

Sample Event Marketing Checklist - Short Version

The long version (is further down) is a little overwhelming - although it's a good menu of options if you're looking to add one or two things to your normal event-promotion routine. Here's an abridged version of the essentials - just five steps. Note that this abridged version is focused on online promotion:

- **Put your event on online calendars** immediately - for example, your local Front Porch Forum, DigInVT.com, your local newspapers, Seven Days. Larger events might go to VermontVacation.com or your local Chamber of Commerce, and be sent to area lodgings so they know to put on their calendar to recommend to guests.
- **Add the event to wherever you have an online presence** - Facebook, website, Instagram, blog, etc. You don't need all the details to start, you can post "Save the Date" and then update the information with items like a link to ticket sales as they become available.
 - On Facebook, be sure to pin the event to the top of your posts feed. On Instagram, you can change your bio to promote your event.
- **Write a very basic description of your event and be sure that everyone who is participating has that description** and can share it. Here's an example from a past VFN Annual Forum:

Just the Facts:

The Vermont Fresh Network 22nd Annual Forum Dinner! The best meal of the summer. . .

Where: Coach Barn at Shelburne Farms

When: Sunday, August 5th, 5:00 - 8:00 pm

How Much: \$75 | \$60 for VFN Members

Who: VFN member chefs, farmers, and food artisans . . . and you

Why: To celebrate the best of Vermont food, and the connections between chefs and local farmers & food producers that make our dining experiences so uniquely delicious. And to enjoy the best meal of the summer! This event also raises the funds that support VFN's year round work to strengthen the local food system.

Buy Tickets Here: <http://ow.ly/ILLa30kAwBp>

Sample Short Text: The Vermont Fresh Network's signature event is our Annual Forum Dinner. Every August we bring over 75 chefs and food producers to the shores of Lake Champlain to present the best meal of the summer at the Shelburne Farms Coach Barn. Now in its 22nd year, the Annual Forum Dinner is taking place on Sunday,

August 5th from 5:00 - 8:00 pm. Tickets are \$75 (\$60 for Members) and available online via this link <http://ow.ly/ILLa30kAwBp>

- **Create an image (or choose an image)** that you want for your event and be sure to use it consistently, and also make sure your participants have it. There are some free online services for basic graphic design, like Canva and Photopea, that can help. These services are also a good way to make basic flyers to post around town.
 - **Post on Social Media about your event** - just saying it will happen gets boring quickly. Be sure to tag others who are participating and look for *their* posts to share. You can add posts about preparing for the event, show the site, share interesting facts / past posts about other participants, find images from previous years, offer sincere thank yous to sponsors, etc. to liven things up. Also [don't forget hashtags](#) - if that's a pain, take 5 minutes to make a short list early on of tags you plan to use and then you don't have to think about it again.
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Sample Event Marketing Checklist - Long Version

Note: Before getting overwhelmed by the following list, remember that this is the Vermont Fresh Network internal list for marketing major events. Major events for us are really major, not only do we rely on them for a large portion of our annual revenues, but one of our major goals as an organization is to provide outreach / marketing / consumer education services for our members, and events are an important part of that work. We also usually have sponsors who are judging the success of their investment by marketing reach. And events are the primary way that the public learns about our organization and (hopefully) begins to look for the VFN logo when they dine. It's about a lot more than selling tickets. Chances are your event doesn't have that much riding on it and you'll hit the point of diminishing returns long before you get through every item on this list. Consider it a menu of options if you want to go a little further in your event marketing.

***As Soon As Possible:* aka stuff you can get done before it's truly hectic**

- Build list of event participants as you confirm them (e.g. vendors, chef or farm partners, musicians -the people helping put the event together, not the general public), their preferred marketing channels, and their preferred marketing contact
 - Make your life easier by having an easy-to-grab list of social media handles to add to post mentions, hashtags to add to posts

- Be sure all participants have a basic description that they can share - even if it's just a save the date with the event's name, location, date / time and your website. Giving participants something to cut and paste directly into messages from the beginning reduces the chances that someone will accidentally put in wrong information. You can provide more details later.
- **Build list of sponsors (if applicable), collect logos (if needed)**
- **Set up ticketing / RSVP site (if applicable)**
- **Post basic event description on calendars - for example:**
 - DigInVT.com (there's a form with essential info, if you're not sure what to provide to calendars [check this form](#))
 - VermontVacation.com
 - Local Front Porch Forum
 - Seven Days
 - Local Newspapers
 - Farm to Plate (if applicable)
 - Local Chamber of Commerce
- Create an image or graphic to use on social media - different social media streams have different sizes that work best, here's a [quick guide to optimal dimensions](#)
 - If that is too much, just choose a couple of images that you plan to use consistently when promoting the event and maybe a nice font for writing its title.
- Identify the key messages you want to get out to create a simple marketing calendar - it could just be "buy tickets" but examples of slightly different messages that can appear in sequence:
 - Save the Date
 - Look back at last year
 - Tickets now live
 - Meet our participants
 - Thank you to our sponsors
 - See our preparations
 - Countdown to event
- If there is a monthly publication that you want this event to appear in (AgriView, for example) don't forget to send a press release *more* than a month in advance (which is surprisingly hard to remember to do).
- [Set up Google Alerts](#) - for the event's name & for your business name (if you don't already have that set up) - to be able to catch and share any media coverage.

