

## ...MARKET PROGRAMS

Effective marketing is quite possibly the most difficult part of managing experiential education (EE) programs, since field staff (with an outdoor adventure or environmental focus) will often lack skills and knowledge to market programs.

How does an EE program communicate the value of what they do without making this sound over hyped? How do they know that they are even marketing to the right customer base? The following 8 points will help toward successfully marketing an EE program.

### EIGHT POINTS

1. **Develop a value proposition:** This is a promise of what the program will deliver to customers and clients. It should be tangible and realistic. Prospective clients will know if a program is overpromising and they will be disappointed when one under delivers.
  2. **Define a target market:** This is achieved by identifying who will make the decision to purchase an EE program. For example, will teachers, principals, or superintendents be the ones to decide about a school program? Ensure and be very specific about who is empowered to make the financial decision. Focus marketing efforts toward this target.
  3. **Discover channels and tools:** Find out where these decision makers go for further information about the services delivered by the EE program. Check social media, search engines, publications, and word-of-mouth referrals by asking current customers and clients how they discovered this program. Be sure to keep the program website up-to-date with current information and logistics.
  4. **Create Relationships:** Every interaction with existing customers and clients should encourage a business relationship with the EE program. In this way, they will return for
- repeated services, thus reducing the need to constantly search for new customers. In addition, clients may promote the program to others by word-of-mouth referrals.
5. **Outline a marketing calendar:** Plan out all marketing activities for a full calendar year. Waiting to plan a marketing campaign, until the revenue to launch becomes available, may mean that the necessary money to do this could be limited due to a lack of business income. So, marketing should be planned consistently and well in advance, with money set aside to implement it.
  6. **Line up human resources:** EE programs, like all businesses, will need a person to plan and create campaigns, as well as people to manage and track the marketing process. Choose the best consultants to advise about a branding guide that provides consistency across materials. Pick highly talented staff to respond to all inquiries in a timely and positive manner.
  7. **Build a budget:** Determine the percentage of annual revenue that will be dedicated to marketing efforts. If necessary, set this money aside in a separate account to ensure it is not consumed by other projects or miscellaneous expenditures.
  8. **Test metrics:** Measure every marketing effort made based on how much revenue it generates, how many inquiries it generates, and how many of these leads turn into customers and clients. When a measured effort performs well, consider dedicating additional resources to that kind of effort.

Follow this blueprint and watch the EE program transform into something that customers and clients want as an important part of their lives.

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# FURTHER RESOURCES

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