

# Promotion With Guerrilla Marketing

## by Del Suggs

**Consider what promotion is: it's free advertising.** It's publicity you don't buy. Anybody with a budget can just buy a few ads in the newspaper, and hope that people will read them. But not everybody has a budget big enough to afford a few full page ads. That's why promotion is so valuable--it doesn't cost a cent except for a few materials involved.

You probably have a very active and successful promotions committee within your activities organization. Try some Guerrilla marketing to promote your shows. Always remember that promotion is the key to attendance. If your students don't know about the show, then don't expect them to attend.

### Start with the basics

Begin by using the promotional materials you get from your artist. That means the posters, photos, bios, flyers, and other information that college performers provide for you. The artists who perform at colleges and universities generally have special materials just to publicize their campus shows. Use them.

Put up the posters. People actually forget to do this sometimes. Make sure that you add the show time, date, and place. Put them anywhere people can see them, such as the other side of glass doors, near the trays in the cafeteria, by the elevators, where ever you can.

Once the posters are up, don't forget them. Make sure to replace them if they get torn down or stolen. Then, on the morning of the show, go around and put a large sticker across each poster that says **"TONIGHT"**. That keeps the posters from blending into the mass of posters covering the walls on every campus.

Make copies of the press release (or write your own) and make sure the campus paper gets it, along with the publicity photos. Try to arrange an advance telephone interview or story a

few days before the show. Try to get the show reviewed for the next issue.

Make sure that the campus radio station has the Artist's CDs, and encourage them to play them. Nothing draws a crowd like airplay. Try to arrange an on-air interview, either live, taped, or over the phone.

If you don't have a campus station, try to work with a popular local station. They are sometimes sympathetic to the college audience. And if you don't have a campus radio station, and can't get any help from a local station, try this: bring a player into the Student Center and play them yourself.

If your campus is "wired" and everyone is online, then your activities board **must** have a web page. List all upcoming events, and have active links from your page to the performer's page. That way, students can log on and check out the acts before the show. They may even be able to download audio and video clips to view!

Setup a "MySpace" or "FaceBook" page for your program board, and keep it updated. It's the perfect place to post mp3s of upcoming shows. Make it so cool that everyone on campus checks it out everyday!

Forget "spam." Everybody hates unsolicited junk email. But you can have a sign up email list, and send out notices of events to folks who are interested! Checkout the list bots available online, and start your own mailing list. Send out a call for subscribers to everybody you can, and be sure and list the sign up address on your activity board website.

Make banners, and hang them in the cafeteria. Also hang them outside by the main entrance to campus, in the courtyard, in the lobby of the student center, on the outside of dorms... anywhere you can get away with it!

Make long narrow posters, and stick them in elevators over the door and under the floor indicator lights.

Everybody stares at the lights when they are in the elevator, and they will surely see this poster.

Use your campus marquee or sign board to advertise. It's amazing how rarely those signs get updated. Take down the message that still says:

### HAVE A GREAT SUMMER! FALL CLASSES BEGIN AUGUST 24

(even though it's already October!) and put up a message to promote the show.

Make fliers (or copies of the small posters) and post them everywhere. Stick them in every campus mailbox (if you're allowed), hang them on or slip them under dorm room doors. Stick them inside the door to bathroom stalls or over urinals... anyplace you have a captive audience.

Utilize your College or University Public Relations Office. They can get your information to the right local media for publication and for Public Service Announcements. Don't forget that a number of college students these days are "non-traditional" and may be more likely to read the local newspaper than the campus publication.

Cultivate a relationship with the campus media. Build a rapport with campus writers and campus DJ's. They can really help you get the word out about your events. Find out when their publication deadlines, and make sure you get them the information about your shows when they need it.

### Getting Clever

Take copies of the concert flier to the local pizza delivery stores (Dominos, Pizza Pronto, Little Caesar's, etc.) and ask them to stick one on every pizza box they deliver to the campus area.

Print stickers, and have the soft drink vendors stick them on soda cans and bottles when they load the machines!

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Use the classified ads in the "Personals" column of the campus paper. Something provocative like:

**"Chad: Meet me at the Del Suggs concert on Thursday night. And bring the massage oil for after the show! Love, Megan."**

Spice it up (or tone it down) according to your campus standards. It works every time.

Have faculty members announce the show in related classes, such as Music, Humanities, Fine Arts, Literature, Theatre, etc. Some professors may cancel class and give extra credit to those who attend.

Have an artist or art student paint the sidewalk during the "rush hour" in a prominent place with the artist's portrait, concert information, or just the name repeated endlessly. Be sure to use water-soluble paint or colored chalks. Pick a sidewalk that everybody passes, or just in front of the performance site. This sounds strange, but a working artist really draws a crowd, and then everybody sees it as they walk over it later.

