

Village Hall

Marketing Toolkit

A basic guide to Marketing for
Village Halls and Community Centres

Village Hall Marketing Toolkit

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The Need to Market Village Halls

Over the past ten years village halls have benefited from grant funding to refurbish buildings, purchase new equipment and furniture, and for basic revenue costs. These grants have enabled communities to build a social asset that in many instances they own and control, and that generally requires minimal revenue costs. Grant funding is reducing and in order to maintain the village hall as a community facility it will become necessary to earn increased income to cover both revenue and capital costs, rather than receive it from external sources.

Marketing starts by looking at what you have - you have a hall, but maybe few resources or options to make changes so you need to make the best out of your situation and your facilities, and then identify the most appropriate users or markets in order to generate income. Sometimes a lot of thought can go into what the current users from the community, or the management committee, consider would be good things for the hall to contain or do, but there is often little thought about what potential users might want. There are some halls that for various reasons are not suitable for extending their use outside the immediate community but it is still worth thinking about how you could market locally, improve the service you offer and discuss ways of improving the venue, in order to increase use and income.

The Marketing Toolkit

This self-help Village Hall Marketing Toolkit is designed to help the management committees of village halls and community centres develop a basic marketing plan. It is a practical self help guide which can be worked on in stages; it can also be used to facilitate short training events. There are a series of practical exercises, which develop draft results to be recorded. The Marketing Plan is a document which can be given to your wider committee, your supporters and be attached to fundraising documents.

The Toolkit is broken down into eight steps; each step has information and a practical exercise.

Step 1

WHAT RESOURCES DOES YOUR VILLAGE HALL HAVE?

Identify existing resources and those planned for.

Step 2

WHICH USERS CAN YOUR VILLAGE HALL ATTRACT?

Who uses the village hall and which users are you planning to attract.

Step 3

WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE FOR MARKETING?

What skills and capacity do you have in the committee and volunteers and what skills do you need.

Step 4

PLACE – WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF YOUR LOCATION?

What is special about your location and how can you take advantage of any features.

Step 5

PROVISION – WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER?

What provision and services do you currently have and what are you planning to provide in the future.

Step 6

PRICE – HOW MUCH DO YOU CHARGE?

What pricing structure do you have in relation to your current and planned users?

Step 7

PROMOTION – HOW ARE YOU GOING TO SELL YOUR SERVICES?

How are you going to promote your village hall?

Step 8

PREPARE YOUR MARKETING PLAN

Transfer the information from the Marketing Ledger to a Marketing Plan.

What is Marketing?

Marketing is not simply some advertising and sales activity, but a whole process for matching a village hall to its best market opportunities. Marketing is a management process that identifies, anticipates and supplies customer requirements - and makes sure it's done efficiently and profitably. It is about creating something that people want to buy.

In marketing terms what you have to sell is the venue and the additional services you can and are willing to provide, such as catering, camping, training equipment, etc., and any additional features such as mountains, walks, rivers, etc., which make your venue stand out.

The Toolkit will help you to make an inventory of all the resources and additional features and services you have, and to understand your range of current users. You may think you know who they are but it is still worth mapping and listing them, understanding their level of satisfaction with the hall and what they might wish to see improved. Make sure the current users are happy before trying to attract new users, and see how to improve the venue and services to improve current users' satisfaction and they will keep coming back to use the hall.

The Marketing Process

In marketing terms the village hall is a venue where individuals, groups, public and private organisations will pay to use the resources, and services, to undertake activities. The potential user base is therefore enormous, in fact it is so large you can't possibly attract all of them; so you need to decide who you want to attract and how.

As a venue you are selling your resources and services; resources are what we

physically have, the building and its facilities, and services are what we can provide with them. You need to be very clear what kind of resources and what services you have to sell, and you need to be clear about who wants to use them, then make sure the two match up.

Once you have got the match right between what you have to offer and the potential users, you need to work out how to promote the village hall and attract those users, so that they will enjoy using it and want to return to your venue again. Marketing touches everything and the key is to make sure that the service you provide to your users is clear and consistent.

Marketing village halls is as much about securing repeat bookings from existing users as it is about promoting services to new users. Pay equal attention to the quality of services provided: customer satisfaction is the best way of getting repeat bookings, satisfied customers will have received a quality service from booking the venue to the final invoicing and aftercare support.

Market Orientation

The management committee has to consider its willingness and capacity to re-orientate the village hall towards a more marketing approach. This is what is called Market Orientation. There is no right or wrong approach, just one that suits the management committee and the community.

This could involve moving from a position where the village hall is a facility for local people run by a local committee, to a situation where the village hall is used more, has more financial independence, can be used by a wider group of people and organisations, and perhaps employs someone to market and administer the venue.

Having looked through this Toolkit and done some of the planning exercises the committee may decide to remain a very local resource for those in the community to use or it may decide it can build the capacity to market the hall further.

Understand your current position and opportunities

Look at how to improve your village hall, how to exploit the existing features you may have and how to improve and extend the level of services you are able to provide.

Get information on the market

Once you have investigated the potential improvements, or opportunities, investigate new users, who are they, what do they need/want, how will they find you, how will they make the booking and what will entice them to return when they next want to hire a venue?

