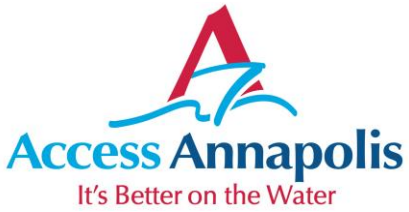# Marketing Toolkit
Action Plan
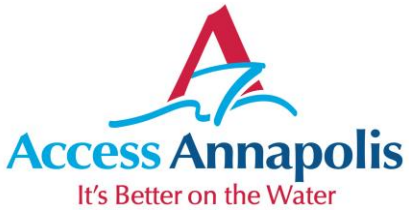
Working Waterfront Awareness Project
November 15, 2016

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Using the Toolkit

The goal of this Toolkit is to provide high level designs and strategies Annapolis maritime business owners may utilize to promote their products and services and tell their maritime stories. The overarching brand will showcase each organization's collaboration in promoting the Working Waterfront via a unified brand: **Access Annapolis**. You will find the following items on the www.accessannapolis.com website.

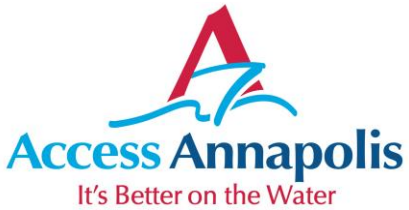The Toolkit includes:

> Logo files in various formats for print and digital use
> Logo usage guidelines to direct you and ensure brand consistency
> Digital and print ad templates you may use as a base (there is space for you to add your logo and other information)
> Several versions of a rack card with space front and back to promote your business
> Bannerstand design for use at trade shows and events
> A press release template you can follow to announce news

Additionally, this guide provides a high-level action plan covering ways you might use these tools to support your marketing efforts. The specific tools and strategies you choose will depend on your goals, target audience, their preferred channels, and your budget.

We hope you find these tools useful.
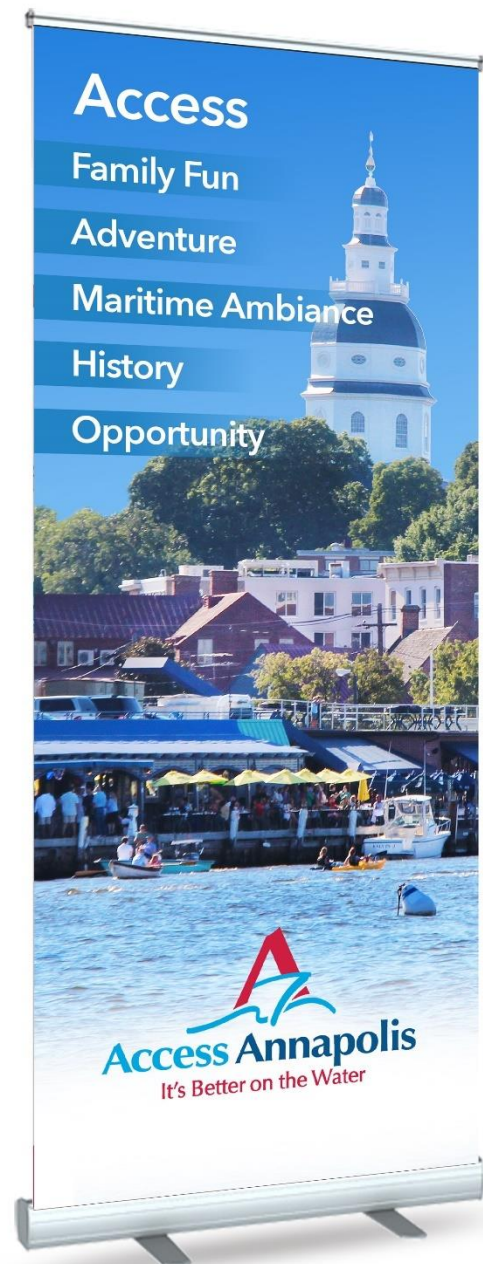
Getting Started | The Basics

Having a strategy ensures your marketing dollars are spent wisely. Begin by asking yourself the following questions:

