

COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STRATEGY

A Discussion Document

Principal Goals

The primary goal of the Media Strategy is to increase participation in all forms of orienteering in Victoria i.e. Bush Orienteering, Mountain Bike Orienteering and Park/Street Orienteering and to retain new and current participants by increasing their level of satisfaction in the sport. A secondary goal is to enhance the profile of Orienteering as a sport that would be recognised by a significant proportion of Victoria's population.

However, orienteering competes with an ever-increasing number of outdoor sports for the attention of the public. Some sports clearly dominate the media landscape, and there is little media space for minority sports. Orienteering also competes with television, radio, computer games and internet activity for the hearts and minds of the indoor inclined, and our challenge is to inspire them to try something new.

Additionally, major orienteering events are usually located at least two hours driving distance from Melbourne, where 75% of Victorians live, and few people will travel more than half an hour to try something new.

We need to find ways to increase the exposure of our target groups to the events which we offer. We must also consider carefully the types of events we promote, and to whom.

By marketing orienteering as an outdoor activity, suitable for all members of the family, we could hope to achieve worthwhile exposure. We must decide which groups are our targets, offering them suitable events in convenient locations and deciding for each group the best methods of communication.

To mitigate the distances to quality orienteering areas, car pooling may encourage newcomers to travel to further events, as well as providing obvious social benefits.

Media Objectives

We can usefully develop our use of the Orienteering Victoria website and combine it with internet communication tools such as Email and Facebook. A redesign of the OV website to make it more suitable for viewing with smartphones and tablets would be a positive media enhancement.

Local print media may be used to reach those who are presently unfamiliar with the sport. 'Margaret Gee's Media Guide' lists phone numbers, email addresses and deadline dates for all Victorian print media. A data file of local contacts is being compiled for circulation.

The Australian Orienteer and *OVic* magazines also play an important part in publicising what we do. Major events and the Eventor membership system will be promoted here.

A recent study of UK orienteers found that 55% of beginning orienteers came to the sport with family or friends. Our current participants are clearly our greatest advert and our keenest advocates and may be persuaded to bring along a friend, relative or colleague.

A survey of Australian orienteers in 2007 showed that 90% of Aus orienteers had internet access at home and that 84% had a mobile phone. It is reasonable to suggest that these percentages, already high, have risen significantly in the intervening years.

Last year, 55% of Australians (half of them in the 18-34 age bracket) were reported to be regular users of social media website Facebook which connects like-minded people with each

other (<http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/australia>). This suggests that 3 million Victorians use Facebook and that it would be a very accessible way of showcasing what we do and publicising our activities.

British Orienteering researched the issue of target audiences in 2012 and concluded that several groups may represent a good investment of time and effort. It is possible that Orienteering Victoria would find the same. However, with limited resources, clubs will want to prioritise.

Families with young children

Young families require events which are held at weekends during the daytime. I would also suggest that, with several entries to pay, price is important to them. Local newspaper promotions may catch the eye of this group.

Singles & Couples aged 16-30

These people are likely to be receptive to the challenges of BushO, MTBO and Park/StreetO events. A newspaper campaign directing them to the OV website and encouraging them to connect through email and Facebook feeds may well prove fruitful.

Two other potential target groups are Recreational Runners (not connected to any other sport) and School Children aged 9-16 (persuade their parents along).

Events Series

Bush Orienteering, Mountain Bike Orienteering and Park/Street Orienteering events and series which are to be held in the first part of this year are detailed below. Some may be used as promotion vehicles to new orienteers, while others may be used to encourage present members to increase their involvement.

January

Park/Street Series
Summer MTBO Series
Silva Duo

February

State Series Events
Park/Street Series

March

Bendigo Bush Series
Easter 3 Days
Park/Street Series

April

Victorian MTBO Series
Park/Street Series

May

Victorian Schools Championships
Park/Street Series

June

MelBushO
Park/Street Series

These event series could be promoted with an incentive scheme, such as an offer of a free entry voucher, either for existing members or for newcomers. Current orienteers are our most valuable resource and advertisement for our events. They may be persuaded to introduce and mentor newcomers through the initial, often confusing, stages. A promotion button on the OV website might work, or a voucher printed on the back of a Street-O map.

Press releases to local print media would highlight suitable events for newcomers.

Flyers posted at suitable outlets e.g. leisure centres, sports clubs, libraries, etc. may catch the eye.

Media Formats

Using the internet, publicity should always provide links to the Orienteering Victoria website, from where newcomers may be persuaded to subscribe to the OV Email Bulletin and the OV Facebook page.

Print media will catch the eye of the currently uncommitted. Newspaper reports could highlight upcoming events, as well as reporting recent results.

Tactics

When should events be held for our target groups? Daytime/evening?

What type of event should each be? Score/line, Mass/split start?

What incentives can we offer both current and potential orienteers? Nominal entry fee? Free voucher? Pricing of Events? Pricing of OV Membership?

Timeline

Some event series might require long lead-in times for publicity.

For others it may be sufficient to publicise as follows:

Two weeks before event – print, flyer and internet media.

One week before event – internet media

Feedback

A standard data collection system, used by all clubs at every type of event, would enable us to find out which media strategies work best, and with which target groups. A standard event registration sheet could collect such information. On future occasions, the information collected could be fed back to inspire other potential participants.

Dennis Mews January 2013