Persuade people to buy your services

Successful selling is based on getting the four Ps (Place, Provision, Price and Promotion) right. For example, if you want to sell the venue for business courses the Place has to be convenient, near a main road with parking spaces; the Provision has to be a warm, comfortable, and well equipped training room, the Price can be higher than for local users and the Promotion will have had to be smart and a bit glossy and direct to the client. Getting the four Ps right in relation to the user is the key to good marketing.

Step 1

WHAT RESOURCES DOES YOUR VILLAGE HALL HAVE?

Identify existing resources and those planned for.

Who you can promote your hall as a venue to, and how it can be used, is dependent on the resources you have to offer. Having a clear understanding of what you can offer will help you when it comes to mapping and identifying potential new users.

Exercise One - Fill in the Village Hall Resources Checklist below

Use the checklist to identify the resources you have, and those that you would like to acquire, either now or at some point in the future, and those that are not relevant to you, and try to summarise your key resources.

Under the 'comments' column make a note about the quality of resources on offer. You can grade those Poor, Satisfactory, Good, and Excellent. Also comment on suitability for purpose – you may have lots of chairs but can you sit on them for 2 hours or 4 hours? Are they good enough to sit on all day for a training course? If you decide they are not of good enough quality you are restricted as to who you can hire the venue to, or what you can hire it as.

For any resources you might like to obtain or develop you can identify those which won't cost much and those you will need to raise additional finance for. You may find that with limited expenditure it is possible to improve or add to a range of resources which can have a bigger impact overall on your venue than one big expensive outlay.

Resource	Not relevant	Do you have?	Would you like to acquire this?	Comments
An easily contactable booking person or system				
Locally available booking information				
Booking information on- line – Facebook, website, Neighbourly				
Office space to hire				
A pick up brochure or leaflet				
Information in magazine/local listings				
An accessible location for cars/ public transport				
Are you located in a tourist area/ on a walking route				
Attractive appearance				
Parking				

Resource	Not relevant	Do you have?	Would you like to acquire this?	Comments
Outside space				
A Notice board outside				
Security systems				
Toilets				
Large hall space				
Meeting room/ break out room				
Disabled access/toilets				
Good heating				
Basic kitchen				
Well equipped kitchen				
Outside cater facilities nearby or opportunities to establish				
Equipment storage				
IT facilities and broadband				
Quality furnishings				
Chairs/tables				
Large number of chairs/tables				
Training equipment e.g. projector, wall panels				
Range of lighting/side lights, dimmers, theatre lights				
Good acoustics for speaking and music				
Staging				
Dance floor				

Resource	Not relevant	Do you have?	Would you like to acquire this?	Comments
Public entertainment licence				
Cycle washing facility				
Drying facilities				
Camping space				
Overnight accommodation				
Self catering facilities				
Could you offer afternoon teas?				
Changing/shower facilities				
Sports equipment				
Sports fields				
Could you link with events happening nearby?				

Identify those key or special resources that you have and list them here, also identify those resources that you would like to acquire in the near future.

Existing Key Resources	
Planned Resources	

Step 2

WHICH USERS CAN YOUR VILLAGE HALL ATTRACT?

Who uses the village hall and which users are you planning to attract.

Now you need to identify all those currently using the hall and those who are potential users.

Exercise Two - Fill in the Village Hall Users Checklist below

Fill in the existing and potential users in the checklist and try to summarise your existing and potential users. (The list is only a guide so fill in more users or different users as appropriate). Then refer back to the Village hall Resource Checklist and try to match up resources with existing and potential users. We have included a research matrix as Appendix 2 which shows the type of resources required by a range of user groups, you can use this to help you.

At this point you will have started to build up a picture of the existing users and the existing resources, and the future potential users once new resources are put in place.

	Already user	Potential user	Comments
Community use			
Social Events/ fetes			
Sports			
Playgroups/ children/ youth			
Interest clubs/societies			
Community private hire			
Celebration parties			
Meetings			
Office space			
Civic Events			
Polling station			
Public meetings			
Political meetings			
Social benefit			
Post office/ shops			
Community learning resource			
Advice service			
Voluntary sector			

	Already user	Potential user	Comments
Information events			
Training / Meetings			
Office space			
Local Authority			
Meetings			
Conferences			
Training			
Business			
Meetings			
Conferences			
Sales venues			
Sublet office space			
Annex to hotel			
Education			
College/university outreach			
Schools			
Holiday Play Schemes			
Training companies			
Seminar/training			
Longer courses			
Tourism			
Walkers			
Cyclist			
Visitors to local attractions			
Projects/Programmes			
Training			
Meetings			
Office space			
Arts Sector			

	Already user	Potential user	Comments
Arts festivals			
Theatre			
Cinema			
Dance/music			

Market Segmentation

Market segmentation is the term used to describe breaking your users into groups so you can target them better. You might be able to start to do this by using highlighter pens on the checklist.

Segmenting your users into groups has a number of advantages; it can help you to:

- identify your most and least profitable users
- focus your marketing on the users who will be most likely to hire your services
- avoid the markets which will not be profitable for you
- build loyal relationships with users by developing and offering them the services they want
- get ahead of the competition in specific parts of the market
- use your resources wisely
- identify new services
- improve services to meet user needs
- increase profit potential by keeping costs down, and in some areas enabling you to charge a higher price for your services.

