



BMG Information Sheet Number 6

Case Study : Marketing Yourself and Your Group

Ian Pommerenke-Steel

Marketing is an essential ingredient of any business plan whether it is a private or voluntary venture. Basically in relation to the mandolin, banjo or guitar, you want pupils either for private tuition or for courses; you are therefore selling something, and it's difficult to do that without some form of marketing.

Fact - For example, if you take a look at the "mandolin cafe" web site you will see many adverts from experienced mandolin tutors

-all appealing for students! (advertising on the web is part of their marketing strategy)

It is important that you or your organization has a well-thought-out **marketing strategy**. The extent of that strategy or plan might depend on whether you want to teach as a hobby, a business, because you enjoy it, to supplement your income or a combination of all these things.

You might want to consider the following elements in relation to your Marketing Plan:

Objectives and Targets

Objectives - What you want to achieve **Targets** -What you want to achieve within a given timescale (and if we want to be really academic *"and in measurable terms so you can monitor success"*).

The four Ps: Product, Place, Promotion and Price

Product: Know exactly what it is you want to offer (individual lessons, group, kids, adults, only teach a particular style, only beginners, only existing players etc).

Place: Where will it happen? At your home, in a centre, will you visit schools, clubs?

Promotion: Publicity, advertising in appropriate places and using effective methods.

Price: How much will you charge, do you need to take account of room hire, your travelling expenses, will someone pay you to run a course etc.

These are some of the basic things that you will probably consider. Assuming that you have the ability to do what you want to do and that you have taken the "four Ps" into account, it could be that you are "ready to roll" --except maybe for one thing --**Demand**. Is there a demand for what you offer? And if there's not, can you **Create a Demand**?

How popular is the Mandolin? In our experience it is or has become more popular. The organizers of the Celtic Connections Festival believe that in terms of interest it is the fastest-growing instrument in Scotland (during the 2003 festival



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90 people attended the workshops of Da Capo Alba, double that of any other workshop). Most of the instrument builders they have visited struggle to keep up with demand.

Promotion - Creating Demand

There's a term used in Marketing called **AIDA** - an acronym for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action.

Attention - Attracting the interest of your target group (potential students)

Interest - Creating or stimulating interest (in the mandolin, banjo or guitar)

Desire - Creating a desire for people to want to take lessons either as beginners or to improve their existing skills.

Action - Prompting your target group to take positive action -ie taking lessons, joining a class.

All sounds very grand eh! But how can you do it? Our experience is that you've basically got to "get out there" and do things to attract attention. What you can do will obviously depend on whether you are on your own or part of a larger group. Here are some ideas:

- Run a Come and Try workshop
- Play in your local shopping centre and advertise
- Visit schools, youth clubs, scout troops, cub packs, brownies, guides etc
- Daytime tuition? Retired people, unemployed people advertise in job centers, churches.
- Contact folk clubs - lots of potential musicians there! Music societies, arts centres
- Folk and other music festivals - offer to run come and try sessions or even sessions for existing players.
- Advertise, Advertise, and Advertise!
- Speak to local council arts and education officers, speak to individual school Heads -they might deny it but they have budgets!

The list of things you can do is really endless and those examples given include some of the marketing and promotional techniques we have tried. Some have worked and some haven't but at the end of the day they have all been good fun (hard work, but good fun).

This section could go on and on but the primary purpose is simply to make you think and to give you a few ideas. The following pages cover in a bit more detail, some of the steps that the LGMA have taken over the past few years to increase our numbers of mandolin students and indeed the membership of our orchestra and association as a whole.

We would not presume to say that ours is a perfect model, but our marketing strategy



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has worked for us, and allowed us to achieve our current objectives. (The planning process continues.) We of course have the advantage of being an association and therefore have many outlets and people we can call upon for assistance.

Come and Try Workshops

Come and Try workshops are, in our experience, very effective ways of getting pupils and even recruiting enough people to start a regular course. It is reasonable to assume that someone who takes part in a Come and Try session is interested or at least curious.

