships with your subscribers and keep them engaged with content they feel is relevant. If your event is new and you have little or no email subscribers, a good place to start getting them is through your web and social media sites.

A quality email promotional campaign will contain the following:

- **Good subject line:** Your subject line will be your first impression, so it needs to be good. The subject line should grab the reader's attention right off the bat and entice them to keep reading.
- **Easy to read:** No one wants to read an email that takes longer than a couple of minutes to get through. Your email should be simple, straight to the point, and easy to read.
- **Mobile-friendly:** A lot of people open up their emails on their phones, so your email must be mobile-friendly.
- **Relevant:** The content in your email should be relevant to the person you're sending it to.
- **Value:** At the end of the day, your email campaigns are being sent as a way to entice someone to learn more about your event and register. So, you need to include in the email what the recipient will get for participating (escaping to a new destination, helping with a cause, etc.).

Emails should be sent throughout the sales period and at the closing:

- before the event - press releases to the media (print, radio, and TV)
- to local and out-of-area clubs notifying them of the event
- to past participants when registration begins
- periodic reminders of when ticket prices increase
- to everyone registered about those that have won a gift or a raffle
- a week to a few days before the event – with details about packet pickup and arrival
- after the event to thank and recognize everyone involved with the event including volunteers, sponsors, media, and participants.

***Note:** Following an electronic, social media and email marketing strategy over the entire ticket sales period is the best way to help you achieve better sales results.*

Posters/Flyer Cards and/or Direct Mail – are tried and true ways to promote your event. Putting up posters in your local community bike shops, health clubs, coffee shops, and wherever else people might see them is a great way to raise awareness not only amongst athletes but the community as a whole. Distributing flyer cards is another effective strategy but is labor intensive to distribute. Direct mail marketing is a useful overall marketing campaign and works because it taps into the positive psychology of receiving a physical gift. However, you have to manage the printing cost, labeling, and mailing.

Print Media Guide

- **Posters** – A good poster attracts an audience with a clear, uncluttered design that has a pop of color. It has information presented in logical order so the audience can navigate through the material easily. A good poster is not overloaded with text; it contains only the most essential bits of text and graphics needed to tell the story.

Key features include the title (name of the event), text (location and date), graphics, color, flow, and a QR code linked to the event or registration site. Recommended size - 11x17 on 24lb paper or premium card stock.

- **Flyer Cards** - can arguably be classified as the most iconic medium of all time and are ideal if you desire to target a specific audience. They can be distributed in diverse ways including cross-promoting at other cycling events, direct mail, windshields, distribution at bike shops, health clubs, parks, and post bulletin boards. Flyers can also be resized and digitized for distribution through social media and email. Key features include being used both front and back, having a title (name of the event), text (location, date, etc.), graphics, color, flow, and a QR code linked to the event or registration site. Recommended size - 4x6 on premium card stock.
- **Mailers** – can be costlier, so it is best if they are targeted to past participants to give you a better bang for your dollar and registration success rates. You can use the flyer that was created as the mailer and you may need to do a redesign to accommodate the mailing address and postage permit if you haven't done so. The mailing permit is permission to use a certain postage payment method for commercial mailings. You can provide the design and mailing addresses to the printer and typically they can handle the permit and mailing as well. Recommended size - 4x6 on premium card stock.

Note: In all cases choose fonts, colors, and images consistent with your brand's image (see Attachment A for examples).

Cross-Promotion. The whole point of cross-promotion is to build partnerships where all parties benefit. It is a recognized fact that sports tourism injects new money into the local economy through expenditures on lodging, food and beverages, retail products, and other goods and services. This means there are many opportunities to find partners, however, you must first research and develop a list of potential partners. This includes businesses, clubs, civic organizations, local government entities, and nonprofits who could partner with you. Then answer the question – what's in it for them?

Businesses – include local retailers, office and manufacturers, and service providers. They may provide sponsorship dollars, in-kind contributions, and promotional assistance as a demonstration of giving back to the community. Thereby improving the company's reputation and creating greater brand awareness.

