



Marketing Toolkit

Imagine if your local SkillsUSA chapter planned an event and no one came? A nightmare, right? Well, we want to make sure you never have to wake up in a cold sweat worrying about that! By using the SkillsUSA Marketing Toolkit, you'll have everything you need to make sure your chapter's activities are successful.

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WHAT IS MARKETING?

Marketing is the art of changing behavior. Through your marketing efforts you hope to change people's behavior ... you want them to do something. Apple wants you to listen to your iPod; anti-tobacco groups want you to reject cigarettes; colleges want you to apply to their schools; nutritionists want you to eat healthy foods. Marketing is the way they get people motivated

WHAT BEHAVIOR DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE?

So exactly what do you, as a member of SkillsUSA, want people to do? Most likely, you want people to know about SkillsUSA, or to join SkillsUSA. Maybe you're hoping to motivate people to support SkillsUSA in some other way, either by making a donation toward your chapter's activities or participating in a community event you've organized.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

But how do you do all that? First of all you need to know your audience. Chances are you're trying to reach other students. You may also be trying to reach local businesses. Think about who else you want to talk to. Parents? Teachers?

Once you know who you want to reach, think about the best way to do that.

TELLING YOUR STORY

Before you can market all the wonderful things about your local SkillsUSA chapter, you should know all there is to know about the national organization. There's a wealth of information here at www.skillsusa.org, so visit the national Web site often. Who knows, maybe you'll learn something about this organization you belong to that you never knew before!

REACHING OUT

Once you've determined who you want to reach, it's time to get active and be creative! If your audience consists of a number of schools in your district, for example, maybe you'll choose to send the guidance or career counselors at each school some information about your chapter. Think about contacting your school district's webmaster. What's the best way to reach your superintendent of schools or your school board members? Take a look at your county government's Web site. Are their e-mail addresses listed? Perhaps you'll decide to write each of them an e-mail describing the great things your chapter is doing. If you are trying to reach other students, think about the best way to do that. Be creative and come up with as many ways to get the word out as possible. Start a text message chain that gives information about your event, and watch everyone pass it on.

PLANS ARE GOOD

Once you've decided whose behavior you're trying to change, you can begin to map out a plan of action. Your marketing plan doesn't have to be complicated. Just putting down the following elements will give your chapter members something to work off of together.

Goal: What do you want to achieve?

Audience: Who do you want to reach?

Strategies: How are you going to reach them?

Measurements: How will you know if you've succeeded?

MAKING IT HAPPEN

If your goal is to increase your chapter membership, and you've identified your audience as students attending your school, the following strategies are a few ways you might reach them:

Reaching students

- Distribute program fliers in the school cafeteria, library and in technical labs.
- Hang posters in the public library, shopping mall, favorite hangouts and eating places.
- Mail a flier to students who have participated in the past.
- Call or e-mail students to invite them to participate.
- Ask to speak briefly in front of various technical programs to announce events.
- Extend a person invitation to people who might enjoy being a part of SkillsUSA.
- Send newsletters or direct mailings to community youth groups.
- Survey current SkillsUSA members asking what they want from your chapter.
- Display photos and awards for local/state/national winners in the display case at school.
- Send articles to local publications, such as the school newspaper or community paper.
- Ask your local cable television station if it would air a student-produced PSA.
- Put program fliers at the businesses that have sponsored programs or events in the past.
- Have a SkillsUSA booth at community fairs.
- Have members read promos on the school's morning announcements.
- Promote your chapter on the local radio station by being guests on a morning show or asking it to run SkillsUSA PSAs when extra air time is available.
- Promote SkillsUSA on your school Web site or ask for links from community sites.
- Ask your local paper if it can run a free ad about your program, if space is available.
- Set up attention-grabbing displays at the local shopping mall for SkillsUSA Week or to raise money for contestants to travel to state or national events.

CHAPTER MARKETING TOOLS

Your chapter can put out some very good information about your activities. Make these efforts a team project. Publish a simple newsletter. It doesn't have to be fancy; just a short one- or two-page newsletter distributed to the people you're trying to reach can say a lot about your chapter.

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Create a Web site that students will want to visit. Enlist the help of student volunteers to help design, choose content and maintain the site. Keep it fresh by updating your site often. Start a chapter blog. Create a chapter MySpace or other social networking group online.

Design a chapter brochure that tells all about what you do. Make sure it's distributed at the beginning of the school year in orientation packets.

MEDIA WORKS

Working with the news media can be an important element to ensuring the success of your chapter. In addition to the placement of public service announcements (free advertising), editorial coverage is a great way to get the message out to the public about your events. By investing a little extra time, effort and planning (and little or no money) you can execute an effective media campaign promoting your event. Make media relations an integral part of your community service day planning, and your event will surely be a success. Below are some simple ways to use the media to garner attention for your event and your organization.

WHO DO I CONTACT?

Look at newspapers, and listen to TV and radio news and public affairs programs to identify the reporters who would cover your event, most likely those who have an interest in education and business issues. Or get out the Yellow Pages, check the Web and call each newspaper and TV and radio station in your area. Make sure your list includes the reporter's name, media outlet, title, phone, fax and e-mail address.