Talk to your users and potential users

Your users are a valuable source of information: sometimes you need to develop a relationship or stronger links with your users in order to create a useful dialogue and build your market information. Giving information to, and getting information from, your users and potential users can be undertaken in a variety of ways. Below are some suggestions to refer to if you have the time and capacity to do further research.

Questionnaires and surveys can be excellent ways to start the process but they are seldom enough on their own: they are best as part of a process which will lead through to some action. No one likes filling in questionnaires or being interviewed unless they can see benefit for themselves, incentives are quite good if you can afford them such as a prize draw for those who return them.

Questionnaire Styles:

- Closed questions Yes/ No questions
- Multiple choice
- Open ended
- Statements inviting responses or comments
- Scaled responses, e.g. 1-5 or good or bad
- Variance questionnaires, e.g.; how it is now, and how you think it should be, on a scale of 1 to 10.

However sometimes you need to create a dialogue to find out more:

- Rapid Appraisal (go to where people are and ask them questions)
- Face to Face Interviews
- Telephone Interviews

Or give people information:

- Formal Meetings
- Short Presentations
- Posters/ Bill Boards
- Newsletters
- Newspaper articles
- Community Newsletter

Or create a participative dialogue between you:

- Outreach work
- Workshops
- Public Voting
- Website Message Boards
- Village History Projects
- Coffee Mornings/Tea and Chat

Or create a dialogue through holding Social Events:

- Arts projects
- Disco/Dance/Party
- Sports

Step 3

WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE FOR MARKETING?

What skills and capacity do you have in the committee and volunteers and what skills do you need.

Marketing is an on-going process and will need to be managed over a longer time span than just a month or two so it is best to set up a small sub-committee to be the 'marketing team'. They don't have to be from the management committee - there may be individuals within the community, who are not keen to be fully involved in the village hall management, but do have professional skills and are willing to serve only on the marketing team. These people will be worth seeking out and courting to secure their involvement.

Look for these types of skills:

- Management experience
- Editing and Copy writing
- Graphic Design
- Promotion/ PR
- Email and website (IT)
- Networking
- Co-ordinating resources, people and venues
- Fundraising

You may not call upon all these skills that often so it is worth identifying as many people with the above skills as are available and apportion specific tasks if and

when they arise. And those who want to get more involved can obviously do so. In the Marketing Ledger - record the skills you have and the skills you need.

Exercise Three – Complete a SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis is a quick and smart exercise which you can use to determine the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing your hall. It will help you profile your hall and it enables a 'marketing team' to gain insights into opportunities and the potential for strengthening and capacity building. The Strengths and Weaknesses are internal influences and Opportunities and Threats are external influences. These can be prioritised in order of importance.

A SWOT should be undertaken as a brainstorming exercise. It uses a statement or question as a start - in this case the statement might be: **Marketing the Village Hall**

- You can prioritise and decide upon the most important areas and discard the rest.
- Discuss the four lists and identify potential moves to enhance the internal strengths and external opportunities and diminish the internal weaknesses and external threats. Use the positive to reduce the negative.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Example: SWOT PROFILE

<p>STRENGTHS Committee members Experience of some volunteers Good venue Good quality furniture Friendly members Able to teamwork</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES No full time staff Some skills not available Unclear tasks and roles No money for brochure No parking spaces</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES Local residents' skills and potential Support from local organisations Volunteers can get involved Neighbouring village halls Grants for equipment</p>	<p>THREATS Insecurity of revenue funding Too few volunteers Increasing competition from new hotel Talk of closing some village halls</p>

- From the SWOT exercise and from looking at the skills available to the committee, prepare a skills list

List the skills on your committee

Skills needed

Develop the Marketing Mix

At this point you should have lots of notes and have a picture of where you are and what your potential is: you should have identified your current and planned resources; your current and potential users; the skills available to manage the marketing and those still needed to be found; and profiled your strengths and weakness.

You are now ready to develop the marketing mix. This uses the four Ps - Place; Provision; Price; and, Promotion to sell your facilities to customers. It is generally agreed that if you can get the four Ps to be consistent with one another and clearly focused on attracting and servicing your customers you will have got a good marketing system in place. Developing the marketing mix is as much about exploring options as it is about planning; see what mix of the four Ps works. It is an iterative process, and can go round and round until you have got what you think is a solid and consistent set of facilities.

Place:

This is about your building and its location. Is it accessible or remote, with good car access and parking, near to public transport, is there disabled access, a kitchen and good quality toilets? Place can be enhanced if the building is attractive, you have good surroundings and local features such as rivers, mountains, etc.

Example: if your customer is running a training course; the participants need to be able to access the venue easily, park, be able to go outside and stretch and walk about, they need to be able to use their mobile phone, etc.

Provision:

This is about making sure you have the right venue, features, resources, and special service that the customer is expecting.

Example: if your customer is running a training course; they will need a quiet, large, warm, and airy room, with tables and comfortable chairs, a large blank wall on which to stick paper and project PowerPoint and a broadband connection. They will also need good quality coffee and tea and lunch. If all these things are available there is no reason why they won't return next time they run a course.

Price:

This can be varied for different users. Obviously in a community or village hall the local

user is the focus and the price charged to them should be kept low, but for other users the price can be increased without jeopardising their custom. However, price and quality have to match. Before developing a pricing policy it is essential that you first work out what the real running costs are for the village hall, and costs for any future plans.

