



Marketing Your Blues Society

To be successful, every Blues Society has to utilize a number of different methods to attract and retain members, as well as creating a vital presence in the local community.

- **Acquire domain name, develop a website, establish a social media presence** – There are plenty of companies that will host websites. Some offer a free basic site. Determine what information you want on your site now, and possibly down the road. Having that road map will help you select a hosting site that gives you what you need to get started, and allows you to expand the site with more offerings later. Identify member(s) who are savvy on Instagram & Twitter and willing to volunteer to incorporate those platforms in your marketing efforts. Check existing Society websites for ideas.
- **Develop relationships with clubs and bands** – Most blues societies promote the local music scene and area bands/musicians. Some societies also work with national touring acts to schedule and promote shows in the local market. It can be challenging at times to “keep everybody happy”. Promotion includes banner headlines on the Home Page of your website, through dedicated e-mail blasts to members about a specific show or event, on “Events” calendar on the website, or through a weekly e-mail to members listing all of the upcoming week's live blues music in the area.
- **Your society logo** – If you have any members with design experience, see if they would volunteer to develop a logo for the Society. Or check with local colleges or high school arts departments. Your Board should determine the key elements that you want in the logo. For ideas, check the websites of other Affiliate organizations.
- **Newsletter** – Board should determine if you will have a newsletter for members. Will it be a print newsletter, e-mail only, or combination of the two depending on the preferences of members. Moving forward with an e-mail only newsletter eliminates expense for printing and postage for mailing newsletter to members. Decision to start a newsletter also means finding volunteers to write articles, reviews, and do the layout of the publication, whether it is print or in e-mail version.
- **Merchandise** – Once you have a logo, you can explore the many options for merchandise including t-shirts, fans, shot glasses, coffee mugs, hats, etc. Get quotes on costs from local shops that do t-shirt printing. Find sources for other items. Since merchandise has up-front cost, Society needs to be in strong financial standing before ordering Merchandise, as it may take some time to recoup the initial investment.
- **Develop relationships with Arts & Entertainment** staffs at area newspapers – Local press can be very effective in helping to spread the word about your society and events.
- **International Blues Challenge** – hold a local competition to select a band and /or a Solo/Duo act to sponsor for the annual IBC in Memphis. This is a great way to promote local musicians and bands as well as your society. (See the IBC section of the Blues Foundation to learn more about the rules and guidelines for this event.)
- **Festival – Pros & Cons** – While festivals are a great way to promote your society and blues music, even a small festival is a major undertaking for any society, requiring many volunteer hours to plan, schedule, coordinate, and staff the event. New societies may find it prudent to grow the membership and solidify the society before considering the idea of staging a festival.