1. What are my overall goals?
2. What are my goals for this marketing "campaign"?
3. What story do I want to tell?
   o How do I best define my message to tell the right story?
4. Who is my target audience for this campaign?
   o You may have more than one primary or secondary audience.
5. How can I best reach these audiences?
   o You may need to use different channels to reach each audience.
6. How do I integrate my message across channels?
   o It generally requires 3 – 7 "touches" before your message is heard by audiences unfamiliar with your business or organization.
   o This may include multiple touchpoints, i.e., an integrated campaign that includes social media, digital ads, and direct mail or a phone call..
7. What's my "call to action" to generate leads?
   o Examples include clicking on your digital ad, visiting your website, calling your business, or attending your event.
8. How will I track incoming leads?
   o For digital ads, you may use a unique tracking URL to determine the source of the click.
   o For print ads, you might choose a promotion code or a unique call in number.
   o Or you may simply ask each caller how they heard about your business.
9. How will I handle those leads when they come in?
   o Once someone has completed an online form or called your business, you must be prepared to provide information or assistance.
   o If your call to action asks consumers to call your office, make sure someone answers the phone, is welcoming and knows about the marketing offer.
   o You may also want to have a follow-up marketing plan for those leads that come into the marketing funnel.

As you plan your marketing efforts, determine which of the tools in the Marketing Toolkit you might use to make your strategies work for you.
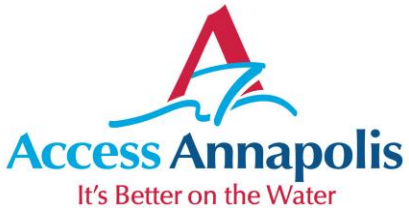
Your Online Presence

Having a solid online presence is critical for most businesses. If potential clients do not find you online, or your online presence is sketchy, they may go to the next vendor on their list. It is a good idea to search online (Google and Bing, at a minimum) for your own business on a periodic basis the search results. You may choose to search your business name as well as several keywords or phrases others may use to find your business (i.e., "sail repairs"). This information will give you an idea of how others see your business.

Your Website

Not every company needs a deep website with lots of bells and whistles, but in today's business environment, consumers expect to find at least a basic site. Here are some considerations:

> A mobile-friendly (responsive) site is a must.
  - o Recent research shows many visitors search on mobile devices and will drop off your site if it's too difficult to view on their phones. They also believe not having a mobile friendly site is a sign you do not care about them.
> Make sure your site is easy to navigate.
  - o If the content does not add value for your visitors, leave it out.
  - o Keep navigation to a minimum. Expansive menus and drop downs may be overwhelming to the user.
> An attractive site is a draw.
  - o Use high quality, representative photos on your site, and lay out page content so it is easy to read and understand.
  - o Apply headers to break up text and include bullets to make it easy to skim content.
  - o Usually 300-500 words per page (relevant to the page topic) is optimal.
> Search engine optimization (SEO) matters.
  - o If Google or Bing choose not to index your website, people won't find you in the search results.
> Keep your site current.
  - o If you have a calendar or a blog that shows only old information, people may assume you are out of business.
> A secured site (https://) is a must if you sell goods and services online.

Blogging

Writing blog posts can be a great way to add value for your website visitors. They are a good option for businesses with a longer sales cycle where the buyer does more research. Plus this helps with the search engines!

> Make a list of the questions you hear most frequently. These questions can become the blog post titles; your answers (the post) will then feed the buyer's quest for knowledge and add SEO value to your website.
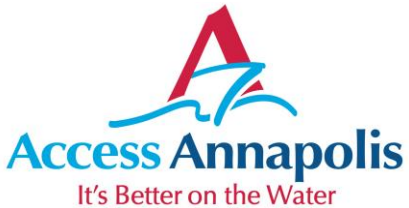
- > Getting influencers to post your articles on their sites and include links back to yours has added benefits of new viewers and with the search engines!
- > Reposting content from others is a good way to share information and show connections in an industry, but this will not always help your SEO (Google does not typically index duplicate content).
- > Repurpose blog posts by linking to them when you create an e-newsletter or post on social media.
- > If you hand out printed information kits, put the articles in an attractive template with your logo and business information and include the most relevant articles in the packet.
- > Use this content with prospects and/or past customers. Print and mail out articles (with a personalized sticky note) of interest.