Example: training providers will usually have a budget for venue hire that can be geared towards hotel costs, and they will expect a good quality of service. So it is worth investigating the venue hire and lunch costs in nearby hotels to be able to compare prices.

Promotion:

This is getting potential customers to know about your hall and facilities. Promotion is the way you present the village hall, cleanliness, the notice board, the impression people have when they use it, and things like aftercare support. Remember the internet has changed the way people promote their facilities and the way people search for facilities.

Example: training providers may look for a venue via the Local Authority, local Tourist Board, through word of mouth, by recommendations from colleagues, internet, etc.

Step 4

PLACE – WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF YOUR LOCATION?

What is special about your location and how can you take advantage of any features.

What are the advantages of your location?

Think carefully about how you describe your place, it most probably has some excellent strengths. Is it with your building, your immediate surroundings such as sports field, parks, or your wider environment such as views over beautiful countryside, rivers, and mountains? Maybe your place is on a main road or near a railway station, or can only be reached via walking up a path. The trick is to use any situation as a strength, always remember that different users want different things.

Location

Where is it, what is its special situation, are there neighbours – can you make a noise, is there a good view?

The building

What is special about your building, it could be size, design, situation, facilities, location, etc.

Access

Is there car parking, disabled access, suitable for a range of disabilities, public transport, near a main road, walking routes, cycle routes, boating, mountain climbing.

Links with other resources

Could you build relationships with hotels, youth hostels, restaurants, towns, museums, galleries, parks?

Exercise 4 – Describe the Place

- In the box below, describe the Place and any special features it has.
- Think about the not such good things and how they can be improved.
- Keep a note of the improvement that can be made, some will be expensive and others might cost very little. Consider which users might use the Place and how they might make use of it.

<p>Location:</p> <p>Access:</p> <p>The building:</p> <p>Links with other resources:</p> <p>Special features:</p>
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Step 5

PROVISION – WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER?

What provision and services do you currently have and what are you planning to provide in the future

What does your village hall provide and how is it managed?

Provision, sometimes called 'product', is what you offer. This includes the actual venue and facilities, additional or special services, the way the hall is managed and the after care provided. Think about your own experiences of being a customer, you will know that it is not just one thing that makes a service good but the combination of a number of service provisions that can make the whole experience very good.

Marketing is dependent on consistency; so what Provision you offer has to be consistent with the Place and re-enforce what the Place offers. Build strength between the two and the two become more attractive than one or the other alone. Consider the service components below they are all part of your provision:

Contact and booking

- Is it easy to contact you, do you have a booking form?

Size and quality of building

- Recognise the number of people who can use the hall in different circumstances: dances, meetings, training, receptions, special events
- Recognise the quality of the building

Amenities

- Do you have a playing field, are you near a mountain or river, do you have a swimming pool, is there a local B&B, pub, restaurant

Facilities

- Chairs and tables, kitchen, broadband, training equipment

Services

- Meet and greet, catering, organise walks, sight seeing, accommodation

After care support

- Lost property, pass on information, follow up on a question

Special Provision

- Can you provide something that is not available elsewhere locally, such as equipment for children's parties, music equipment for teenagers, catering equipment, etc?

Exercise 5 - Provision

- Provide information on the key facilities you have in and around the building, and any services you can provide in addition.
- Think about the not so good things and how they can be improved.
- Keep a note of the improvements that can be made, some will be expensive and others might cost very little. In relation to the Provision consider who might use the services and how they might make use of it.
- Consider which users might make use of the Provision and how they might make use of it.

Number and size of rooms:

Other facilities:

Equipment:

Step 6**PRICE – HOW MUCH DO YOU CHARGE?**

What pricing structure do you have in relation to your current and planned users?

Do your charges cover your costs and make a profit?

The cost for management, maintenance and purchasing new equipment and facilities in many village halls is not particularly high because there is no rent, mortgage or rates, staff volunteer their services and much of the up keep and repair is done by

volunteers. However, village halls have to pay for utilities, insurance, new equipment and repairs and any major work on the buildings. Over the years there have been generous grants to pay for capital equipment and refurbishment and revenue costs. It is anticipated that these grants will decrease over the coming years and village halls will be increasingly reliant on earned income to pay for the outgoings. Consider the following:

Does it cover costs?

What are the running costs, maintenance costs, repair costs, insurance, and costs for additional services? Financial requirements for village halls are made up of three component parts:

1. **The fixed assets** - One-off purchases of equipment, computers, chairs and tables, etc. They are things you will purchase outright and which depreciate over a fixed period of time.
2. **The fixed costs** – these are the running costs; costs that you will incur regardless of how much you hire out the building and include items like, heating, lighting, telephone, stationery, etc.
3. **The variable costs** – the costs which are linked directly to sales or activities or unexpected repairs, GST, etc.

Fixed Assets	Fixed Costs	Variable Costs
equipment computers furniture fixtures & fittings building land	electricity insurance wages & ACC purchase sundry items maintenance postage audit fees stationery cleaning	raw material fuel/ heating catering part-time labour advertising emergency repairs

Is it competitive?