Once again it is essential that you follow a planning process for organising a Come and Try workshop. Remember that it is essential that you have sufficient mandolins to lend out – you can't expect people attending a Come and Try to have their own instrument (although some might).

The usual ingredients of a Come and Try workshop have to be considered:

Target Group - Adults or young people, or both?

How Many - How many people can you cater for?

Content of Session - Remember it's only a Come and Try, so keep it simple and enjoyable. Try to make sure that by the end of the session the group can play/sing something together. They will feel they have achieved something – they have - and so have you.

Where, when and cost - Try to find a suitable location and a suitable time and keep the cost affordable. You might even consider it for free if you can persuade someone to give you premises for nothing.

Advertising - As always this is very important; you need plenty of it and to the right places.

Follow up - Hopefully if you are running the Come and Try as a means of recruiting people for a course, you will already have completed most of the planning process for starting the course. (See p6)

If you have made course preparations, then we suggest you give out the course flyer/advertising at the end of the Come and Try session (example p5).

You can say something like: "We hope you enjoyed this Come and Try workshop. You've all done very well and it's clear we have some budding musicians in the group. We're starting a new course for mandolin beginners on..... Don't worry if you don't have a mandolin, we can get you one" etc. Then give out the flyer to each person.



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Mailing List -Whether or not people indicate that they are interested try to get them to complete a mailing list form so you can notify them of events etc. (It makes them feel you are interested in them -which you are). It's our experience that individual mailing slips are more effective than a mailing list, as people can't be bothered waiting in a queue to fill out their details.

An Example of a course handout

Lanarkshire Guitar and Mandolin Asssocation

Mandolin Courses for Adults

- Beginners Fridays 6.30 - 7.30
- Intermediate Fridays 7.30 - 8.30
- Advanced Fridays 8.30 - 9.30
- **New day time course**
for beginners commencing in May

Mandolin Courses for Children


- Beginners Tuesday 5.00-6.00
- Intermediate Tuesday 6.00-7.00
- Advanced Wednesday 5.30-6.30

All courses are held at
The East Kilbride Arts Centre

Residential Weekend for Mandolin
16th-18th May at Wiston Lodge
A great opportunity to improve you
Mandolin skills (beginners to advanced)

Residential Weekend for Mandolin Teachers
20th to 22nd of June at Wiston Lodge
For mandolin teachers and those wishing to teach mandolin

For further information on any the above events please contact:
Barbara or Ian on 01698-457 518,
Email: mandolinscotland@yahoo.co.uk





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Children's/Young People's Courses

Rather than trying to suggest how to go about setting up tuition courses for young people, it is probably of more benefit to give an outline of the planning, process, events and timescale which led to the formation of the existing courses of the Lanarkshire Guitar and Mandolin Association (LGMA).

The example given involves "partnership" working between the LGMA, schools and their local arts centre. (The local arts centre runs a variety of courses for all age groups - pottery, painting, fiddle, tin whistle, guitar, photography etc.)

Timescale	Planning Process	Action Points
January	<p>LGMA Committee discusses and agrees proposals to try to start mandolin courses for children.</p> <p>Initial approach to Arts Centre Manager – agrees to run beginners course for ten children providing we can fill the class. Arts centre will provide facilities, admin and will pay our tutor. We will have to find pupils and supply mandolins (which we already had)</p> <p>Meeting takes place with council's education music advisor – he likes the idea and supports school visits. Advised us to contact school heads.</p>	<p>To contact local arts centre to propose course and discuss brief details.</p> <p>Contact local council music education advisor with proposal to visit primary schools re mandolin workshops</p> <p>Organize general advertising campaign For course beginning in March. Contact schools re visits.</p>
February	<p>Posters prepared advertising course, distributed in local libraries, music shops, community centers etc. Article submitted to local news paper. Contacted to head teachers and "sold" them the idea of visiting their school-visits organized to two local primary schools</p>	<p>Prepare schools lesson plan. Organize 12 mandolins + 3 "tutors" (1 tutor and two assistants)</p> <p>Prepare information letter for teachers, kids and parents (Examples attached)</p>