### You 've Got To Try These

Arrange for some give-aways. Solicit prizes from the campus bookstore, and local merchants, like free t-shirts, dinners, a coupon for a beer or soft drink, whatever. Give them away from the stage before and after the show.

Have a campus performer open the show. He or she will bring all of their friends, and ensure a good crowd to start with. Do two things: Pay them something if you can (even just \$25) and make them stay for the main artist's show after they play. If they just play and leave, sometimes their friends will, too, before the artist gets on stage.

Make "Tent Cards" or "Table Tents" to go on the tables in the student center and cafeteria. You see these in restaurants often-- folded cards that stand on the table and advertise

something. Use them to announce the show.

Even if the show is free, print tickets that say "Free Admission" or "Complimentary." Make sure the ticket has all the pertinent information on it-- the time, day, and place. Give them away, or require students to come by and pick them up. Having a ticket makes them more likely to come to the show, and it also serves as a reminder. It's like a miniature poster right in their hand.

Pass out fliers to people going into a ball game, campus movie, etc. Have the show announced at halftime, during intermission or at the end of the other event.

If fraternities and sororities are active on your campus, go around and announce the show during dinner. Have someone go from house to house and make a presentation.

Arrange for the artist to teach a workshop to a class or a group of classes in a field such as music, theatre, or humanities before the show. Most students will attend the show and bring their friends after hearing the artist speak.

Give away food. Offer free sandwiches, tacos, ice cream, pizza, hot dogs, frozen yogurt, anything to the first 50 people in the audience. Free food always draws a college crowd. You may be able to get it donated by a local business (such as a new pizza place) interested in giving away free samples to build their campus business.

Have a theme concert like "A Day At The Beach" or "A Spring Break Warm-Up". Have everyone attending the show wear beach clothes, hawaiian shirts, slaps, baggies, straw hats, thongs, or whatever. You might let the people in beach clothes in free, or let them in first, or give them the free prizes, to encourage participation.

### Get The Idea?

These are just a few publicity ideas that have worked on campuses across the country. But there are great ideas everywhere. Don't worry too much about always having to come up with something original. It's okay to "borrow" a promotional idea from some other source. Just keep your eyes open, and you'll see all sorts of great promotional ideas all around you. Don't be afraid to try something new or different.

### How To Kill Your Events

There are many "silent signals" that can undermine your events. Many program boards are guilty of these short comings. They can literally keep people away from your shows-- and you may wonder why.

1. Publicity that doesn't get displayed: when you get in publicity materials such as posters, table tent cards, photos and press releases that aren't utilized, you are undermining your attendance. Not only are you failing to inform your students about a show that they are paying for, but you are also sending a message to those who do know about the show that it isn't very important. That is the wrong impression.

2. Board members who promote but don't attend: your students know who told them about the show. If the students attend-- but the person on your committee who told them isn't there-- the students are going to wonder why. Even worse, they may feel like a "sucker" and leave before showtime. Or they may just never bother to attend another show. Can you afford to have students write off your shows?

3. Not knowing the act: giving the audience the wrong impression. I was once by the introduced by the emcee at a concert as a "Bluegrass Musician." Or one time the time Ms. Robin Greenstein arrived to do a show and found out that the audience had been told that "HE" was a comedian!.

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SHE's not! She's a singer. Know your act!

4. Improper displays and shoddy workmanship: If you see a poster taped crookedly to a wall, with the date-time-place scribbled at the bottom, what do you think? If it looks cheap and crummy, why even bother to go? On the other hand, if you see a poster displayed properly, with the date-time-place neatly calligraphied at the bottom, you would be positively impressed. Be aware.

5. And look at your stage: is it several old risers stuck together, chipped and peeling, looking ratty? Buy a can of black paint for \$3 and make it look good. Borrow or buy some drapes to go around the sides and front of the stage. Find a backdrop to hang on the wall behind it. You DO get points for neatness-- it's when your students enjoy your shows!

6. Don't get in a rut: The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth!

### Don't Forget

Be aware of Poster Blindness-- which is the inability to see any posters because there are so many on every wall and bulletin board. Try some innovative ideas instead, such as hanging the posters from helium balloons, or hanging them upside down, or on the floor for effect.

Have all the posters and fliers approved and stamped by the proper authorities, if that is required on your campus.

Don't get started too early. A week-long blitz is effective; three-weeks is a bore.

Word-of-mouth is the best advertising. Make sure you and your committee talk up the show, and make sure all of your friends are at the performance.

### After the Event

Take down the posters, fliers and banners.

Most posters and promotional materials can be recycled. Don't just throw them away! Find a way to re-use them, or put them in the appropriate recycle bin.

### For Additional Help

There are many good sources for other promotional ideas. At the APCA Convention, the Regional Conferences and the National Convention of NACA, experienced professionals offer excellent educational sessions on Publicity and Promotions. Attend these sessions, and gather all the good ideas you can.

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