- Local businesses can help promote the event as a company health and wellness or team-building initiative. They can encourage employees to register and have jerseys made up with the company's logo. They can contribute swag for brand awareness.

Restaurants can increase business by offering to donate a portion of their sales on the day before and/or the day of the event or offer discounts to participants who show their event registration or wear the event t-shirt.

Local hotels, motels, B&Bs, and campgrounds can help promote the event by displaying an event poster or flyers. For those guests that are registered to participate, they can distribute a list of restaurants and bike shops supporting the event and have a list of all future events for the remainder of the year – offering value for sponsors and potential future night stays.

Cycling Clubs – identify bicycle clubs around the state or adjoining state(s) and ask if they would put the word out through email, e-newsletters, and post to their social media page to the members.

Civic Organizations – like veterans, scouting, fraternal lodges, churches, and charities, to name a few, do a lot of heavy lifting in communities. These organizations can be a great source of volunteers and can help with generating sponsorships. What is in it for them is an opportunity to serve their community and/or a cause.

Other Events & Local Government – consider two types of opportunities for event support and promotion, first outreach at other events and secondly, forming a geographical alliance to promote events. Keep in mind Tourism, Economic Development, and Chambers of Commerce are good partners to approach whether you're the only event in the area or you have formed a geographic alliance of promoters.

- **Promoter Outreach** – contact event promoters who host their event before yours and ask if they would allow you to distribute event flyers in with their packet pickup. See if after their event whether they would share your event on their social media site and/or to their registrant list. You should offer to help promote their event similarly as well.
- **Geographic Alliance** – where several cycling events are happening geographically throughout the season it would be advantageous for event promoters to agree to form an alliance and reach out to the local government to ask for assistance in promoting their events. Sports tourism injects new money into the local economy through expenditures on lodging, food and beverages, retail products, and other goods and services. In addition, the argument can be made that your events can bring people who may have never considered visiting before. The local government entities just need to understand how these events further their mission. The alliance will need to explain the overall metrics their events have such as:
 - Total registrations
 - Number of local, out-of-town, and out-of-state registrations
 - Total registrations by gender (if asked in registration)
 - Age ranges and the average age of participants (if asked for birth date)
 - Any hard numbers or estimates of the number of overnight stays and how long

In addition, both of you can benefit from pre-event and day-of-event happenings.

- **Pre-Event** – share with them the list of attendees and co-write the pre-event email letting the participants know what to expect with regards to

packet pickup or arrival and that the local government is looking forward to their visit. The local government can have a link to a microsite (which can be used for all other events) with quality of life information about the city, county, and/or the region and other upcoming community or regional events. They could also highlight the great companies in the area and use them to promote job opportunities by providing links to company websites with job openings.

- **Event Day** – vendor table at the event with representatives from tourism, economic development, or the chamber handing out promotional information and answering questions. They should consider having a highly visible QR Code with a link to the microsite mentioned above.

What promotional assistance could the alliance ask of local government? Help with advertising (social media, cycling publications, radio, TV, co-branding of a dedicated event website), working with hotels on discounted lodging, working with restaurants on discounts or special promotions, assisting with providing a potential sponsor list, and/or finding sponsors. Educating the community about the importance these events have on the local economy.

Step 9: The Venue Experience. The venue experiences are an important part of the event product and your marketing campaign! Why do you ask? This goes hand in hand with stimulation as you engage each participant’s senses. If the environment doesn’t match the message you are trying to communicate, the experience will not be effective so don’t underestimate sensory engagement.

Packet Pickup (particularly the day before the event) have it at a sponsor’s venue, the event location, or somewhere unique.