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Timescale	Planning Process	Action Points
February	<p>Visited local primary school and gave mandolin workshop to three classes (Primary 6 and 7), 90 children in total each session lasting about 30-40mins. Gave out letters to those interested in course.</p> <p>Repeated process for second school.</p>	Further prepare materials and planning for start of course
March	<p>Course up take is full – 10 pupils from school visits and from general advertising.</p> <p>Course commences – course will run in 10 week blocks three times per year. Mandolins hired to participants at £10 per session – participants keep mandolins during and after courses.</p>	Review course materials, make any necessary changes.
May	<p>Course ends – very successful. All kids sign up for next session in August.</p>	Prepare report for LGMA committee on success of course and future plans.
August	<p>Report to LGMA Committee. Committee agrees plan to start 2nd class.</p> <p>2nd session begins for existing class now “intermediate and a new class starts for complete beginners (managed to scrape together enough mandolins)</p>	<p>Prepare to repeat process as before.</p> <p>Problem! – running out of mandolins for hire and for school visits</p> <p>Prepare grant application to local arts council and education authority.</p>



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Timescale	Planning Process	Action Points
September	Application forms are submitted to local arts council and to education authority.	
November	Awarded £500 from local arts council.	Purchase 5 "Ozark" Mandolins with padded cases – special deal arranged with local music shop.
December	5 mandolins and bags purchased. Awarded £1500 from education from education authority. LGMA Committee meets and discusses proposals for third course – agreed. All meetings completed – school visits arranged etc. 15 new mandolins purchased.	Purchase 15 Mandolins and cases. Repeat of previous actions – discuss with Arts centre, advertise, arrange School visits.
January	Third kid's mandolin class begins – three classes' now running, beginners, intermediate and advanced.	Monitor, review and further develop.
April	First children's mandolin class residential weekend takes place at Wiston Lodge. Not just a music weekend but trying to develop kid's social skills. Weekend includes craft activities, games BBQ, nature diaries making music folders, instruments and of course MANDOLIN PRACTISE!!!!	HAVE A BREAK!
	Childrens Course – Outwith Arts Centre It might not be possible for everyone to have the benefit of an arts centre or other venue to run courses. In May 2003 we started our first "unassisted" course. We repeated our school visits in a new area Hired a room in the local community centre (£3.80 per hour) calculated what we needed to charge the kids to cover tutor fees, room hire etc.....and we're up and running!	NO BREAK FOR US! Tip of the day – If you have an idea try it! Plan in advance; know what you want to do and how you want to do it. Annoy people, go on their nerves till they help you. "Sell" your ideas – you've nothing to lose.



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Promoting an Instrument through School Visits

The Lanarkshire Guitar and Mandolin Association have visited over 500 children in four different schools, and therefore have a great deal of experience in promoting the mandolin with schoolchildren. Their mandolin demonstrations are given to classes of up to 30 children at a time. They now run three mandolin/guitar courses with 25 children. Here are some of their guidelines:

Aims of the project

- To raise the awareness about the mandolin and its possibilities
- To encourage children (10 years old and up) to learn to play the mandolin

Preparation

- Find schools that are close to the venue of the courses
- Establish contact with teachers and book time slots for the demonstration. Aim to visit at least two classrooms, for about 45 minutes each.

Required Materials

- An information sheet for pupils, parents and teachers
- Mandolins (at least 10)
- Music of different styles to demonstrate the instrument's versatility

The Demonstration Itself:

- 1 Start out by introducing yourself and explaining of the aims of the demonstration ("To introduce the young people to the mandolin").
Note: It is advisable to have at least one other person along to help you.
- 2 Play a piece of music (Blues or Folk).
- 3 Ask the pupils what they already know about the mandolin and let them answer.
- 4 Give out mandolins asking the pupils to describe the different parts.
- 5 Discuss the features of the mandolin.
- 6 Play another piece.
- 7 Sing and "accompany" a song that they know and can play on open strings, such as "Frere a Jaques".
- 8 Give out information sheets, about available courses etc.
- 9 Quiz: Play two contrasting pieces, tell the pupils the title of the pieces and ask them try to identify which piece is which (ex. Marlo Strauss' "Spanish Dance" and "Raindrops")
- 10 Thanks and Goodbye




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Sample information sheet

Lanarkshire Guitar and Mandolin Association
in conjunction with the
East Kilbride Arts Centre



Dear Kids!
Do you enjoy music?
Would you like to make music with other kids?
Would you like to learn the Mandolin?

