Five ways to promote your community event

The five weak spots I see most often, and what to do about each one. Page 3 has the week-by-week promotion rhythm.

Seats stay empty for a few predictable reasons, and most of them get decided before the first promo post goes out. Fix these five and the rest of your promotion gets a lot easier.

01 · PROMISE

Nail your value proposition first

Why should someone give up an evening for this? “It’ll be a great time” isn’t an answer.

- Frame the event as a solution. Swap “Learn about AI” for “Discover 3 ways small businesses are using AI to save time and cut costs.”
- List 3–4 concrete takeaways: skills they’ll gain, tools they’ll leave with, people they’ll meet.
- Write a one-line **“Why Attend”** statement and use it everywhere.
- Build promo materials only after the value is clear.

02 · PEOPLE

Turn enthusiasts into advocates

You don’t need influencers. You need people who care and have networks.

- Identify ambassadors: past attendees, engaged volunteers, local connectors.
- Hand them a **share kit**: pre-written posts, images, hashtags, the registration link.
- Ask for personal stories about why the event matters, not a copied flyer.
- Give sponsors co-branded content and ask them to say why they’re involved.
- Say thank you in public: shout-outs, VIP access, notes.

03 · PEOPLE

Show, don’t just tell

People come to see people. Feature faces, not logos.

- Ask speakers for a 30-second phone video on what they’re covering.
- Share behind-the-scenes moments: prep, setup, first arrivals.
- Use countdowns and teasers (“3 days to go”) to build urgency.
- Afterward, post highlights, testimonials, and quote graphics, and let attendees help tell the story.

Raw phone video often beats a polished flyer. Canva, CapCut, and Clipchamp make it quick.

04 · PERSISTENCE

Plan the promotion like a journey

One announcement is a notice. A campaign has a rhythm, with each channel doing a job.

- Follow a timeline from announcement to day-after recap (full version on page 3).
- Match channels to goals: LinkedIn for visibility, Meetup or Facebook for reach, email for conversions, community calendars for discovery.
- Batch your content and schedule it with Buffer or Hootsuite.
- After each event, track what worked and repeat it.

05 · PEOPLE

Step outside the tech bubble

- Partner with colleges and tech programs: offer workshops or mentorship in exchange for promotion.
- Engage chambers of commerce, libraries, and city boards. They’re often looking for community content to share.
- Reframe for broader audiences: “Microsoft 365 Governance” becomes “Digital tools for small business growth.”
- Tap local media: community blogs, newsletters, radio.
- Make attending easy: hybrid options, free or low-cost registration, clear directions, parking, and accessibility info.
- Treat partnerships as two-way. Stay involved year-round, not only when you need promotion.

FILLING SEATS · BEYOND A SINGLE EVENT

Community development 1-2-3

Filling seats once is marketing. Getting people to come back, bring others, and step up is how a community grows.

I first wrote this framework back in 2010 for the SharePoint community. It grew out of lunchtime sessions with fellow managers on Microsoft's Management Excellence Leadership Team, a volunteer network of managers supporting other managers, about how to get people involved. The goals haven't changed: connect and energize people, share what works, and develop the next wave of leaders, speakers, and experts.

1 Get involved

Don't sit on the sidelines. Community happens when people decide to take part instead of watching.

- No user group at your company? Start one.
- None in your city? Build one.
- If one exists, participate: learn from others and share your own experience.
- Help out at events and volunteer for the next one in your area.
- Engage the online community too, in forums and on social channels.

ORGANIZER MOVE Ask for help in the room. Recruit volunteers for the next event before this one ends.

2 Bring a friend

Regulars have no excuse for keeping these events to themselves. Take the initiative.

- Don't know anyone at the local group? Bring someone along.
- Invite colleagues, your manager, partners, and customers.
- If you have direct reports, make attending a team activity.
- Notice the people you know who work in this space but never show up, and invite them.

ORGANIZER MOVE Close every event by asking attendees to bring one person to the next one.

3 Keep learning

There's always more to learn. Years ago a Microsoft Certified Master in SharePoint told me he still had a lot to learn, and it stuck with me. Continued learning keeps you motivated to keep doing steps 1 and 2.

- The more you know, the more people see you as a local expert.
- That recognition makes it easier to stay involved and motivate others.
- It's also the path from attendee to speaker.

ORGANIZER MOVE Give regulars a next step up: a lightning talk, a lab they help run, a panel seat.

It's basic, and that's the point. Do these three things and your community will grow.

It works for an internal user group, for extending the reach of a local group, or for promoting your next big community event.

A rhythm you can repeat every event

Six weeks out for larger events, four weeks for meetups. The day-after recap becomes the promise for your next one.

Before you promote

- [ ] One-line “Why Attend” plus 3–4 concrete takeaways
- [ ] Format includes something interactive: a lab, panel, or networking block
- [ ] Registration page has date and time with time zone, location, parking and accessibility (or the join link), and an agenda with speaker faces
- [ ] Calendar invite (.ics) sent automatically at registration
- [ ] Know your historical show rate so you can set a registration target (free events often run about 40–60%)

6 / 4 wks out

- [ ] Announce date, topic, and value
- [ ] Post a LinkedIn event, Meetup or Eventbrite, community calendars
- [ ] Send share kits to speakers and sponsors
- [ ] Contact partners: schools, chambers, libraries, other user groups

3 wks

- [ ] First email to your list
- [ ] Speaker spotlight #1
- [ ] Ambassadors share their personal “why”

2 wks

- [ ] Feature a speaker or session with a short video
- [ ] Partner newsletters go out
- [ ] Most online signups land 1–2 weeks out, so keep posting

1 wk

- [ ] Logistics and any giveaways
- [ ] Reminder email #1
- [ ] Behind-the-scenes post

2 days

- [ ] Personal last-chance invites
- [ ] Ask people who can’t attend to release their spot
- [ ] Open the waitlist

1 day

- [ ] Reminder #2: what to bring, where to park or how to join

Day of

- [ ] Reminder 1 hour before
- [ ] “We’re live / doors open” post
- [ ] Photos and short clips for the recap
- [ ] Record check-ins

Day after

- [ ] Thank-you, highlights, quotes
- [ ] Share slides or recording
- [ ] Tease the next date

1 wk after

- [ ] Short survey
- [ ] Compare RSVPs to check-ins
- [ ] Note which channel drove signups
- [ ] Update this checklist

LinkedIn	Meetup, Facebook	Email	Community calendars
visibility	reach	conversions	discovery

Communicate smarter, not louder.

Christian Buckley · Microsoft MVP & Regional Director · CollabTalk · buckleyplanet.com · @buckleyplanet

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