Online Reviews

There are an increasing number of online review sites (Google, Facebook, Yelp, etc.) for consumers to either offer praise or criticism. Many buyers make decisions based on reading reviews. These sites can be a challenge for businesses since they are somewhat out of your control, but a regular online search will help you find any issues you might need to address.
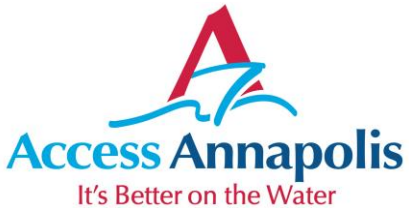
- > We recommend you encourage your happy customers to post reviews! Your fans essentially become mini-marketers on your behalf.

When a negative post happens:

- > The best options to fight negative reviews are:
    1. Ask your supporters to post positive reviews (reasonable people understand there are always haters out there and will see the higher percentage of great reviews).
    2. Respond to all reviews – positive or negative. If the review is negative, do not respond defensively - show an honest effort to resolve the situation. Your potential buyers will see that you've handled the situation well and may look at you more favorably!
    3. You may reach out to these tools to request they remove certain reviews, however, they generally limit their actions to reviews/posts that are obscene or otherwise do not meet their publication guidelines.

Toolbox Tips

- > Add the Access Annapolis logo to your website, email signature, promotional signage, etc. to show you are part of the Access Annapolis movement!
- > Use the "Access" language on your website in prominent spots to showcase what consumers can get from your maritime business.
- > Consider exchanging blog posts with non-competing waterfront businesses and include backlinks on your website.

Social Media

According to a 2015 study by the Pew Research Center, 65% of American adults are active on social media sites (that number was 7% in 2005[1]). That means your business needs to be there, too. The good news is you should not try to have a presence on every social media tool. Maintaining a real and helpful presence on one site is much better than being stretched too thin to be effective on 10 sites. Your best option is to find out where your current and prospective clients spend their time and be present on those tools.

Some of the social media tools (most notably Facebook) changed their display algorithms to decrease the likelihood that your business page will appear in a fan's news feed. The more activity a post has, the more likely it will be shown. Other options to have more posts displayed include asking page fans to check the "See First in Newsfeed" option or paying to sponsor your posts.

Facebook

Facebook is, by far, the most popular social site out there. If you do not have a Facebook page for your business, you may want to look at your customers and prospects to see if you need to be there.

- > More than 1 billion people use Facebook every day (as of March 2016[2])
- > 71% of American adults with internet access use Facebook
- > Facebook's mobile app is heavily utilized
- > Of those online, 82% of 18-29 year-olds are on the application, as are 79% of 30-49 year-olds and 56% of seniors
- > More women than men are active on Facebook
- > Of those online with incomes of $75k or more, 72% use Facebook

YouTube

Having a video presence on YouTube can be an effective tool for businesses. YouTube was purchased by Google several years ago, and is the second largest search engine in the world.
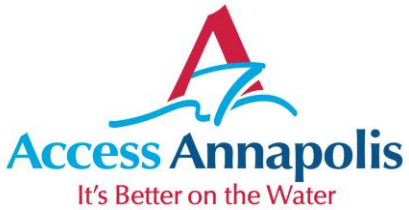
- > "How to" videos are very popular, if these make sense for your business (don't forget to repurpose the videos by embedding on your website and linking to them in e-newsletters and on other social media channels)
- > YouTube has more than 1 billion users
- > More men than women are active on YouTube
- > 46% of those with incomes of $75k watch YouTube
- > YouTube reaches more 18-49 year olds than any single cable network in the US[3]

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[1] http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/08/social-networking-usage-2005-2015/

[2] https://blog.hootsuite.com/facebook-demographics/

[3] https://blog.hootsuite.com/top-social-media-sites-matter-to-marketers/

Chat Based Marketing is Headed Up

Growth of instant messaging apps like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, WeChat and similar tools is outpacing traditional style social media. Consumer expectations have shifted, with clients and potential customers demanding faster responses from businesses. These tools play to these new expectations. Businesses are just beginning to look toward these tools as a way to interact with consumers.

What Else Is Out There?

> Tumblr has an active Millennial audience, more than 75% of whom access this blog tool on their mobile devices.
> Instagram (Millennials, very few 50+ users) continues to grow in popularity, having surpassed Twitter in 2016.
> Twitter (more men) is still a good option for many businesses (especially if you are more focused on text content vs. photos/videos).
> New tools are coming out all the time, but they don't always fit your target audience.