Who are your competitors, how does the price compare with other village halls/community centres, how do the facilities and amenities compare with local competitors, what is it that makes your village hall competitive? Find out what local pubs hotels and meeting rooms charge.

Are there pricing options?

Can you offer a range of services, can you charge different groups different prices, can you be a sub venue at a special price, can you work with other village halls in providing joint services such as resting places for walkers at an agreed price, etc. It is helpful to divide your bookings into morning, afternoon and evening sessions and consider a price per session for each category of user.

Exercise 6 – Price

Describe the cost of running the village hall for one year, make sure you don't underestimate how much and at the end put in a good contingency amount for

unknown expenditure. Make sure the increases in utility bills (fuel and electricity) have been taken into account.

Fixed Assets	Fixed Costs	Variable Costs

- Include below the charge rate for hire and other services, if you have different rates for different users please put them in.

<p>How much does it cost to run the village hall annually?</p> <p>Do you have different charge rates for different users?</p> <p>Local residents and groups:</p> <p>Projects:</p> <p>Local Authorities:</p> <p>Private sector:</p> <p>Other services:</p>

- Then look at your income – can you cover your costs and make a profit? Are you pricing effectively and are you competitive?

Step 7

PROMOTION – HOW ARE YOU GOING TO SELL YOUR SERVICES?

How are you going to promote your village hall?

Do you promote your hall to the best advantage?

Promotion is about communicating to your prospective users: what you have to offer; how they can access it; and how much it costs. Emphasise the quality, use examples such as “the furnishings are suitable for all day training courses” or “there are 30 plastic stacking chairs available” if the quality is not so good. You don’t want to miss-sell nor do you want to sound negative about your provision. Customers will appreciate knowing exactly what to expect. You may want to take photographs of the village hall, of the interior of the building and any surrounding features.

Advertising is the most expensive form of promotion and if well focused can be effective; often however, it can fail to reach the right people and offer the right services, at the right time. Village halls should think carefully before paying for advertisements.

Look at the list below and start to create a profile of your users and how you could communicate to them.

Who is your market?

- Local people, local authority, education, companies, tourists, groups.

Where are your markets?

- Local, UK, international.

When is your market?

- Weekends, daily, evening, seasonal.

How do you/will you promote to them?

- Website, advertise, word of mouth, notice board, after sales, quality of service, networks, marketing officer, brochure.

How do they/will they contact you/ find you?

- Website, email, telephone, letter, network, directly, agencies, tourist information, post code, grid reference.

Do you advertise?

- Cost, design, special features, how effective, do you have a website?
Your own, as a page on another website?

Promotion and Publicity Suggestions for Consideration

A Notice Board and Signage

Try to have a notice board outside the village hall with, at least, the up to date contact and booking information, facilities on offer and prices, and forthcoming events. There are some lovely notice boards inside village halls, unfortunately you can often only see them when the hall is open, which is no use to someone passing who perhaps wants to find out how to book the hall, or when an event is on. Sometimes even members of the local community can’t access this information. If your hall is difficult to find make sure it is signed from the nearest main road.

Posters

A computer designed format can make poster production cheap and efficient – look for free icons, pictures and logos. Look for an image that can be identified as representing

your hall – good if your poster has to compete with others.

Compile a list of locations for putting up posters or businesses that are happy to accept one – it makes it easier to delegate the job to a willing volunteer if they know where they can go and who they can ask. Posters need to be managed and replaced when tatty and removed as soon as they are out of date.

Leaflets and Flyers

Something that people can pick up and take home (see Appendix 3 for an example). Don't just have them on table in the hall (no use if it's shut) but in the pub, local shop and libraries and other facilities further afield, such as doctors' surgeries, play groups and dentists. If there are specific event flyers, as opposed to venue information, make sure that someone is responsible for collecting and removing them when they are out of date.

Newspapers

Many local newspapers have a free what's on or listings section. Find out if there is a community correspondent for your area and build a relationship with them so you can keep them informed; they need stories to report.

Send out press releases, or event reports with a photo (check the format required first), of anything you wish to promote. Sometimes local newspapers have some space to fill and if there is some print ready copy available you have a good chance of getting it in.

Advertising – this can be expensive and eat into any profits to be made from putting on an event so needs careful consideration. However, placing an occasional advertisement can help to build a working relationship with your local newspaper and make them much more inclined to print the copy you send in or perhaps send a photographer out to an event.

Newsletters and Websites

Create a file of leaflet and newsletters you can advertise in for free. These might include local free newsletters, parish magazines, local school magazines, Local Authority bulletin boards and websites. Libraries may also have listings information you can contribute to. There are a number of free listings websites in Gwynedd and nationally which you could contribute to (see Useful Links). Your village or community council may also have, or be developing, a website so make sure you are included.

If your community doesn't have a newsletter then consider starting one – you may want to join with a nearby community to make it more feasible. It is a good way of involving local people, schools, churches, businesses, young people, clubs etc.

Word of mouth

If you are on a village hall committee take the opportunity to mention the hall and its facilities/ activities and promote what is going on; you can do this both formally and informally. Provide a good service to users and the word of mouth publicity you receive can be invaluable.

Talk to local groups, businesses, about the hall and ask your customers about how they found using the hall. This will give you useful information and also create a feel good factor.

Have an open day/ evening with drinks and nibbles and invite users and potential users to view the facilities.

