Promoting your event

The basics

1. Audience

First things first: who is your audience? And where do they get information (offline and/or online)? This is the key thing underpinning successful promotion of your event.

2. Location

Go to where your audience already are! Whether this is in person or online. This could mean anything from putting posters or flyers up at a venue or in the local area, or engaging with particular Facebook or community groups online.

3. Timeline

You should start promoting your event 6 weeks in advance. If you're participating in the festival you should start promoting your event and open up bookings when the programme launches in early October.

4. Purpose

All of your promotional content should convey the value and purpose of your event. Why will people find it interesting? Why is it relevant? What will people get out of attending? Why should they make time to come along?

5. Help

Other researchers or colleagues from your organisation may have already worked with the audiences you are trying to reach, perhaps they will already have a list of contacts and will be able to support you in developing these relationships. A lot of universities and organisations will have departments supporting public engagement, community outreach and widening participation, as well as events management, marketing and press and media relations. Ask for their expertise and support!

Key information

All of your promotional material(s) should include:
- title of event
- date/s and time/s of event
- what the event is (e.g. talk, comedy show, performance)
- venue or online platform
- whether booking is required (and a note that it is free!)
- a link to find out more or book
- reference to the Being Human festival and website beinghumanfestival.org

Promotional checklist

Have you…

Engaged with stakeholders to aid in promotion?

- ☐ Partner organisations and your venue
- ☐ Speakers, performers, panellists or others involved in your event
- ☐ Community groups, local organisations, companies and charities with links to your target audience
- ☐ Internal colleagues (your institution's events team, press office, public engagement team, publications team, etc.)

Promoted the event via social media?

- ☐ Thought carefully about which platforms to use, why and how
- ☐ Thought about approaching relevant colleagues, friends or contacts ("influencers") with large social media followings to see if they would be happy to share or talk about your event
- ☐ Incorporated into relevant existing campaigns
- ☐ Thought about creating your own hashtag for the event
- ☐ Remembered to use #BeingHuman2021 and tag @BeingHumanFest where relevant
- ☐ Encouraged others in your organisation or network to promote via social media
- ☐ Asked your community and cultural partners (and other relevant groups, networks and organisations) to promote via social media
- ☐ Considered setting up a Facebook event page (invite Being Human page to co-host)
- ☐ Considered planning your social media content ahead of time and making use of a scheduling tool like Hootsuite

Highlighted the event on relevant websites?

- ☐ Your institution/ department websites
- ☐ Institution/department blogs
- ☐ Other blogs relevant to your research and event
- ☐ Your venue's website (and mailing list)
- ☐ Your community and cultural partners' websites (and mailing list)
- ☐ Online calendar listings, such as local 'What's On' listings, city guides and platforms
- ☐ Sought out relevant local Facebook groups and other community platforms

Created materials to promote the event?

Remember to seek support and advice from your organisation's marketing and design team!

- ☐ Poster/flyer
- ☐ Email invite
- ☐ Email signature
- ☐ Web banner/spotlight
- ☐ Social media graphics and images

Worked with press and media to gain publicity for the event?

☐ Contacted and liaised with the marketing, press and media colleagues at your organisation

☐ Written and distributed a press release

☐ Sent personalised pitch emails to relevant journalists and editors

☐ Sent personalised invites to press to attend the event

☐ Considered having one of your spokespeople write a piece about the event for submission to local media outlets

☐ Considered advertising your event in local press or other outlets

☐ Considered approaching relevant podcast hosts to see if you can discuss your research and event in the lead up

Top tips: calendar and event listings

Online calendar listings, such as local 'What's On' listings, city guides and platforms could be a good place to promote and publicise your event. A quick google (e.g. 'What's On Manchester') will bring up local sites. These will vary depending on the location and content of your event but a few examples include:

- The Press Association
- The List
- Wherecanwego
- thebestof
- Arts Council England news listings
- Culture24
- Culture Fix (online events)
- BookGig (literature/ author events)
- Fantastic for Families (family events)
- NetMums (family events)
- Regional listings such as IanVisits (London), What's On Network (Scotland), Time Out (London), What's On Reading and Reading Culture Live (Reading)
- Subject specific listings such as The Historical Association and Diverse histories on Twitter
- Disability Arts Online (disability arts and culture-related events, exhibitions, performances or touring programmes, or accessible performances)

Why do audiences come to events?

Based on the 2020 Being Human festival evaluation, the top motivations for audience members attending festival events were...
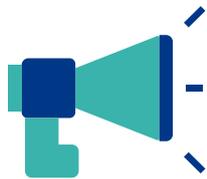
To hear more about a topic

To get inspired

To gain a new perspective

To be entertained

Keep these things in mind when communicating and promoting your event. For example...

"Come along to this event to learn more about _____."

"Get inspired by _____ at this hands-on workshop."