Your best bet is to ask your audience how they would prefer to receive information from you. **Pick the most common channels and focus your efforts on those.**

Toolbox Tips

> Include the "Access" language in your social media posts (remember to limit "salesy" posts to 20% and use the other 80% to share helpful information).
> If you take great photos, overlay the Access Annapolis logo (the .png version avoids the white box in the background) in the bottom corner to reinforce the connection.
> Include the Access Annapolis logo and language in any videos you might create.
> Consider advertising options on social media tools to reach a broader audience.
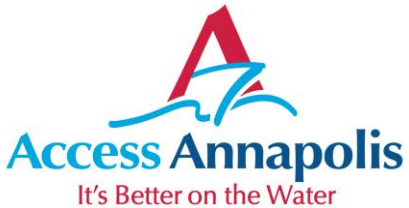
Digital Marketing

Given the rapid increase of internet users over the past decade, it is not a surprise that marketers are spending more on digital ads than ever to reach customers online and tell them about their brand. eMarketer reported in March 2016 that 21.9% of retail marketing budgets for the year were earmarked for digital.[4]

There are several options for digital ad placements, including:
> Targeting based on demographic data, including geographic location, gender, age, income, education, etc.
> Behavioral targeting allows you to direct your ads toward online users who visit certain sites on a regular basis (for example, Forbes or Wall Street Journal readers).
> Retargeted ads will "follow" a person who previously visited your site. Your ad will appear again as they move from place to place, with the frequency and number of repeats capped based on the ad setup.
> Other types of placements are available.
> Most digital ad placements are purchased based on a cost per thousand (CPM) or the cost to reach 1,000 of whomever you are targeting.
> Placement "above the fold" is important.
> You may want to try A/B ad testing and optimize based on the results.
> Reporting and optimizing your campaign is a must to get the most for your investment in digital.
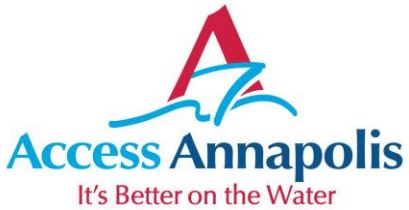
Paid Search Marketing

Search-based marketing (like Google AdWords or Bing ads) is another option to consider. This type of marketing is aimed at people doing product research or ready to make a purchasing decision (the small part of the purchasing funnel). Having name recognition by doing previous marketing can make a big difference, as these ads are displayed when search terms you define are entered. Someone recognizing your name over a competitor's may cause them to click on you first! With paid search marketing, you determine the daily budget and the amount you are willing to pay per click.

Social Media Advertising

Most social media tools offer advertising options for businesses. These ads tend to be less expensive (per click) than Google or Bing ads, but targeting is not as refined. This can be a good option to promote an event or build brand awareness (larger part of the purchasing funnel).
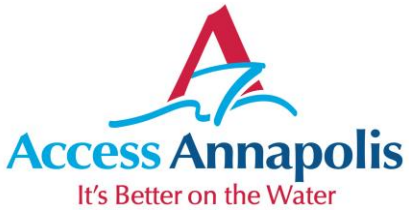
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[4] http://www.smartinsights.com/internet-marketing-statistics/2016-us-digital-ad-spend-statistics-trends/

Toolbox Tips

> The Toolbox includes several digital ads in the form of .gif files for reference. These ads rotate instead of being flat. Include your contact information and message on each ad you will run. Keep it short for maximum effectiveness. The digital vendor should be able to take the pieces of the .gif and create a customized animated .gif file for you.

> Consider mobile ad options, especially for a younger target audience.

> You may want to test different calls to action or different landing pages. Change one variable at a time for the most accurate test results. If you focus on mobile ads, make certain your landing pages (structure, content and call to action) are mobile-friendly.