- If there are going to be printed promotional materials, these should be designed and ordered with enough time to start distributing no later than 3 weeks out.
 - If this event is large enough that local lodging might want to send their guests, be sure to bring them materials too.

One Month Out:

- Deadline to have event posted in all of your social media sites, website, blog, etc.
 - Pin a "Save the Date" post to top of the social media feed if you're posting before the details are ready. Change to "Tickets are live" or "come to event" when ready.
- If there is going to be any paid advertising, that should be arranged by now.
- Put the event in the signature file of your email
- Promotional materials kit provided to other participants (if applicable)
 - Things that might be included: Short "Who, What, When, Where, Why" description; expanded version of that description; sample Facebook / Twitter / Instagram posts; any relevant hashtags; any relevant images; your social media basic info so partners can tag you; press release
 - Here is an example from a [previous VFN Annual Forum Dinner](#)
- Send press release to any place that has a long lead time to publish:
 - Organizations' newsletters (like DigInVT), Seven Days, some blogs or websites
- Send a personal email, letter, or postcard to people who you want to know they are particularly encouraged to attend - including if you are going to offer complimentary tickets
 - There are websites dedicated to sending event invitations, a quick and easy way to format an email invitation while still having it come from your personal email address is to do it in MailChimp, send yourself a preview, then forward with a new subject line and the header with the email history removed.
- Start social media posting using theme guidelines created previously - the pace should be slower (mentioned every few days + engage with other people who are mentioning) then ramp up as the event approaches.
- Get in the habit of scanning for mentions on other social media accounts / in the media that you can then engage with (comment on posts, like posts, share posts, share articles, etc.)

Two Weeks Out:

- If there are printed materials involved in promoting this event, they should be on display by this point.

- Press release goes out to remainder of list
- Pitch to daily television & radio news (if relevant)
- Check in with people who received a promotions kit to be sure they have what they need / check if they've been promoting.
- Tag partners and participants in social media posts. "Looking forward to seeing @---"
- Follow up with the individual invitees you feel strongly should be there but haven't replied.
- If you have a blog / newsletter - publish mini-features that go beyond the basics of the event. For example, short profiles of people attending, some interesting back story on *why* you are holding this event / how you chose it, "sneak peek" on details (what those are will depend on the event - like if you're making nice decorations, or if there's some ingredient in a dinner that takes a long time to make), etc.

One Week Out:

- Increase frequency of social media posting - at least once a day, consider paid boosts if you think the social media posts need more attention.
- Make event-relevant images your profile picture / cover photo on social media. If you have instagram put it as your bio.
- If you wanted to try out [social video](#), this would be the time.
- If you have a website, be sure the event is the main featured item on the homepage for at least the last week (assuming it's a fairly large event) - for websites that don't turn over their homepage very often, promote it to the main feature earlier.
- Connect with a short list of participants / attendees who you think would be able to do social media posting during the day (and, if applicable, also the day before while they prepare). Ask them to post, give them any relevant hashtags, and ideas for shots that you'd really like to see - everyone should be sympathetic to the fact that you'll be busy as event host and need some help with the picture taking / sharing.
 - Even if you don't have anyone helping you take pictures, developing a list of things you want to be sure to get will help you remember to capture the images as you get busy.
- Check in again with any media you hoped to have cover the event / send a media advisory
- Send a note to attendees (if you'll know who they are ahead of time - for example emails collected from ticketing sites) reminding, welcoming, building their enthusiasm . . .

Last Few Days:

- Hopefully everything has gone so well you can just focus on getting ready for the event. . . of course if there are any good getting ready pictures to share on social media. . .
- If there are participants who haven't yet posted who should do so, call them

During Event

- If there are any media expected, facilitate coverage. This is a whole subject on it's own but some quick points:
 - Be sure they have the best way to reach you during the event - even if you think they have the info, email the day before with a "here's how to reach me" number
 - If Google Maps or GPS give bad directions, make sure everyone has the *right* directions
 - Have people ready to be interviewed so you don't need to go searching
 - If there are extra informational materials - a brochure about your location, information about the event, items with the correct spelling of everyone's names (that helps) have those ready to go as well.
- Don't forget about taking pictures during the event - even if you don't have time to do any online posting and even if you have people who have solemnly vowed to take pictures for you, if you see something that looks nice or is a person you want to be sure to capture or product you want to be sure to have a shot of, take the picture!
- If you have signage up for the event - a banner with the event name, signs pointing directions, etc. - take pictures of each of those. Those images are *always* useful to have on hand later.

Post-Event

- Social media Thank you posts.
- Follow up with any media that attended or showed interest.
- Review activities and make notes for next time.
- Post photo album of images.