"Enjoy an evening of _____ at this free event."

"Explore and challenge new ideas about _____ at this free event."

Social media top tips

Always keep in mind who your target audience is and where they get their information online. A lot of academics love Twitter, but Instagram and Facebook are more widely used by the general population in the UK. It's great to promote across all platforms, but if you're short on time you may need to concentrate your efforts. Here are some of our top tips for using social media to promote your public engagement event:

1. Don't re-invent the wheel

It's normally not worth setting up a new social media profile to promote your event. Instead you should make use of existing platforms that have an existing audiences and followings (a public audience is better). Think about making use of channels run by: your community or cultural partners; your organisation or university; your venue; and anyone else involved in your event such as speakers, artists and other collaborators.

- Consider approaching "influencers" with large followings.
- When asking other platforms to tweet or post for you, make sure you give them plenty of notice. Save them time and draft up a tweet or some messaging for them, it will make it a lot easier and quicker for them to share.
- When posting always remember to mention other profiles such as your organisation, your partners and your venue by tagging them – this will encourage them to retweet and will extend your reach.

2. No po-faced promo

- Remove all academic and specialist language. It's very important to always use plain English in communications so that everyone can understand what you're saying.
- Try and create a playful presence online as people respond well to humour.
- Be clear about what your event is and what it will entail. Draw in interest by emphasing what people will do, create, learn or come away with.

3. Call to action

- Always include a call to action. What do you want people to do? Visit your website? Read a blog? Book on to your event? Comment with their thoughts and questions?
- Support your call to action with a link e.g. blog, event page, booking link.

4. Use hashtags (wisely)

- Consider creating your own hashtag for your event. Keep it short and snappy. The hashtag can also be used later for analysis. Include it on all of your promotional materials and encourage attendees to use it before, during and after your event.
- Do a bit of research into popular hashtags in your area or with your target audience (this is particularly useful on Instagram).
- On Twitter remember to keep an eye on what's trending.
- Remember to use the hashtag #BeingHuman2021 and tag us @BeingHumanFest to help us draw all the activity together.

Social media top tips continued...

5. Be topical

- Being Human is all about showcasing how humanities research is relevant to people's everyday lives. Does your research link to something topical or something happening in the news?
- Digital communication is a reactive medium. While scheduling is an excellent way to help you plan content, you also need to be able to respond to news and followers who engage with you.
- Repost articles and news pieces relevant to your activity. This is about drawing connections between research and people's everyday experiences.
- Creating a Twitter thread telling a story can be a fun and engaging way to share your research and in turn promote your event.

6. Plan ahead

- Consider and plan how many posts you are going to make and even consider preparing some content ahead of time. Think about how your posts and stories will string together.
- You could make use of scheduling tools like Hootsuite.

7. Stay visible

- When scrolling through their timelines, people are far more likely to stop and engage with an image rather than just text, so always try and use eye-catching imagery in whatever you do.
- Twitter and Facebook will automatically convert hyperlinks into 'cards' and will select an image from the linked page.
- Check the organiser area of the website for downloadable social media graphics or consider creating your own promotional graphic.
- Think about relevant visual content that brings your research to life in fun ways (e.g. archive snippets, pieces of artwork, interesting objects and items, historical buildings, photos of previous events) and try to tell a story about what your event might look like.
- Optimal social media image sizes:
  - Facebook timeline image: 1200 x 630 pixels
  - Facebook event Image: 1920 x 1080 pixels
  - Instagram: 1080 x 1080 pixels
  - Twitter in-stream image: 440 x 220 pixels
- You can use an online tool like BeFunky to resize your image.

Drafted tweets

[I'm/ We're] excited to be taking part in Being Human 2021, the UK's only national festival of the humanities (11-20 November). Now more than ever we need the solace, creativity and understanding the humanities bring to an increasingly uncertain world. https://beinghumanfestival.org/

Excited to be organising an event as part of this year's Being Human festival: 11-20 November. @BeingHumanFest is the UK's only national festival of the humanities, led by @sasnews with @ahrcpress and @BritishAcademy_. #BeingHuman2021. Check it out: https://beinghumanfestival.org/

[I am/ We are] organising a free event on [insert event topic] on [insert date] as part of this year's @BeingHumanFest! A free nationwide festival showcasing the brilliant humanities research happening across the country. #BeingHuman2021 https://beinghumanfestival.org/

This year [I'm/ We're] taking part in the national Being Human festival @BeingHumanFest – a festival all about showcasing how the humanities help us understand what it means to be human. There are hundreds of free events taking place across the country. https://beinghumanfestival.org/

Quick links and resources

- Being Human festival website organiser area
- Being Human festival 2021: Organiser guide (including example press release)
- Being Human festival Twitter moments: highlights from previous years
- Being Human on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook

- NCCPE resource: 'What works: Engaging the public through social media'