> Consider setting up a separate landing page on your website (or multiples) just for the ad you plan to run. (Do not include the page in your website navigation.) This will allow you to track how many visitors hit that page and control/update the content. Google has a tracking URL builder tool at https://ga-dev-tools.appspot.com/campaign-url-builder/.
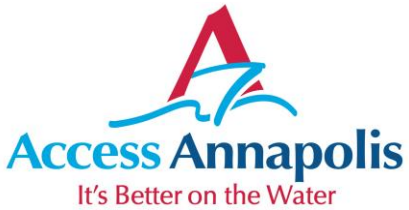
Print Advertising

While print media spend has declined over the past few years as a percentage of many total marketing budgets, print can still be a very effective tool, depending on your target audience. Print encompasses newspapers (which may include an online version of your ad), magazines and trade journals, directories, as well as direct marketing pieces (rack cards, brochures, postcards, etc.). Again, some research to determine where your customers and prospects spend time will help you decide whether print will work for you.

Toolbox Tips

> If you choose direct mail, consider a series versus a single mailing. A minimum of three touches is recommended. The same goes for an ad in the newspaper or a magazine; you'll need to run your ad more than once.

> Include more than just print in your campaign. Look at adding digital or social ads to run concurrently.

> Consider setting up a separate landing page on your website just for the ad you plan to run. (Do not include the page in your website navigation.) This will allow you to track how many visitors hit that page and control/update the content. This can be helpful if the ad will be in a publication that comes out infrequently, giving you the option of changing up the web content as often as needed.

> Add your company's logo and contact information to the rack card design or print ad template. (Your local printer can assist with this.) Include a call to action here, too. What do you want the recipient to do once they read the piece?
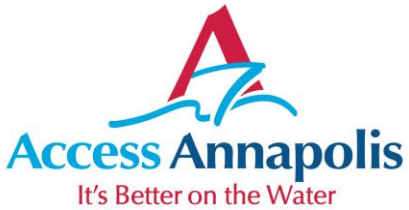
E-Marketing

Email marketing can also be an effective tool, though best practices indicate your email list should include only those who have opted-in for emails from your business. You should manage the list in accordance with current spam laws, meaning the recipient must have the option to opt-out of receiving future emails.

Toolbox Tips

> Many website interfaces include an email tool you may wish to use. They are not always as user friendly for design, mobile friendliness and CAN-SPAM compliance but offer the option of keeping everything in one place.

> Tools like MailChimp, iContact or Constant Contact tend to be easier to work with to design emails and they have mobile friendly templates. They also help manage your email lists and communications. These tools handle CAN-SPAM compliance so you don't have to do so manually.

> Make sure your email template(s) are mobile friendly.

> Limit the number of stories you include and keep the text to a minimum. As a best practice, post longer content on your website, then use a "read more" link in your email so anyone interested in the topic can click and learn more.

> Your subject lines should be catchy (and short – think mobile) to improve open rates.

> Include interesting photos, but remember some email tools block images from automatically displaying. If you use an image at the top of your email, make it relatively short so some content is visible underneath. We caution against creating a pretty graphic with all the content details included and sending only that in your email; many readers will delete the email and never download the picture.

> Include the Access Annapolis logo in your footer, try using an Access headline that fits your business, and use the Access language to get your message across.

Client Relationship Marketing

Acquiring new clients is 3-8 times more expensive than retaining existing clients. Cross-selling and up-selling to your current client base should be a high priority for many businesses. Current (happy) clients are also more likely to refer others to you.

Client relationship marketing is simply staying in front of your existing and recent past clients and prospects who have opted in to receive communications from you so they do not forget you. A few options to do this include:

> Sending regular email updates via a monthly or quarterly newsletter.
  o The goal is not to hard sell but to provide valuable information and keep your business top of mind.
> Recognize birthdays, anniversaries or other important events to let them know you are thinking about them.
> Offer existing customers advance notice of upcoming sales or new product releases.
> Invite this group to a special event you are hosting.
> Send handwritten thank you notes to recognize referrals (see Referral Programs).
> Mail out (or email) off-holiday cards. Instead of sending an annual Christmas card, instead you might recognize National Oceans Month in June.
> You get the idea!