Contact the media outlet and ask the following questions:

- Who should receive news releases pertaining to local school events?
- Who should receive community bulletin board announcements?
- What deadlines do you have for news stories or upcoming community events?
- When do you make your decisions about covering news events?
- Do you have special needs for television cameras, sound and photo opportunities?

WHAT DO WE TELL THEM?

Remember, they can't cover it without all the details. Wait to make phone calls or send out news releases until all logistics, such as place, time, date and spokespersons, have been confirmed. When inviting reporters to cover your day of community service, make sure the time and location are clear, and that the location is easily accessible. Provide directions and parking suggestions if necessary.

DO WE NEED A SPOKESPERSON?

Be a good host — start your event on time and have someone who is available to escort the media around and answer their questions. Be sure to designate one or two people as spokespeople for the day's event. Typically these will be your chapter leadership and your teacher/advisor. Make sure that these people are comfortable speaking in front of a camera. They should know as much as possible about your event, your CTE program skills and SkillsUSA. You might also consider as a spokesperson any

business person who is supporting the event, or a representative of where the community service day project is taking place.

Once you have completed your media list and confirmed all of your event details, media advisories and news releases may be used to alert your media contacts to story opportunities. A media advisory invites reporters to an upcoming event. Keep it short and simple. Include a catchy lead sentence detailing why the community service day is important with enough information to catch the reporter's attention. Answer the "five Ws": who, what, when, where and why. For television crews, be sure to include the part of your event that will provide the best visual for their cameras. Send your advisory two weeks before your event. Make follow-up phone calls a day or two before your event.

News releases generate interest among the media about the release contents. They generate curiosity and inspire further questions by reporters. Make your release brief, interesting, timely and include a local angle. Begin with a short, attention-grabbing news hook in the first paragraph. Include a quote and explain the event or project as accurately as possible. Limit releases to a page or two. Include the names and phone numbers of your spokespeople who can give an interview and answer questions.

Is it okay to "drop in" and chat with your media contacts prior to the event? Dropping by your local newspaper or TV station (together with some of your chapter members) can create a nice opportunity to introduce yourselves in-person, though it's advisable to call and make an appointment first. This approach may work nicely in smaller media markets. However, don't forget that reporters and editors are always working toward a deadline and that you may want to time your visit early in the day.

Keep in mind, you need to have all your details organized and you may want to bring your spokesperson(s) with you. Most importantly, don't be disappointed if you can't meet the reporter face-to-face. Be sure to leave your media advisory so that it gets to the right person.

OTHER TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL MEDIA RELATIONS:

- Keep up-to-date media lists. Personalize your materials as much as possible.
- Only contact the media with newsworthy story ideas. Contact them in advance of events.
- When contacting newspapers, be familiar with their publication dates and deadlines.
- When speaking to reporters, be brief, stick to the point and be courteous.
- Know your subject matter and anticipate questions.
- Have a media sign-in sheet at your event or gather contact info from any media reps.
- Have background information available, such as SkillsUSA brochures and fact sheets.
- Display a SkillsUSA banner and wear SkillsUSA attire, if you have them.

Keep an eye out for articles that may be published in local papers about your event and collect them for your files. Be sure to fax stories or e-mail story links to SkillsUSA national headquarters to the attention of Tom Holdsworth (703-777-8999, tholdsworth@skillsusa.org) so media coverage nationwide can be reviewed.

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INTERVIEW TIPS

Identify which students or teachers will serve as spokespersons for the project. Remind them of these tips during media interviews:

- Be sure to tell the media how students are using their skills and leadership
- Point out specific examples, provide numbers and data to support your story
- Always be polite, honest and helpful toward media representatives.
- Stay positive — avoid negative words or criticism of others (individuals or groups).
- If asked a question that you do not have the answer to, simply say so.
- Give facts; do not speculate.
- Never say, “no comment.” Such a reply comes across as evasive and sounding guilty.
- Keep your personal viewpoints to yourself.
- Refer media to the school administrator if you are uncomfortable with a question.

EVALUATION

The most rewarding part of planning is to evaluate the success of your events and see the progress you’ve made. Being able to show that you’ve accomplished what you set out to do is something that can bring a great sense of pride to all your SkillsUSA chapter members.

These are also great skills to develop now, that can help you on the job later. Your marketing efforts can make a huge difference in the success of your SkillsUSA chapter. And with a more successful chapter, you know you’ll get more out of your experience with SkillsUSA.

MARKETING RESOURCES

A quick online search or a visit to an online bookstore such as Amazon.com can generate lots of good marketing tools, books and other resources. For more information on SkillsUSA marketing support or materials, contact Karen Perrino, SkillsUSA director of marketing and membership services, at kperrino@skillsusa.org.

SKILLSUSA RESOURCES

ASK: Advisor’s Success Kit

This encyclopedia for SkillsUSA chapter management includes the following chapters:

Chapter 5: Coordinate Public Relations Activities

Chapter 12: Establish Committees

Chapter 13: Conduct a Community Service Project

Chapter 14: Conduct a Fund-Raiser

To order this resource or other SkillsUSA materials, go to: www.skillsusa.org/shop/