- ✓ Make sure you have event signage (even if it's just printed on foam core) hanging up for all to see.
- ✓ Have sponsor signage on clear display at packet pickup and at the rest stops.
- ✓ Layout and display the swag to show what is in the packet.
- ✓ If you have t-shirts, jerseys, gloves, socks, drink glasses, etc., hang them up – clearly display them, if there are extras for sale make a sales tag so people know the price.
- ✓ Depending on the length of the route include a “Ride with GPS” map and a QR Code to download it to their GPS device.
- ✓ Have a wristband with the SAG support number. If you don’t have a wristband, then be sure to have the SAG number printed on the route map. You can also put the SAG number on directional signage and/or displayed it at rest stops.
- ✓ If your event can have vendors/sponsors (artists, local bike shop, local tourism and or economic development office, etc.) have them as part of packet pickup, at the start, and post-ride return.

The Start should be a full experience whether it is a mass start, in waves, or a show-and-go.

- ✓ Have event signage on display (name and logo) to support the overall brand message and set the tone for the day’s experience.

- ✓ Make sure there are more than enough portable toilets stationed to accommodate the preride nervous urination that runs rampant among participants.
- ✓ Before the start, be sure to thank everyone for coming out and why the event is important (the purpose), mention each of your sponsors, and thank them.
- ✓ If the event is at a resort, thank them, and if in a community take time to say welcome to the community.
- ✓ Provide route updates of any areas where riders need to exercise caution (overnight washouts, tricky down hills, sharp turns, etc.).
- ✓ If this is not a race, mention points of interest, and mark place(s) along routes that are good for photo ops (old mills, farms, old vintage signs, vistas, etc.).
- ✓ Arrange for a photographer(s) to take photos at key locations.

Rest Stops should be fully stocked and staffed and have good communication to make sure they stay properly stocked. At the stop, post a notice reminder of the number to call for SAG support. Other considerations include:

- ✓ Possibly a portable speaker with upbeat music
- ✓ Display sponsor signage or name a rest stop after a sponsor with their logo displayed
- ✓ Hand sanitizer
- ✓ Don't skimp or be cheap on the rest stop goodies as rest stops are one of the most memorable parts of the ride and are often talked about afterward. *Make sure the food is the fuel a rider needs to give them the proper energy to finish.*

Nutritional Suggestions:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cut up bananas - orange and/or watermelon slices - peanut butter & jelly quarters - cups of nuts & trail mix - hard-boiled eggs - packaged crackers - boiled red potato slices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - energy bars - banana nut bread slices - homemade cookies/brownies, or store-bought, don't go heavy on sweets - Something for cramps (pickle juice, yellow mustard packets) |
|--|---|
-
- ✓ Some riders may have dairy/gluten/nut allergies, so variety and labeling food is a great thing.
 - ✓ Water and if you're going to have Gatorade, take time to mix it right or portion the Gatorade mix into paper cups (ratio for 16-ounce water bottles) for the riders to mix.
 - ✓ Soft drinks (Coke/Pepsi/Ginger Ale, etc.)
 - ✓ Possibly post a sign after leaving each rest stop (Thanks for Coming – Enjoy the Ride), or at the last rest stop (Thanks for Coming – Hope you Enjoyed the Ride). Minor touches trigger the senses and are engaging.

The Finish should be more than just a ride back to the car. Ask people to check in so you have a record of who finished, thank them for coming, ask them if they enjoyed the ride (get feedback) and encourage them to stay for the post-ride festivity. Depending on

your event, you may choose to have a finisher's t-shirt or a medal for finishing the longest route or take a photo of everyone at the finish.

If a meal is provided after finishing an event, know that the food is just as important as the quality of the food at the rest stops and it matters to the participants. Consider what foods are best to enable the body to recover after a ride. Here are some post-ride food ideas:

BBQ	Quinoa
Burgers/Hot Dogs	Pasta
Burritos - beef or chicken	Rice & Beans
Chicken	Vegetables
Chili	fruit
Pizza	Nuts
Salads	Desert

❖ ***When all is done, what people remember is how they were treated and the atmosphere.***

Think about all the steps previously listed as creating a “*snowball effect*” – you are connecting with your participants on multiple levels. When people have a great event experience, they become more passionate and will tell others and the word will spread further. Of course, the same is true in reverse, negative news can spread just as fast. You want real fans and supporters. The more passionate your fans are about you, the more likely they’ll share you. The passing of information through word of mouth is powerful. It is a free form of advertisement and a great vehicle for exposure and distribution, and is essential to spreading your brand’s awareness.