Toolbox Tips
> Create a content calendar with topics to cover each month in your communications plan.
> Use the rack card as an option for a direct mail piece.
> Include the Access language to trigger a reminder of what you have to offer.
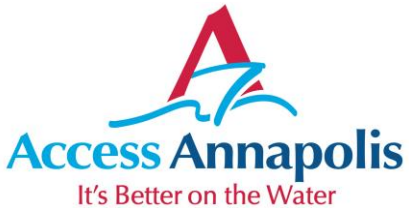> Use the Brand Checklist to ensure consistency.
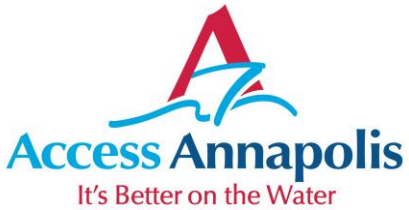
Referral Programs

Rewarding current clients who refer new business to you can be good practice. Many businesses find referrals from current and past clients generate the best prospects. You can structure a formal program or simply keep it informal. Nothing can replace word of mouth advertising and personal recommendations when you complete a cost/benefit analysis.

Tips

> Ask for referrals.
>   o Many people do not think about making referrals, reminders help.
>   o If you send out a regular newsletter, add your request in periodically.
> A big budget is not required for a referral program.
>   o Many clients are happy to refer someone they know and trust to a friend.
>   o A handwritten thank you note or phone call will often be sufficient.
>   o Small tokens of appreciation that have meaning to the individual are also appreciated. For example, if you know someone is an ice cream fanatic, a $5 gift card to Annapolis Ice Cream may make their day!
> One option is to reward both the client making the referral and the new client.
>   o For example, the referrer may get a $50 gift card and the new client may get 10% off the first purchase (up to some dollar amount).
> If you do choose to set up a formal program, publish the details on your website with instructions on how to make referrals. This might include giving referrers a special card to hand to friends or simply having the new client give you the name of the person who referred him or her.
> If someone makes referrals to you on a regular basis, you might want to invite them out to lunch or hold an annual party to recognize your top referrers.
> Consider the type of business/industry the referring party is in before you send a token. Most government agencies and many companies do not allow their employees to accept any items of value (or sometimes above a certain value). If you are not sure, ask.
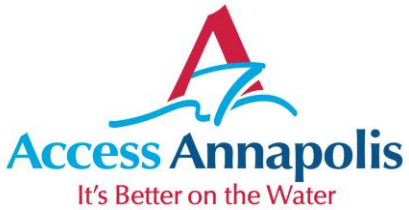
Media Exposure

Getting your story picked up by the media can be a huge benefit with limited costs (usually only your time). There can be a lot of competition for media attention. It helps to build a reputation with the media as an expert in your field – essentially becoming the 'go-to' person when there is a related story. You can also get attention with the right story at the right time.

Toolbox Tips

> Use the press release template to get your story out to the media.
> Follow and get to know your local and regional media contacts, especially those who focus on the maritime industry. In an ideal world, you want to become a subject matter expert they come to whenever there's a relevant story.
> Is there a current hot topic you can tie your story to?
> Is your story hard news or human interest? Knowing the angle helps.
> If you are promoting an event, you can typically submit information online to TV, radio, and print or online community calendars to get your event covered.
> Target who the story goes to; match each story to the appropriate media contacts.
>> o Google your topic (i.e., news story on kid's maritime activities) and look for reporters who have featured this type of story. Send them a personal note that recognizes the fact that they cover this type of story and a bit about how your story helps add a new angle or how it may provide a dissenting opinion.
>> o If you repeatedly blast "news" out to the full media list and it is never relevant to them, they will begin to ignore your submissions.
> Does it make sense to pitch a full article with the complete story and photos? If you write well and have a story that will resonate with a print or online publication, find the editor's name and email address and send him or her the story.
> Consider whether a paid release makes sense. There are several reputable online media sites (PR Web and PR Newswire are two) that will distribute your release regionally, nationally or globally, depending on your needs.
> Register as a source on https://www.helpareporter.com/. This site matches journalists and sources. You get a daily email with requests for sources and can choose to respond to specific media requests.
> Do not abuse the media contacts!
>> o Not every story is newsworthy.
>> o Keep your use of press releases to stories that are important, timely and relevant.
>> o Use other stories on your website, social media and in your newsletters!

Events

Events can be a great way to promote your business whether you are hosting, participating, or just getting benefit from the event being in town.

There are several options to consider, depending on your goals, staff/capacity to do the work and your budget. Before you begin, think about your goal(s) in hosting, attending, or sponsoring the event.

