

# marketshare [mahr-kit shair] -noun

1. Is a program of marketumbrella.org, which works to cultivate the field of public markets for public good.
2. These free documents (called "shares") are the best of "lessons learned" from public markets everywhere.
3. Employ as needed, & please feel free to tell us about your results, so that we can share those with other markets.



## market preparation: devising and managing events

There are many reasons for market organizers to hold events: to generate media coverage, to draw new customers, to please their vendors, or to reward and reconnect with longstanding customers. But too many events can quickly overwhelm organizational resources, exhaust local media, and even annoy, rather than reward, loyal vendors and shoppers. The trick is to avoid over-reliance on events as your only means of driving traffic to your market.

At marketumbrella.org, we use the Four Ms to help us evaluate whether an event is an appropriate implementation of our Mission, use of our Management (resources), will complement our Marketing and generate results we can Measure.

For example, for 10 years we asked local chefs to perform free cooking demonstrations at our Saturday market every single week, which meant four to five chefs and events every month. For restaurants, it was a significant commitment of time and resources on Saturday morning—the busiest day of the week for most of them—and eventually some of them tired of the request. (Looking back, we're amazed they indulged us that long!) Local media

were similarly reticent at covering them in detail; plus, it became apparent that the demonstrations weren't attracting any new customers. They weren't even that big a draw for regular customers; the fact that they were offered every week, made them less than "special."

Now we invite one restaurant/month to *sell* Green Plate Specials at our Tuesday Market, every Tuesday for a month. The specials are sold for under \$10, and can be boxed to take out or eaten on site. (The market runs through lunchtime on a weekday, so the timing is perfect. In fact, local businesses often send someone to pick-up lunches for employee meetings.) This approach has been very successful: chefs make money and gain publicity, while shoppers get fed and inspired. The restaurants pay a slightly higher vendor fee for the rental of the space, but every restaurant that has participated has asked to do it again.

We have seen many market organizers overextend themselves on events, hoping to generate media coverage that becomes more difficult with each event they hold. We have decided that it's better to

pay for a certain amount of advertising, rather than to run ourselves ragged holding events. *As noted in our “Marketing 101” share, we have found radio—particularly public radio—to be an excellent value for our advertising dollars.* We request our ads to be read live by commentators, and many of them turn a 30-second spot into a 10-minute glowing editorial!

We’ve also seen market organizers sponsor events that are intended to attract new customers—but are marketed to the same media outlets as the regular market, minimizing the likelihood of attracting new shoppers. If you’re bringing music to your market, try for a write-up in a local music publication, or in the arts and entertainment section of the daily newspaper, so that you can attract music-oriented (rather than food-oriented) new shoppers. Similarly, consider events or guests that will enable you to pitch stories to the business or sports editors of local media—and, at the same time, introduce you to new prospective groups of shoppers. And definitely consider events that will appeal to different cultural or ethnic groups in your community—and then try to generate coverage in media specific to those groups.

Once you’ve determined that an event is right for you, begin planning for it at least six weeks out. Identify your objectives, target market(s), possible partners, and your marketing plan, with budget. Identify one person to be responsible for managing all event details. Notify your Board, vendors, and media. Identify your volunteers, and schedule them specific duties if needed, like event photographer or greeter for special guests.

Include notice of the event in your e-newsletter and distribute sample articles or advertisements to your

partners for their own member communications. (Mailed newsletters often have a 30-day production deadline, so be sure to communicate early with your partners.) Produce event promotion signage and post it at least a week prior to the event at all your weekly markets. Also the week prior to the event, walk through every detail of the market of who’s going to do what when and where. Make sure your vendors and volunteers, too, know what is expected of them and what to expect (maybe even a handout of event times).

The more they know, the more they can talk up the event. We also recommend having a new shopper sign-in table at the market entrance, so you can see whether you were successful at attracting new shoppers. When the event is over, write your thank-you notes, debrief your event team and document “lessons learned.” Keep these in a file for next time.

We use our Four Ms to decide whether we should cancel an event or schedule for it later month. Three weeks prior, if it doesn’t look as if the event is going to fulfill its objectives (e.g., generate the requisite partner, vendor, media, or shopper interest), we’d say think about whether or not to still hold it. Sometimes the reason is simply a matter of timing: there’s another event that day that people have already committed to, or vendors or staff are too busy in mid season to handle more.

Keep in mind that events aren’t the only way to animate space and add social capital to your market. You can put up an umbrella and offer shaded seating for resting, visiting, and eating. You can have a kids’ table with paper and crayons, food samples, and fun facts about food. Guest partners can offer health screenings, share rescued and rehabilitated wildlife,

or offer free mini-massages. We offer live music at our markets on a monthly basis, which gets us a listing in several music-oriented media outlets, and which the musicians themselves promote to their fan base.

Remember that markets are part of normal weekly routines. Special events are special. We now average 6 free cooking demonstration events a year, plus some of our favorite special events. A seasonal market might want to do only three events—at the beginning, middle, and end of the market season.

However many you do, make sure they're working for you—not the other way around—which means measure your results so you can see if they supported your mission. Did the vendors like them? Did you draw shoppers from new zip codes? Were you able to generate the desired media coverage? Was the event worth the investment of market resources? Would you do it again?

[marketumbrella.org](http://marketumbrella.org) marketshare thoughts management page 3



**mission | management | marketing | measurement**

***Thank you for using a share document. This 4M worksheet below is to help you think through what you just read and how to apply it to your situation. Read the share titled “The Strategy of the 4Ms” to learn more about this [marketumbrella.org](http://marketumbrella.org) teaching tool.***

Is this issue or strategy covered in your current mission (or values)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Does your management structure allow you time to handle this, or is there another organizational partner to help?

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How will you communicate to others about this issue or strategy (marketing)? \_\_\_\_\_

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When and how will you measure the impact of this resolution of this issue or the completion of this strategy?

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**cultivating the field of public markets for public good**