Here's what you can do:

The Arts Centre offers you the opportunity to learn the mandolin in a beginner's course for children.
The course runs from the **28th January to the Tuesdays from 5pm to 6pm** in the East Kilbride Arts Centre.

We are also hoping to start to run a class at the **Fairhill Civic Centre in May**. If you are interested speak to your parents and they can find out more by phoning Barbara or Ian on **01698-457 518** or by contacting the Arts Centre on 01355-261 000.

Barbara Pommerenke-Steel

Dear Parents,

In conjunction with the Arts Centre our Association have now been running mandolin courses for three years. Due to the popularity and success of these courses we have agreed to offer an additional beginners course. Many of the children on the courses are from local primary schools and have made tremendous progress. Some of the children who have moved to secondary school have chosen the mandolin as part of their standard grade examinations.

This is probably the only course of its kind in Scotland and offers a unique opportunity to the children. They will learn to play the mandolin and to read music. The cost of the course (each course runs in 10-week blocks three times per year) is £20. We have mandolins which we can hire to the children at a cost of £10 for each course (this is to cover the cost of replacement strings and the general upkeep of the instrument).

Although the new course at the Arts Centre has already begun it is still possible to join the class. If you would like to book your child into the course we hope to run at Fairhill Community Centre, please phone me.
If you have any questions about the courses please contact Barbara or Ian on 01698 457518.

Yours sincerely,
Barbara Pommerenke- Steel, Mandolin Tutor



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Adult Classes -- An example of how to get started

The following is a brief outline of how the Lanarkshire Guitar and Mandolin Association began its current group of adult mandolin classes. The example gives an outline of the planning, process, events and timescale which led to the formation of our classes.

Timescale	Events and planning process	Action points
September	<p>LGMA Committee discuss possibility of providing work shops for Celtic Connections Festival (Glasgow - the largest Celtic Festival in the world with 2000 performers and 80,000 visitors).</p> <p>Secretary contacts organizers and sends info about our mandolin workshops.</p>	Secretary to contact festival organizers.
November	Confirmation received asking us to run three workshops. 20 students per work shop.	Discuss with committee and plan for and No. of tutors required workshops



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Timescale	Events and planning process	Action points
December	<p>Advise organizers that with so many participants we would have to provide assistant tutors. Organizers can only pay one tutor but offer us a free stall for two weekends.</p> <p>Arts centre approached and agree to starting adult class if we can fill places</p>	<p>Discuss with committee and organize staff to look after stall advertising etc.</p> <p>Committee discusses the potential of getting students from workshops for mandolin classes. Agree to ask arts centre about starting adult classes.</p> <p>Prepare advertisement materials for class And prepare class materials.</p>
January	<p>Festival takes place – 3 workshops and stall. 60 participants in total – course advertisement given out – tremendous response.</p>	
February	<p>Adult mandolin course begins 12 participants. 10 week course 3 times per year</p>	



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Timescale	Events and planning process	Action points
Year 2		
November	Celtic Connections – same procedure. Same organization, but this time they want four workshops.	Organize staff, tutors Speak to arts centre about another course
December	Arts centre agree to further course – possibly 2, if we can fill places	Prepare advertising material. Beg steal and borrow as many mandolins as possible for Celtic connections
January	Celtic Connections -4 workshops 80 participants. Good response for course.	
February	2 new courses start at arts centre for beginners and intermediate – 3 courses running per week	Committee discuss possibility of day time course for retired and unemployed- Jochen Ross, visiting tutor from Germany could take it.
May	Day time course begins at arts centre	