Hosting an Event

Planning your own event can be rewarding, especially if it generates business!

> Planning and coordinating an event can be time consuming. Consider your capacity to do the work before you begin. Optionally, hire an event coordinator to do the work.
> Does it make sense to partner with another organization for the event? If so, you can potentially reduce your expenses and workload.
> Begin advertising the event early and often.
>> o If it's a public event, post it on your website, social media, and emails you send.
>> o Determine if you want to advertise it via paid digital or print ads.
>> o Use community calendars on TV, radio, and print to get more coverage.
>> o Ask partners to share the event, as well.
> Notify the media before the event, if appropriate to their viewers/listeners/readers.
> You may want to look at a tool like Eventbrite or something similar to handle registrations and payment (if you charge for the event, these sites collect a fee).
> Will there be other (non-competitive) businesses who might want to be event sponsors? If this is feasible, consider a sponsorship structure ahead of time.
> Make sure you leave yourself enough time to speak with attendees (especially if you have identified any high-value prospects in attendance) to get to know them better.
> Have a post-event follow up plan to handle any specific inquiries and to remain top-of-mind with those who attended.

Event Participation

Events like Regattas, Commissioning Week and the Boat Show are a big draw for some maritime businesses. You may also find other trade shows of value, depending on your product/service offerings and the audience at these events. Planning ahead is key to make sure you not only make the most of your appearance, but have a solid plan to follow up with the prospects.

> Let everyone know you are involved and how you support the event.
>> o Include the event on social media, your website, e-newsletters or even in your email signature.
> Order bannerstands, signage, posters, point of purchase, brochures, and giveaways early.
> If you are on site at an event, work to make your presence interactive and engaging.
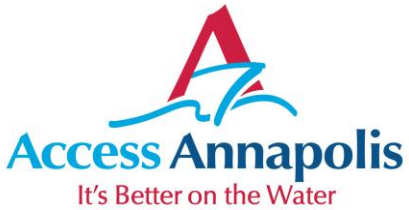
- o Don't put a table between you and your prospects!
- o Consider having video or a moving slideshow presentation.
- > Consider buying logo shirts for team members to wear.
- > Hold a prize drawing to capture business cards or basic contact information, then follow up with those people (and others who expressed interest) immediately after the show. Even if you must schedule a follow-up appointment a few weeks out, do not delay in reaching out to prospects.
- > Have a follow up plan for how you'll handle the hot prospects first and how you'll reach out 3-7 times to all prospects. Getting leads is great, but you'll also need to convert them to sales!
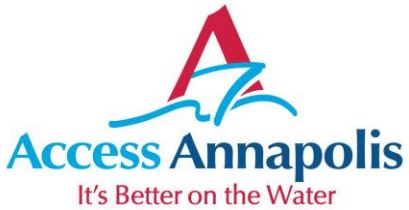
Sponsorships

It sometimes seems everyone is looking for sponsors – from the local little league teams to the big industry trade shows. If you are considering a sponsorship, think about your goals and expectations.

- > Does the target audience match your primary (or secondary) audience?
- > What options are available and how much do they cost?
- > If attendees will be given a goodie bag, what are you able to include? (Make sure to order everything well in advance.)
- > Will the event host share the attendee list (and were attendees advised the list would be shared with sponsors)?
- > Will you be able to attend the event? Will there be an opportunity for you to network or interact with attendees?

Toolbox Tips

- > Order a bannerstand a few weeks ahead of the event. You can find a variety of pull-up style stands that are inexpensive and easy to transport.
- > Print custom versions of the Access rack card with details of interest to the audience. Consider a special offer just for the event.
- > Decide well in advance if you want to order logo items to give participants. This will help avoid a rush order charge.
- > Don't forget business cards!

Cooperative Advertising

If you are part of a larger group with a purpose, i.e., Annapolis maritime businesses trying to promote the working waterfront, creating a campaign that benefits the entire group and sharing expenses can be an effective option. Consider:

> Are your goals for the campaign the same?
> Are you trying to reach the same target audience(s)?
> Will everyone benefit equally (or proportionally) from the campaign?
> How much money are you willing to chip in?
> How will the costs be allocated?
> How will the benefits/response rates be measured?

Toolbox Tips
> Utilize the appropriate ad formats for your target audience/channel