Mounted displays

A folding display board can be created to show the activities your hall is used for

(remember to take photographs) and other activities in the surrounding area which supplement what you can offer, such as walks, visitor attractions, pubs and restaurants.

This can be used not only in your hall but you can ask to take it to local events and community venues, and to places where your target customers may see it.

Special events

A particular annual event is a good way of getting your hall known, for example an art exhibition, because it stands out. Quality is essential – it needs to be well organised and presented then visitors will remember the event and remember your hall by association. The capacity within the committee, or the funds to pay for someone, to do the organisation or is essential. It is also a focus around which you can hang a publicity campaign and involve the wider community.

Radio and television

Obviously publicity of this type can reach a very wide audience and will be easier to achieve if you have, or can make, a contact within the media. To get a publicity feature on television you will need something to 'hook' them with - this could be a special event, a celebrity opening, a successful fundraising campaign etc., but you have to bear in mind that even if booked to come the cameras won't turn up if there is something more exciting happening elsewhere. Local radio may read out news editorial and quite often have a 'what's on this weekend around the county' slot. They often have a road show and if you are putting on a big event or village show may come and do an outside broadcast, which can boost attendance on the day.

Advertising packs

Advertising packs can be developed to publicise the hall to a variety of audiences.

1. **Locally** - to give to members of the community, new arrivals in the community, the clerk to the community council and other relevant local government representatives.

This should contain key contacts for the management committee and booking information, list of facilities and prices, and information about regular activities at the hall (timings of clubs and their contacts). This information should also be placed on the website if there is one. The pack can be developed to include a layout plan if there are several rooms and promotional photographs of the rooms laid out.

If the venue is suitable for birthday parties/ wedding receptions etc., include a contact list of relevant local suppliers and businesses, such as caterers, entertainers, musicians, party planners, mobile disco, cake makers, drinks suppliers, china hire, chair and table hire, hotels and B&Bs etc., to make putting on such events much easier.

2. **To a target market** - if you decide that your hall will concentrate on offering certain types of events, or particular customer markets, you can develop an advertising pack(s) for potential customers, such as the Local Authority, training providers, voluntary sector organisations etc. which indicate the facilities on offer and these services that can be provided, or organised by the customer.

Exercise 7 – Promotion

Please describe below how you are promoting or will promote the services offered by your village hall.

Networking

If you are part of a network of village hall or even if you have a loose arrangement with just one or two please describe the purpose of the network and how it is organised.

Could you start a network with some other village halls?

Networking

In Gwynedd there are over 150 village halls of varying sizes, locations, resources, features and opportunities. At one level all village halls are in competition with each other to secure more users and at another level village halls are in a unique position to form alliances, networks and consortia of special features.

Below are examples of where village halls and other facilities can come together for joint working and marketing. Think about whether your hall could take some of these opportunities. The internet is a useful research tool and some helpful links are given below.

Next to common features

Is your hall along a walk, for example the coastal path, a river or water way, on a cycle trail, near a range of mountains or some castles? Potential users may want places to rest, eat, dry their clothes, wash their bikes, sleep and take a shower. A chain of village halls along routes could be developed to offer these services.

Shared resources and services

Village halls can share or pool resources to cut individual costs and increase the range of services offered, such as children's play equipment, a good quality catering service,

training equipment, display boards, cinema facilities, a moveable dance floor, etc.

Project focused

Village halls can come together to prepare project proposals for providing local services, such as art and drama classes, renewable energy exhibitions, clubs, scenic drawing groups, special interest groups, etc.

Link with business

Can you provide an extra or breakout venue for a nearby hotel or pub, or sports facility? If there is an understanding of the quality of service provision long term mutually supportive relationships can be built. For example, a local pub or restaurant could offer a pre-event meal for a fixed price. Approach catering companies so they will list you as a venue they provide services to.

Tourism

Powys is a beautiful county and has many unique and special features to offer, from mountains to castles and from rivers to its small market towns. Register with the Tourist Board, (www.visitsnowdonia.info) identify facilities aimed at tourists in your area and start looking at ways you might be able to provide a commercial service.

User focused

There are some potential users, such as universities, painting groups, music groups, etc. who want special features like quality furnishings, very good views, away from residential areas to make a noise, etc, who perhaps need to move around the county but want the same type of venue. If groups of village halls who have these qualities come together they may well find a good market by offering similar features but in different locations.

Step 8

PREPARE YOUR MARKETING PLAN

Transfer the information from the exercises to a Marketing Plan (Appendix 1).

The Marketing Plan is designed to help village halls extend their user base, it is already assumed that the key focus of the users will be the local community, in that it is affordable for them and they have priority if there is a conflict of use. In the marketing plan we are looking beyond those users. Developing a marketing plan is vital for developing a more commercial venue hire and service provision for your village hall. Without one, your efforts to attract users and supporters are likely to be haphazard and inefficient.

The Marketing Plan is a management document to help the committee focus on an agreed approach. The Marketing Plan can be used to provide information to other stakeholders, supporting documents for funding and as a monitoring tool to measure performance against. It must be remembered that the Marketing Plan is for developing new income streams and is in addition to the normal service of providing an inexpensive venue for the local community.