Step 10: Event Evaluation. Committing to reflection and evaluation after an event is as important as committing to planning the event. It is the tool to ensure what you are doing is effective and rewarding for those involved. Reflective evaluation can also provide you with justification to pivot and make recognized improvements.

Analysis of Registration Data. This type of data is useful for reporting purposes and sharing with event stakeholders.

- Total registrations
- Sales registrations by ticket type
- Number of local, out-of-town, and out-of-state registrations (attendee geography)
- Actual attendance or event check-ins
- Number of new verses returning event attendees
- Total registrations by gender (if asked)
- Age ranges and the average age of participants (if asked for birth date)
- If providing event camping, the number of campers and ratio of those from out of town and out of state
- Sales data of event merchandise

Analysis of Social Media Data. The great thing about social media is that you can track almost every single detail through social media metrics.

- **Reach** – the number of people who see your content.
- **Impressions** – the number of times people saw your content. It can be higher than reach because the same person might look at your content more than once.
- **Audience growth rate** – it's not a simple count of your new followers. Instead, it measures your new followers as a percentage of your total audience. When you're just starting, getting 10 or 100 new followers in a month can give you a high growth rate. To calculate your audience growth rate, track your net new followers (on each platform) over a reporting period. Then divide that number by your total audience (on each platform) and multiply by 100 to get your audience growth rate percentage.
- **Engagement metrics** – social media engagement metrics show how much people interact with your content, as opposed to just seeing it. Every time someone shares your content, it achieves a fresh set of impressions via their audience. So virality rate measures how your content is spreading exponentially. To calculate the virality rate, divide a post's number of shares by its impressions. Multiply by 100 to get your virality rate as a percentage.
- **Click-through rate (CTR)** – is how often people click a link in your post to access additional content. To calculate CTR, divide the total number of clicks for a post by the total number of impressions. Multiply by 100 to get your CTR as a percentage.
- **Video metrics** – if you're creating videos, you want to know how many people are watching them. And you want to know how many people watched the videos all the way through.

Participant Surveys. One of the most effective tools is the post-event surveys to determine whether the efforts your organization puts into the event planning met the expectations of attendees. Obtaining feedback from participants can be done in person after the event or through an online survey after they have returned home. The most important information to collect from the post-event survey is whether attendees found value in the event, whether it was worth their investment of time and resources, and whether they would participate in the event again. Because these questions are so important, ask those questions early in the survey.

- **In-person survey** – Volunteer surveyors can ask participants after completing the event or while having a post-ride meal, by asking some quick and easy survey questions to get immediate feedback on their experience.
- **Post-ride survey** - To ensure the highest participation rate, send your post-event survey to attendees as soon as the event has ended, while their experience is fresh in their minds.

Sample Survey Questions

Check Male [] Female []

1. Have you attended this event before? Yes [] No []
2. How did you hear about the event?
3. What route did you ride? _____ mileage
4. Did you feel safe? Yes [] No [] If no, what made you feel unsafe?
5. On a scale of 1 to 5, with five being excellent, how satisfied were you with the event? If less than 5, what would you suggest to make the event better?
6. On a scale of 1 to 5, with five being excellent, how satisfied were you with the rest stops? If less than 5, what would you suggest that would make the rest stops better?
7. On a scale of 1 to 5, with five being excellent, how satisfied were you with the post-ride meal?
8. Would you attend this event again? If not, why?
9. Will you encourage others to attend this event? Yes [] No [] If no, why?
10. Do you have any suggestions to make this event even better?

Volunteer Surveys. Collecting volunteer feedback is one of the best ways to empower your volunteers, improve their volunteering experience, and bolster volunteer retention. If you're worried about receiving honest and constructive feedback, make your surveys and forms anonymous. They can be conducted online or by a written survey stuffed into a box and collected after the event. It is important to stress that you appreciated their time and assistance with your event and that their opinion matters.

