

Promotions

Promotion is one of the four key points in building a vital downtown. According to the National Trust Main Street Center, promotion sells a positive image of the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in the Main Street district. By marketing a district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.

Observation: A well-established identity and message will improve the effectiveness of marketing to locals, visitors, and investors interested in the Cliffs' Commercial District. Before the Towns of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe can really begin making improvements to their downtowns and central cores, they must come to an understanding of where these improvements can and should take place; what type of community they are and what their vision is for moving forward. Understanding the identity of the community must be the first step in any process to downtown revitalization.

Knowing the true identity of your downtown and finding ways to effectively communicate and build on that message with your unique audience is a key element to downtown success. Success will occur when you learn to guide the change in perception through strong connections with your audience, the residents and businesses of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe. You must be consistent, persistent and patient. Find a message and stick with it.

Recommendations:

Initiate a branding process to develop an identity for Cliffs' Commercial District. Just as large corporations research tax structures and the business climate of a particular city before they make plans to build a new factory, tourists research where they would like to spend their time and money, before they even get in the car. Communities must be prepared for these visitors by having a strong, consistent message.

Utilize Cliff Hanger's to build and develop linked or consolidated websites. Utilize social media tools. Having a consistent message about your community makes it easier for businesses and residents to communicate what it is you are all about. Both communities should be engaged in a process of developing an identity for the entire commercial district, stretching from the eastern entry to Silver Cliff to the West End of Westcliffe.

Develop Cliffs' Commercial District information packets with map including all downtown businesses for all hotels, event venues, chamber office, and Forest Service office. It is imperative that information on all of the businesses in the commercial district is available to visitors and that they know how to get to those businesses. The maps must be kept up to date, must be legible, and should show an accurate scale of the district. The information packet should include lodging, recreational activities, arts and entertainment venues, community events, and goods and services, for example. These information packets must be available at all lodging, event venues and service buildings.

Create a clearing house of information about what is happening in Cliffs' Commercial

District for print and online distribution. There are currently a number of websites trying to promote the entire area and all of the events that take place here. This can lead to confusion, misinformation, or incomplete information for visitors or residents trying to learn about the area. There needs to be one centralized distribution point for all items related to this district. This could be done by the Chamber or one of the municipalities, but whoever decides to do it must be responsible for events going on in both communities and in the commercial district.

The identified brand for the commercial district should be included on all information distributed. This is true for all events put on by non-profits or the communities.

Consider corporate sponsorship for increasing funds raised from events. Contact Clif Bar. The residents and businesses of the communities donate a great amount of time and money to events that take place here. Why not identify corporate sponsors for some of the larger events that can directly benefit from getting their name on the promotional material? It could be a rather easy sell for some large businesses to see the advantage. And besides, what is the worst they could say?

Package and market existing businesses to target audiences (veterans, kid-friendly, etc.). Westcliffe and Silver Cliff host a variety of diverse businesses. It may be more difficult to attract and acquire a new business than to work with existing businesses to make them more sustainable. Look at innovative ways to market and package existing businesses. Some examples may include kid-friendly or family-friendly businesses - you are marketing specific sections of businesses (list things to do in the area for families - special tours or hikes or fishing at the lake, identify businesses with kid sections - toys or clothes or books, which restaurants with kids menu's, etc).

Consider focusing marketing/promotional efforts on specific target audiences. A great example of this is the May is Military Appreciation Month. How is this marketed outside the area? Another opportunity may be further embracing the heritage - a month-long celebration of the history (encourage all area museums/heritage nonprofits to host events during one specific month/time ... increase historical displays such as historic tools at the hardware store or demonstrations of mining/tours/presentations and utilize existing, regional marketing opportunities - such as through Downtown Colorado Inc - ask businesses to participate through special menu items or highlight specific books on the area, or invite local ranchers to come and speak -- consider moving the "interview a rancher" program into a coffee house and record live, and encourage businesses to stay open later following heritage events to feed crowd).

Observation: The two communities could better capitalize on the natural beauty and amenities at their doorstep. During the focus groups, many of the residents and businesses discussed the fact that visitors who come to the area for the outdoor activities spend very little time and money in the commercial district. For the most part outdoor enthusiasts bring their own food and beverages, don't need the services that are in the downtowns, and may not even be aware of what they can purchase here. It is up to the businesses and the community at large to drive these visitors to the commercial core.

Recommendations:

Work closely with Forest Service and Land Management to better market natural resources, Byways, etc. Visitors to the area may be stopping by the local Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management Offices to get maps, directions and permits. These agencies should be aware of what is going on in the commercial district. If this is the only place in the community where these visitors stop, then this is the only opportunity for the business district to get their information in those RVs. Especially for those businesses that cater to the outdoors people, this is an opportunity being lost.

Develop messages for Veterans, Department of Corrections Officers, etc. for outdoor activities. There are a number of specialized and target markets that live only an hour or so away that the business district could be encouraging to visit. With the number of prisons in the area (16) and Ft. Carson and Pueblo so close, the number of workers and retired officials who could be spending their time here is quite large. The business district and communities would be wise to develop a marketing campaign to get them to the area, along with their families, to enjoy the outdoor activities as well as the amenities located downtown.