Central to any successful marketing plan is an understanding of your users and their needs. The ability to constantly satisfy your users' needs better than your competitors will make you the preferred venue in the area. The marketing plan will use the information you have gathered during the previous exercises in this Toolkit, all you have to do now is to review what you came up with, make sure it all fits together, make adjustments if required and write the marketing plan.

As you transfer information from the exercises to the Plan check that it supports the market orientation, the potential uses and that within the four Ps it is consistent. It is

best to write it electronically so that you can keep copies and when you need to review or change it this can be done with ease.

Develop the Plan

Once you have described the four P's you need to develop them into a single plan. However, by now you will have done much of this and you should have a good idea about what you have and how it will work together.

Decide which users to target based on:

- the Place – accessibility, location and special features;
- the Provision - facilities for hire, type and quality of building, furniture, and additional services offered;
- the Price based on Place and Provision, the quality of what you are offering and additionality of services;
- the Promotion - whether you can promote and attract users and will they be pleased with what you offer.

This process is quite straight forward; it is just about making sure that your potential users will be satisfied with the venue, equipment and services if and when they use them. Be prepared to either delete some of the potential users because your village hall will be unable to meet their requirements, or be prepared to add new potential users because you have discovered that your village hall has certain attributes that will attract them. This is your target market.

Fill in the Marketing Plan (Appendix 1)

1. Name of Hall or Centre

Make sure you put in the correct address with the post code contact, telephone, and email. If you are very rural a grid reference can sometimes be useful.

2. Market Orientation

Make a simple statement about the main focus for hiring out your venue and services; it could be as a sport facility, a performing arts venue, a training and conference centre, etc. Try to summarise this to provide yourselves and your users with a clear message. See this statement as part of promoting the village hall.

3. Users

Describe your current and proposed users, and if you find it helpful, put the future users in terms of this year, next year and so on to provide a plan over time.

4. Building, Rooms and Ground Hire

Describe what you currently have to offer and what you propose to offer in the future. Again, if you intend to develop or refurbish rooms or outside space over time, plan these out by indicating this year, next year, etc. Make sure your plans for proposed users match any plans for the buildings.

5. Facilities, Equipment and Services

Provide information on the type and quality of facilities, equipment and services you currently offer and any proposed in the future. Again, if there is a relationship between the users, the building and the equipment and services make sure the timings correspond.

6. Skills and Capacity of your Committee

Identify and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of your committee and volunteers in terms of the current services and the plans you have for any future services. (Some of

this will be in SWOT exercise in the Marketing Ledger). Think in terms not only about skills and experiences but also about time and availability. If you find you have certain weakness you may be able to recruit new volunteers or buy in paid staff, etc.

7. Pricing Structure

By now you will have some idea about the cost of running the village hall, the income you need to earn, and the amount you earned last year. If you have less income than you need or want, then you can either plan to increase the number of users, increase the cost per user or do a bit of both.

Develop a pricing schedule; lay the costs out clearly for different users and describe any discounts you may provide, such as multiple use or use for the local community. It is advisable to make this price look formal so that users are quite clear about the price and how the charge is allocated. You may charge extra for some items like training equipment or children's play equipment, you may charge more for catering or the use of the kitchen for self catering. However you design the charges make sure it is consistent and clear.

Go back to the Village Hall Users Checklist and categorise them into payment category groups; for example:

Group 1. People and groups from your local community who will pay a basic rate; however this should still cover the cost of using the building, sometimes the rate hasn't been raised for a decade whilst utility costs have raised considerably.

Group 2. Special interest groups.

Group 3. Then there is the corporate user, such as local government, private business, and voluntary sector projects. You may consider raising the rate for these organisations, but remember that their alternative is to use a local hotel so you will be competing with them and you should find out what rates they charge and make sure your rate is less.

You should undertake this exercise in looking at different rates for different users even if you don't want to do this at the moment; it is valuable to know what you could charge if you wish and it might help you in looking to the future when planning for the present.

8. Promoting your Hall or Centre

Having identified your target market(s) think about how each user group needs to have your facilities promoted to them.

As a basic promotional action all village halls and community centres should have a Notice Board outside, they should prepare and print or photocopy a basic leaflet with information about the venue and services, location, price and contacts. You should send it to Mantell Gwynedd, Gwynedd Council and other agencies. In addition to this identify what specific promotional approaches you intend to make to your target market.

9. Action Planning Chart

The Action Planning Chart can be used to list all the actions you have identified when writing this Marketing Plan and to set them out in the order they need to be actioned. Use coloured marker pens to fill in under the months when you start and finish a particular action. At the right hand side you write in the name of the person(s) who will be responsible for carrying out the action.

Appendix 1: Marketing Plan

The marketing plan is where the village hall committee set their ideas out in a clear way and plan their future actions. Please use the information from the exercises as the basis for completing this plan. When planning think in terms of a number of years and try to specify start and finish time where appropriate.

1. Name of Hall or Centre:

Address:
Contact:
Website:

2. Market Orientation

Describe the main focus of the market you intend to develop over the next few years.
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3. Users

Describe your current users:
Proposed future users:

4. Building, Rooms and Ground Hire

What do you currently offer?
What do you propose to offer in the future?

5. Facilities, Equipment and Services

Current facilities, equipment and services:

Future facilities, equipment and services:

6. Skills and Capacity of your Committee

Identify which skills and capacity will be needed to meet the proposed future users and facilities and the weaknesses you currently have.

