

Why you must have a marketing timeline

This past Saturday, I received a 6"x11" size postcard, in color (read: higher printing costs) advertising an event taking place on Sunday. Yes, you read that right. I got the expensive postcard one day before an event, and this was for a nonprofit group. You know what this postcard was? **A total waste of money.** I had already heard about the event via social media and enewsletter. I had already decided not to attend.



Photo: Time by Thomas Hawk, via Flickr.

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What this organization probably failed to do was a build an accurate marketing timeline. Without a timeline, you will print and mail stuff too late (or too early), send newsletters too often or not frequently enough, send a press release too far from the event, etc. Marketing takes planning. Planning is essential if you want to get the most for your marketing dollars. In the case above, the postcard was a complete waste of marketing dollars. Very few, if any people, decide to attend an all-day event (which has a registration fee that is higher at the door) the day before.

How to build a marketing timeline

You probably will want to either sketch this out on a calendar or use a spreadsheet program to map this out.

1. Start with the end (your target date) and work backward.
2. Create a row for each communications vehicle, such as press release, newsletter, email blast, brochure, etc.
3. Decide how many days prior to the target date you want each communications vehicle to reach your audience.
4. Consider preparation time for each communications vehicle. For example, for printed materials, you have to consider printing times, shipping to you, delivery times (are you using first class mail or bulk) and approval process. Set target dates for each preparation step.
5. Fill out your timeline.

Remember to give yourself time to plan your marketing

timeline!

Your thoughts?