Many of the answers will depend on the role they played in the event (i.e. packet pickup, day of registration, rest stop, course markers, SAG support, post-ride meal server, etc.). Therefore, it may be best to have open-ended questions:

1. Did you enjoy your volunteer role and experience? Yes [] No [] If no, what was the most unpleasant experience you had?
2. Would you consider volunteering for this event again? Yes [] No []
3. Do you have any suggestions to make the event experience better for volunteers?
4. Did you hear any comments from the participants about what they liked or disliked about the event? If so, what were some?
5. Do you have any suggestions to make the event better for participants next year?

Written Event Report. A written report should be shared with stakeholders and serves to document the overall efforts and impact you had toward achieving the goals for the event. The information you gather will help you with sponsor recruitment, getting additional support from the community, attracting volunteers, and aid in the future decision-making process to improve and make your event even better.

Step 11: Planning begins for next year. Start your program all over again and you will be better informed and prepared for each step along the way.

This is a free publication put together by Cycling Virginia for the purpose of encouraging and supporting recreational cycling event promoters. The sport of cycling is for all ages and one of the best kinds of exercise for keeping fit. It's easy on the joints, helps relieve stress and having quality events can inspire more people to get on a bike to stay healthy.

Attachment A: Print Examples

POSTERS



A poster for the Three Creek Century bike ride. The top half features a cyclist in motion against a blurred background. The text 'Three Creek Century' is prominently displayed in a blue and black font. Below this, the date '9.18.22' is shown in yellow. A 'Sponsored by' section includes the Sun Motor Cars logo and other smaller logos. At the bottom left is the 'Bicycling Trifecta' logo, and at the bottom right is the website 'ThreeCreekCentury.com'. A blue banner at the very bottom contains a QR code and text describing the ride routes and location.

Three Creek Century

9.18.22

Sponsored by

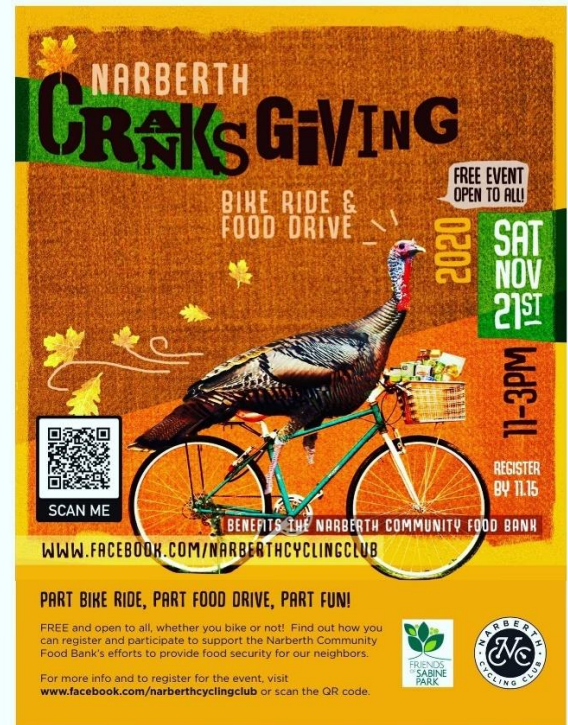
SUN MOTOR CARS

ThreeCreekCentury.com

Bicycling Trifecta

A bike ride through scenic Cumberland County in Central PA featuring routes of 18, 25, 29, 51, 75 and 104 miles. Penn Township Fire Department complex in Newville.

Good example of communicating succinctly through direct and clear imagery - when, where, sponsor, ride options and a call to action to find more information by using both a web address and a QR code. Message is quickly and clearly conveyed and it flows naturally from left to right.



A poster for the Narberth Graks Giving event. The background is a textured brown with yellow leaves. The title 'NARBERTH GRAKS GIVING' is in large, bold, black letters. Below it, 'BIKE RIDE & FOOD DRIVE' is written. A turkey is perched on a green bicycle. The date '2020 SAT NOV 21ST' and time '11-3PM' are clearly visible. A QR code is labeled 'SCAN ME'. The text 'BENEFITS THE NARBERTH COMMUNITY FOOD BANK' is at the bottom. A Facebook link is provided. Logos for Friends of Sabine Park and Narberth Cycling Club are at the bottom right.