Strengths	Weaknesses

How are you going to improve the skills and capacity to support your plans?

7. Pricing Structure

Describe how you are going to charge for the venue hire and services you provide.

8. Promoting your Hall or Centre

How are you going to promote your hall/centre to the users you have identified?

9. Action Planning Chart

Identify those actions that need to be done within the next year and list them in the left hand column in the order that you think they need to be done. Then use a coloured marker pen and draw lines from when you will start to do them and when you plan to finish under the corresponding months. In the right hand column you can write who is going to do the work.

Action	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	By whom ?

Appendix 2 Marketing

Markets	Local community					Voluntary Sector			Local Authority		Business					Education			Training Companies		Tourism			Projects/ Programme		Arts Sector						
Sub-Markets	Social Events	Celebration parties	Meetings	Playgroups/ children	Sports	Information events	Training	Meetings	Meetings	Conferences	Meetings	Conferences	Sales Venue	Sub let space	Annex to hotel	College outreach	U3A	Holiday Play schemes	Summer school	Seminars/Training	Longer courses	Walkers	Cyclists	Visitors to attractions	Training	Meetings	Dance	Arts festivals	Theatre	Cinema	Music	
Facilities																																
Booking Person	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Booking info local	x	x	x	x	x										x		x		x									x	x	x	x	x
Booking info online		x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pick up brochure						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Accessible location		x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x		x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Location tourist area/ walk																		x		x	x	x						x				
Attractive appearance		x								x	x	x	x		x			x		x	x	x						x				
Parking	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x				x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Outside space		x		x	x													x	x		x		x						x			
Notice board outside	x		x	x	x	x							x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Security systems				x										x	x													x		x	x	x
Toilets	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Large hall space	x	x		x	x	x	x			x		x	x		x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
Meeting room			x				x	x	x					x		x	x		x	x	x						x					
Disabled access/toilets	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x					x	x	x		x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Markets	Local community					Voluntary Sector		Local Authority		Business					Education			Training Companies		Tourism			Projects/ Programme		Arts Sector								
Sub-Markets	Social Events	Celebration parties	Meetings	Playgroups/ children	Sports	Information events	Training	Meetings	Meetings	Conferences	Meetings	Conferences	Sales Venue	Sub let space	Annex to hotel	College outreach	U3A	Holiday Play schemes	Summer school	Seminars/Training	Longer courses	Walkers	Cyclists	Visitors to attractions	Training	Meetings	Dance	Arts festivals	Theatre	Cinema	Music		
Good heating	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Well equipped kitchen	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X			X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X				
Catering Facilities near	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Equipment Storage				X	X					X		X				X	X	X	X			X							X	X	X	X	X
IT Facilities Broadband			X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X			X				
Quality furnishings	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Chairs/Tables	X	X				X	X			X		X			X	X	X			X	X				X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Training Equipment							X			X		X				X				X	X				X	X							
Range of Lighting	X	X																										X	X	X	X	X	X
Good Acoustics	X	X								X		X								X	X				X			X	X	X	X	X	X
Staging										X		X																	X	X			X
Dance floor	X	X																										X					X
Entertainment licence	X																																X
Cycle washing					X																		X	X									
Drying Facilities					X																		X	X	X								
Camping																							X	X	X								
Overnight accommodation					X															X			X	X	X				X				
Self catering facilities					X																												

Markets	Local community				Voluntary Sector			Local Authority	Business						Education			Training Companies		Tourism			Projects/ Programme		Arts Sector								
Sub-Markets	Social Events	Celebration parties	Meetings	Playgroups/ children	Sports	Information events	Training	Meetings	Meetings	Conferences	Meetings	Conferences	Sales Venue	Sub let space	Annex to hotel	College outreach	U3A	Holiday Play schemes	Summer school	Seminars/Training	Longer courses	Walkers	Cyclists	Visitors to attractions	Training	Meetings	Dance	Arts festivals	Theatre	Cinema	Music		
Afternoon teas					X														X		X	X	X				X						
Changing/shower facilities	X				X											X	X	X	X														
Sports field	X				X												X		X									X					
Sports equipment	X				X											X	X	X	X														

Appendix 3: Example Village Hall Brochure.

Folded inwards	Back cover	Cover
<p>Price:</p> <p>Costs for occasional users are: £8 an hour for large room. £5 an hour for either of the two small rooms £10 for use of kitchen For use of whole building £50 a day, and £80 for the weekend. Please contact the Bookings Secretary for other quotes.</p> <p>Layout of building.</p> <p>Bookings: Mary Jones 01497 832658 Or via our website info@pennorth.com</p>	<p>Map:</p> <p>Directions:</p> <p>From Brecon take A40 to Cardiff and after 2 miles turn left at Red Dragon Pub signed to Pennorth, the village hall is 2 miles on the right.</p> <p>Address and contacts of hall:</p> <p>Village Hall Pennorth Brecon Powys LD3 7HX 01497 832649 info@pennorth.com</p>	<p>Name:</p> <h1>Village Hall</h1> <p>Picture:</p> <p>Location of hall:</p> <p>Pennorth, Brecon A mid Wales venue for conferences, meetings and events</p> <p>Website address: www.pennorth.com</p>

