



Communicating with young people

Know your audience

The elusive youth market is an important yet often frustratingly difficult audience to capture. The techniques that your organisation employs when attracting the attention of other sectors do not usually transfer well to a youth-oriented campaign. Young people will, however, respond to an imaginative campaign that employs familiar and attractive techniques.

- Be mindful of the fact that 'young people' do not form a homogenous group. Your organisation cannot rely on one approach if a campaign is to reach all youth groups. Tailor the angle of your campaign and its publicity to suit the different groups in the market.
- Youth groups are keen to maintain their own identities. Appreciate the culture in which your target group operates and use appropriate references in your campaigns.
- Note the variation in the age ranges of 'young people'. Early teens, for example, will fail to appreciate a campaign that is suitable for 18-21s. Similarly, although the 22-25 age group will understand the content of a campaign aimed at 18-21s, their specific interests, experiences and lifestyles demand a more appropriately tailored campaign.

Target your audience appropriately

The right approach and techniques can make all the difference to the success of your campaign. Young people will respond to messages that reach them clearly and honestly while gimmicks will find little favour.

- Young people are critical of campaigns they deem to be irrelevant or poorly conducted. Be careful to select the campaign and medium for delivering your message that is right for the audience.
- Engage in appropriate and respectful dialogue with your target audience in language that is familiar and accessible. Seek to come across as approachable and interesting. A campaign which features condescending language or which 'preaches' rather than informs will undoubtedly fall short of achieving its desired impact.
- Consider featuring celebrities that are popular with your target audience to promote your message.
- Note the power of peer pressure and aim to harness it in a positive way.
- Your campaign techniques and slogans should be tailored to suit your audience and stand out from the barrage of messages, images and advertisements that young people are exposed to every day.
- Obscure advertising is unlikely to impress. Be aware that young people will filter out information they find unimpressive. You should, therefore, avoid presenting baffling and complicated messages. Articulate your message clearly in a way that is relevant.

Getting your message across to students

Students represent a significant and lucrative share of the youth market. It is, therefore, essential that your organisation's campaign successfully penetrates that market. Although a notoriously sceptical group, a well-judged and shrewdly presented campaign can still capture student interest.

- Your marketing strategy should be designed specifically with students in mind. Your campaign should be credible and unique. Consider tactics that surprise or push boundaries with greater boldness than campaigns aimed at the mainstream.
- Consider publicising your message at youth-oriented venues. At music festivals, for example, you could potentially reach audiences of thousands.
- Certain modes of communication will reach students better than others. Think about launching a flyer campaign or offering 'freebies' that repeatedly expose the recipient to your brand and message.



Means of communication

Tuning into key modes of communication is a means of reaching your target audience in a manner to which it is likely to be receptive.

Text messaging, internet and email are the fastest growing mediums of communication amongst young people.

- Text messages deliver concise messages to large numbers of people in a language to which they will respond.
- Use text messages and email discreetly. Persistent or poorly expressed communications irritate and frustrate recipients, usually prompting them to delete without absorbing your message.
- As with other communications the design of your website should reflect your audience.

Increasingly, television stations are creating channels aimed specifically at the youth market and many are keen to dedicate time to raising awareness of issues that are relevant to and important for their audience.

- Although a station or programme is likely to run its own campaign and define its own agenda, a charity can still find avenues to get across its message. Advertise your charity's interest in targeting the youth market with a particular campaign. Seek to make your organisation an indispensable consultant and advisor to the station.
- The youth market is notoriously fickle in its viewing patterns and station loyalties. During programmes and commercial breaks young viewers are likely to 'channel-hop' between channels and programmes. Be mindful of this when preparing your campaign and seek to maintain the viewer's interest by presenting your material in a way that is captivating and concise.

Radio stations, in particular local stations, provide music, news and features for young people in an approachable and convenient format. Local, youth-focused radio can help your organisation reach its target audience and generate publicity for your campaign in various ways, usually without charge.

- Regional radio stations looking to foster a community image are usually enthusiastic about working with charities that are local or whose campaign has a local appeal.
- A station may help raise a charity's profile by mentioning your campaign on air, by sending its reporters to cover news stories in which you feature or by sending a ground crew to attend your events.

Despite the proliferation of online media, magazines remain important reading material and are a significant source of information for young people.

- The magazine market is deluged with age, sex and specific interest titles. To gain coverage for your campaign you should research magazines carefully and approach those publications which reach your target audience.
- Magazines select stories they believe will be of greatest human interest to their readership. By making editors aware of your organisation's campaign and of the information or expertise you can provide, you will increase opportunities for publicity.
- Ensure that you edit your press releases wisely, adapting the style and tone of your message to suit the nature of the magazine and its audience. A magazine may then offer you space to promote your cause or tie your issue in with a feature or awareness campaign it is running.

Conveying your charity's message to young people may often seem a frustrating and fruitless



task. Ultimately, however, a strong message, presented through an apt and well-utilised medium, should form the basis of a good campaign.