NARBERTH GRAKS GIVING

BIKE RIDE & FOOD DRIVE

FREE EVENT OPEN TO ALL!

2020 **SAT NOV 21ST**

11-3PM

SCAN ME

BENEFITS THE NARBERTH COMMUNITY FOOD BANK

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/NARBERTHCYCLINGCLUB

PART BIKE RIDE, PART FOOD DRIVE, PART FUN!

FREE and open to all, whether you bike or not! Find out how you can register and participate to support the Narberth Community Food Bank's efforts to provide food security for our neighbors.

For more info and to register for the event, visit www.facebook.com/narberthcyclingclub or scan the QR code.

Friends of SABINE PARK

NARBERTH CYCLING CLUB

Fair example –has an eye-catching image, conveys the purpose of the event, the date and time, who's the organizer and the call to action to find more information by using both a Facebook address and a QR code.

Could have provided ride length options, or stated it is a family friendly event to capture a wider community audience. The message is cluttered and not quickly to conveyed, too much fine print and the layout doesn't flow naturally from left to right.

Attachment A: Print Examples

FLYER CARDS/MAILERS

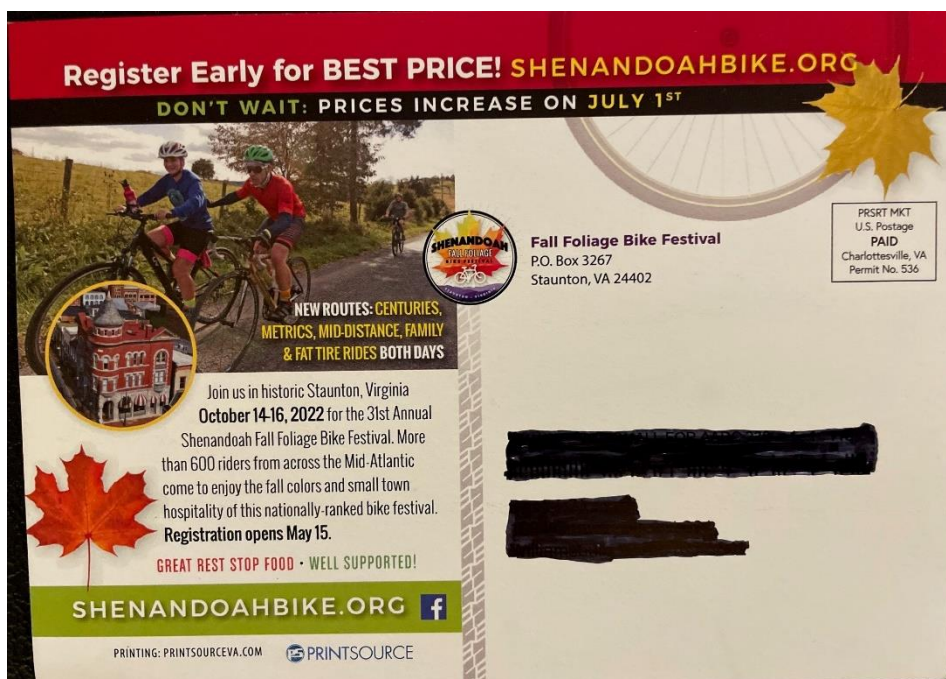
Flyer cards and mailers are more flexible than posters because you can provide more information, however just convey enough information to encourage them to go to the site and learn more.

Back



Communicates the message succinctly, good branding image and use of photos to create a vision of the ride experience and the layout flows naturally left to right with a call to action. Could have also included a QR code to make it easier to visit the website.

Front



Provides additional detail--when, where, sponsor, ride options and a call to action to find more information. Good use of brand image, but could have also included a QR code to make it easier to visit the website and register as most people use their mobile phone to access the internet.