

LOUISIANA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT NEWSLETTER



Marketing Your Community

Every year thousands of communities across the country compete for a relatively small number of business expansions and relocations, and company decision-makers don't have the time to comb through every possible location. So, how do you make your community stand out in the crowd? The answer is simple, marketing.

Marketing is an avenue that allows companies to see the advantages of doing business in your community during their initial search, putting it at the forefront of their consideration and increasing your chances of a project win. Successful

To begin building your community support network, click [here](#) to visit our partners page.

marketing starts with information gathering. Take the time to learn the perception of the community from an outside perspective so you can see what is being done to positively promote the community and the areas that need to be improved on. Next, identify what the community has to offer and who you are targeting to attract new business.

Once all this information is gathered, establish what it is about the community you are trying to communicate and how to best spread that message, better known as a marketing plan. If you do not have a marketing plan or it is outdated, we recommend the following steps to create one:

- **Define the product**

When marketing a community, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Focus on the existing economic base and build upon that. This is the time to tell the community's story the way you want it to be told. This works best when the community understands it is the "product". Think about the current strengths and what distinguishes the community from others like it. Is it a highly skilled advanced manufacturing community, a college town or maybe a warehouse and distribution economic base?

Doing a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis with local stakeholders is a great way to identify unique qualities and assets. It is imperative that the community is realistic about what they want to be. That is why it is so important to bring stakeholders to the table.

- **Identify the audience(s)**

Once a product is established, it is time to decide who you are trying to sell to. The results of the SWOT Analysis will help define the target audience as well as discussing these questions with local stakeholders: What industry would you like to expand or come into your community? What existing companies would benefit from suppliers being closer? What kind of programs are available for start-ups that would allow them to grow in your community? What demographics are you looking to increase in our community; tourists, retirees, college aged individuals, etc.?

To begin building your community support network, click [here](#) to visit our partners page.

- **Craft a message**

It is important that strategic messages are based on fact and not perception. Understand that there will be facts and statistics about the community that do not tell the best story. The exciting part about a marketing plan is that it is an opportunity to tell the better story. Sometimes the typical story is not one that gives the best optics. Maybe the higher education attainment level is low. Tell the better story, which is that there is a strong talent pipeline. Another example may be that K-12 education's graduation and state ranking is average. Tell the better story by focusing on individual school programs. For instance, the graduation rate is up from previous years and along with upgrades to school facilities.

- **Distribute the message and create awareness**

Once you have the story to tell, make sure to promote it in the most efficient ways. As it is impossible to know which marketing tactics will work, it is important to have a variety of ways to promote your community including: direct mail, trade shows, social media, networking, websites, newsletter or personal contact. Although having brochures and print material is essential, always make sure to have an electronic version of marketing materials available.

- **Follow up**

Finally, follow up is a critical step often overlooked by local communities. After spending time and money on a campaign, it only works by following up with prospects. This can easily be done by sending emails, postcards or direct mailings or through personal phone calls or visits. For more details on how to put a marketing plan together please visit www.LouisianaCommunityNetwork.org under the Community Development Toolkit on LED's web page. We encourage you to discuss writing a marketing plan with all groups that are working to sell your community.

To begin building your community support network, click [here](#) to visit our partners page.