Bring people up the hill with "Climb the Cliffs on Friday Nights" and Cliffs' Community Yard Sale. If you want to get out of town for a "night away" - where do you go? Salida? Canon City? Look at the year-round residents in these towns as potential market for specific events (you don't always have to look for high-profile, expensive marketing campaigns). Consider a special night every week and everyone who has a driver's license zip code of Salida or Canon City can get \$5 off a meal - a regional draw that is marketed (using grassroots tactics) and is consistent (every First Friday night). Consider looking at neighboring communities as partners in drawing visitors/residents and look for ways to encourage Custer County residents/multi-day visitors to go and experience (stay with us in Custer County - but go float the Arkansas River ...). If you are a business, maybe look for "sister businesses" - in Salida or Canon City and "trade" information and clients.

A simple and effective promotion done in Lake City is a town-wide yard sale. If you want to be listed on the map, it's \$5. The map is inserted into the weekly paper (so more newspapers are sold that week, plus DIRT paid the insertion fee to the locally owned newspaper). DIRT markets the town-wide yard sale regionally through classified ads/shopper ads and flyers and folks come from Montrose, Grand Junction, South Fork and Creede to shop at the more than 25 local yard sales. These are bargain hunters so they will probably bring their coolers and bologna sandwiches but the yard sale day really serves two purposes. First, it brings folks into town who may return year after year and 2) it encourages a lot of residents to clean up outside their homes, sell unneeded stuff, and generate a bit of income.

Develop materials highlighting trails, sports, and other outdoor opportunities to capture outdoor enthusiasts. Concentrate efforts on winter activities. Summer activities are not hard to find in the valley but during the winter the communities basically go into hibernation. Those businesses that cater to the outdoor visitors should be marketing themselves to that target market in a very strategic and obvious way and should be looking for opportunities to add winter sports activities to their inventory. If customers can purchase the goods they need in the winter locally, they may be more likely to visit the valley in the winter months.

Observation: Developing community objectives for events will help to maximize on impacts for the communities and businesses year round. There are a number of events taking place in the summer months when visitors and second home owners are in town. These events are long-held traditions in the community and seem to serve the purposes they were intended to. However, many businesses and residents feel the events don't really serve a purpose for the community at large, even though large numbers of visitors are coming in to town. Additionally, many of the events seem to be singularly purposed, that is, there are not a number of activities happening at the same time to engage a cross section of the population. Business owners downtown do not seem to get involved in the events and are finding it difficult to take full advantage of the number of people who attend these events.

Recommendations:

Conduct an analysis of all events, develop strategic objectives, and ensure that events are meeting some objectives. Volunteers in this community are in danger of becoming tapped out. With sixty non-profits, many of which are putting on events, the population of this community is constantly busy in the summer months volunteering. Additionally, many of the events in town seem to be for socializing or getting people out of the house or up the hill. But what else do these events do for the community? Are businesses downtown taking part and finding value in the events? To answer those questions and make sure any and all other events are meeting the needs of the community, conduct a strategic events matrix. This tool will help the community identify the objectives that are important for them to meet and help plan events that will help meet those objectives. Overall events calendar should be well thought out and very strategic. Key things to keep in mind:

- Objectives
- Quality not Quantity
- Comprehensive Community Events calendar including all of the large community events
- Capitalize on already successful events

Finally, persistence is the key. You must find events that meet your objectives and stick with them for more than just a couple of weekends or years. It takes time for people to form habits, including going to events and visiting the downtown.

Ensure a year-round schedule with emphasis on developing shoulder seasons. As with many Colorado mountain communities, the summer months have no shortage of things to do in and around town. The winter months, however, are long and there aren't many activities to bring people out of their homes or to the communities. A tool the communities should be using is the Event Calendar. This will help the communities see when events are taking place and where there are large gaps in activities. Use this tool to begin filling in events and activities for the rest of the year. And remember, they don't need to be huge events that bring in thousands of people. You can start with activities that get the locals downtown and build out from there. Use the Strategic Events Matrix to help you fill in activities in the winter months that meet the objectives you have already set forth.

Include a retail component for each event. Many of the current events do not incorporate specific retail opportunities for businesses to get involved. Be sure to use the Strategic Event Matrix to help you identify retail opportunities. For every event that takes place at either the West End in Westcliffe or the Cliff Interpretive area in Silver Cliff, there needs to be a reason for people to visit the commercial areas. Businesses need to market their wares and connection with the events and event organizers need to remember that the commercial core is the strength of the community and they need to direct people to these businesses.

Businesses should maintain regular and expanded business hours. When visitors are in town it is important for the businesses to be open and ready to serve them. This may involve opening earlier than usual or staying open later to accommodate the potential customers. Businesses need to be aware of when events are taking place in the area, either in the commercial core or in the county that could lead to more customers. Work with event planners to prepare for this increase in visitors and staff businesses accordingly.