

# LOW COST PROMOTION STRATEGIES

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When it comes to promotion, you don't have to spend a lot of money to be successful. Be creative, think grassroots, and involve local communities. Think in terms of a slow and steady plan for gradual growth—make a plan and stick to it!

FOR MAGAZINES TO GROW AND reach new readers, they need to be promoted and marketed. Most small magazines simply don't have the budget to buy print advertisements, rent billboards or sponsor trade shows. Because of this, a Catch-22 situation arises: our magazine can't grow because we don't have the money, and we don't have the money because our magazine is too small and has too few readers.

Luckily there are ways out of this situation. The key is to develop a plan to market your magazine in inexpensive, grassroots ways that depend more on your labour than on buying expensive advertising space. Small magazines must think in terms of a slow and steady plan for gradual growth.

The precise components of your plan can and should vary according to the magazine's content, but most grassroots promotion and marketing campaigns should include the following:

## Regular Events

Parties, readings, panel discussions, special speakers, fairs and festivals hosted by your magazine. These are key to building an audience for your magazine and reaching new readers, while also potentially bringing in extra income. There's much to be said on the subject of events, but overall aim to be original, interactive and true to your magazine. The challenge is to come up with novel ways to promote the theme of a particular issue or the zeitgeist of your magazine as a whole that will both appeal to your regular readers and potentially entice new readers. But don't just hold a launch party and sit back and wait for people to arrive in droves. Come up with alluring reasons for people to want to attend, usually some combination of: prizes/giveaways, live entertainment (a band, a guest speaker, a panel discussion) and something fun and out of the ordinary.

## Email Promotion

If you're on a shoestring budget, sending email is inexpensive. Ask your friends to send to their friends and so on. With work and persistence, your magazine should be able to develop a list of hundreds if not thousands of interested readers. At all events, collect emails for the mailing list. On your website ask people to join your mailing list. Never miss an opportunity to

get an email address so you can promote your events and issues for an incredibly low cost. You should also develop an email list of the local media so you can quickly and easily send out press releases about new issues and events.

## Website Promotion

It's cheap and easy to create a website and you should always have one for your magazine. On the site you should ask people to join your mailing list, highlight exciting upcoming events, and offer different, interesting ways that people can participate in the zeitgeist of your magazine beyond just reading the articles. If you're stuck for ideas, spend some time visiting different magazine websites and see what they do. Remember, borrowing is flattery!

## Exchanges

Most small magazines are willing to exchange ads and banners. Develop a consistent look for your own ads and banners and keep them appearing on a regular basis.

## Touring

Now that you've got a website, an email list, ad and banner exchanges and you're a regular at presenting great events in your local community, it's time to expand! Touring doesn't have to involve hotels and expensive flights. You can tour cheaply if you sleep in living rooms and drive everywhere yourself. First, come up with an interactive and entertaining plan. Second, make sure that you have local people chosen to get involved in every community you visit. The locals are key to spreading the word and attracting an audience. Local involvement should include local performers and a local venue such as a bookstore or art gallery or reading series that is willing to help you promote. Choose your tour destinations based on the interest of local partners. Then plan a feasible tour, about 8 venues. Post all the information about the on the website and in your emails and ad exchanges. Presto, you have yourself a tour.

So, if you organize regular events in your community, develop a healthy email list and an informative website, run ads and banners and tour as much as possible, your magazine will grow—slowly but surely.

**Remember, borrowing is flattery!**

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