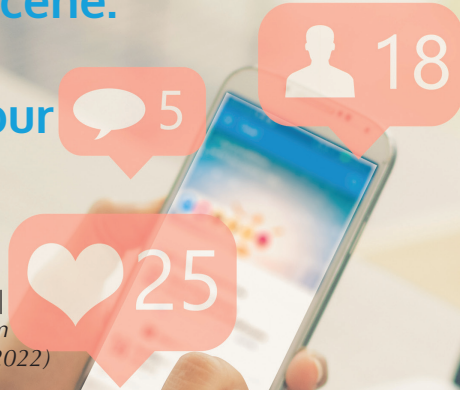


Setting the Scene: Successfully Marketing Your Downtown

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The following is a reprint from
Downtown NJ's newsletter (2022)



No matter the size of your community, promoting its unique assets spurs economic development, tourism, new business, and job growth.

Each community offers a specific set of rich assets that sets them apart from other destinations. These assets may include shopping, dining, attractions, local culture or distinct experiences. A downtown, like any place that delivers an experience, should have a strong brand that is consistently pulled through all marketing platforms, from advertising campaigns to wayfinding signage. Most successful branding initiatives involve community members and downtown business owners.

Here's a handy list of several of the top marketing and PR initiatives to consider:

Brand Discovery. Distinguishing a community from the rest is the first step in marketing and branding what it has to offer. Whether offerings include attractions, recreational opportunities, events, dining, shopping, arts/historic/educational experiences, tours, or entertainment venues, initiating a brand discovery process will assist with uncovering all your community's jewels. Also, consider convenience-oriented amenities including transit, major highway access, schools, overall quality of life, parking, and outdoor physical recreation such as walking, running, and biking as well as pet-friendly areas.

Successful branding also includes a storytelling narrative that has been properly vetted and will serve as the script across all channels, including the website, social media, newsletters, advertising and marketing.

Logo & Tagline. Once brand discovery is complete, logo and tagline creation often are the next projects in the process. A city or village can be unified with a common theme that starts with a simple logo design. Keep in mind that a great logo will follow the simple KISS rule (Keep It Simple Sweetheart) and may be reflective of the community's signature asset.

Taglines should be exclusive to a location; avoid anything generic like 'It's all here' or 'There is something for everyone.' The tagline should convey something specifically compelling about a location and spark visitor's imagination as well as pride among the local residents.

Websites. A website showcasing a village or city should be rich with visuals and information. Maintain a sense of cohesive and robust aesthetics throughout each page. The website design should be mobile friendly (easily view and

navigate the website from a phone) and include search engine optimization and key words to describe your community's locations, activities, events, hotels, restaurants, and other highlights. Some other popular options to consider are mobile apps, blogs, video/photo galleries, FAQ's and event calendars. The website serves as a window to the world and should integrate the brand and highlight all your community's unique assets. Don't forget to add Google Analytics to track website visitors and acquire additional information.

Social Media. With billions of daily users, many people now depend on Facebook as their primary source of information every day. Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok and LinkedIn are also popular platforms used to establish an engaging social media presence. Each social media platform maintains a different tone and is used by different demographics. To engage with your audience, customize content for each platform that will ensure maximum performance for each post. Keep in mind that after establishing a social media presence, it must be maintained and monitored daily. Video is incredibly important in developing a robust social media presence.

Public Relations Campaigns. Don't underestimate the power of PR. A well-strategized public relations campaign communicates key brand messages. Ongoing press releases, promotional events and tours will keep a village or city top-of-mind in the media and public eye. Using the script established during the brand discovery process, a PR campaign can be developed and launched, focusing on assets, events, and personalities. An intensive program pitching media and media immersion events are pivotal for a successful PR strategy.

Marketing & Advertising Campaigns. With clearly defined objectives, targets, and tactics, an ongoing marketing and advertising campaign will help maintain sustained public messaging. Today, online digital marketing, streaming, geofencing and Google AdWords campaigns are often combined with traditional advertising strategies, like billboards, to achieve the desired impact.

In summary, establishing your community's brand and communicating its unique story to visitors, residents, investors, and business owners will keep your municipality top-of-mind.