

Marketing for new developments



BY JULIA NEKICH

MARKETING A NEW DEVELOPMENT MAY BE PRETTY TOUGH IN THE CURRENT MARKET, BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT CONDITIONS ARE BEGINNING TO IMPROVE.

Whatever the state of the market, every good-sized development needs a great PR machine behind it to help promote available stock and garner the support of the local community.

Whether your development is residential, commercial, retail – or all three – the following PR avenues can help meet the above aims.

Before you begin

Before promoting the development, it's really important to know who its buyers might be.

Will the apartments or villas attract empty-nesters, or first home buyers? Is the area filled with medical businesses, making the development ideal for this market? A good property research consultancy can help assess the size of the market, buyer attitudes, and what opportunities exist in the area. Tailoring the development's benefits to this market – that is, developing the right key messages – will be part of the foundation of its marketing and PR.

Media coverage

For any new development, there are a number of story angles that could be pitched to the media – particularly for residential.

The most obvious media avenue is the real estate section of newspapers – both local and major metropolitan – for promoting new apartments or villas. If the development is an important one in the area, some local newspapers may even give it full-page coverage. I remember marketing a retirement village, with the local newspapers very amenable to covering the development each time a "stage" was completed, a display villa opened, or an open day was held (buying some advertising space might help, too). If you have good photos or illustrations, this often results in larger stories.

You can get creative with editorial angles. If the developer has commissioned some research to help assess the viability of the development, the population growth in the area, or whether there is scope for more retail, commercial or residential space in that suburb, the research data could also form some story angles. Also, don't forget that case studies (buyers who have bought off the plan) can add a 'human interest' element to any story.

If the interiors are high end and showcase the latest trends, these could also be pitched to interior design magazines. When I worked as a journalist, I not only covered Sydney Wharf (an important Sydney harbourside development) in Sydney Morning Herald's

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Domain, I also wrote about the interiors in *Belle* magazine.

Marketing communications

As soon as you begin your marketing campaign, it is a good idea to start building a database of prospective buyers, as well as businesses in the community that can assist you in promoting your development. These take a little time to build, but it's worth your while, as you can then update the community about the development directly (not just through media stories) using eNewsletters and mailouts.

A good website is a given – and the more the site provides necessary information and is 'two way' (engages readers), the better.

The community

If the community is on side, it can promote much of the development for you through word of mouth. You could begin by publicising the development through local community events (art exhibitions and festivals, for instance), local sporting clubs and RSLs. One method is through sponsorship and, in return, your development might be able to 'piggyback' on the publicity used by these events.

For commercial projects, you could explore opportunities to publicise the development through local

council, local business chambers, associations, business events and business networking groups. For retail, it could be worthwhile liaising with the various retailing associations to see what avenues are available there, such as trade shows.

Events

Open days are an important part of any development's community relations strategy. An open day can be held at display villas each time a 'stage' is ready to be sold off the plan. In addition, a launch event is essential – and how this is timed will be different for each development.

Think about important speakers and any local celebrities you could invite to the launch event. This is also an opportunity to invite media – the more 'attractive' the guest list the greater the chance that media will attend.

Of course, PR is rarely a one-stop shop, and the most successful developments will engage PR alongside other marketing avenues, such as advertising and online marketing.

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