locality
the power of community

Marketing your community space hire

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Introduction – Why marketing space hire matters

Space hire is one of the most valuable ways for community organisations to generate unrestricted income. It typically accounts for around 15% of turnover where it is managed well. Income from space hire can subsidise core community activities, help maintain facilities, and reduce reliance on grant funding.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, demand has changed. Organisations have seen more last-minute bookings, flexible working arrangements driving meeting space needs, and people seeking affordable venues for celebrations or community activities. This creates both challenges and opportunities.

Effective marketing ensures that potential customers know about your offer, understand the benefits of your space, and feel motivated to book. Marketing is not only about promotion – it is about telling the story of how your community space makes a difference, while reaching the right audiences with the right message.

Setting goals and strategy

Marketing should always start with clear goals. What do you want to achieve through space hire marketing? Do you want to increase weekday bookings, attract new audiences, or encourage repeat customers? Setting the direction makes it easier to focus your time and resources.

Example business goal: Generate unrestricted income from space hire to support community programmes.

Example marketing goal: Increase weekday bookings by 20% by promoting the space to local small businesses.

SMART goals framework

Smart Element	Example for Space Hire
Specific	Increase bookings from local businesses
Measurable	Achieve 20% increase in weekday hires
Achievable	Within current staffing and budget capacity
Relevant	Supports long-term sustainability of the space
Timebound	Within the next 12 months

The seven principles of local marketing

These provide a simple way to think about strategy:

1. Goals – what do you want to achieve?
2. Audience – who are they, and what do they want?
3. Competitors/partners – who else offers similar spaces?
4. Offer – what makes your space unique and compelling?
5. Messages – what should you say to engage people?
6. Activities – what tactics and channels will you use?
7. Evaluation – how will you know if it worked?

Understanding your audience and offer

Identifying your audience is essential. Community spaces often have several potential customer groups:

- Local community groups – such as youth clubs, senior activities, or cultural groups
- Local services – health clinics, adult learning, or fitness classes
- Private bookings – birthday parties, weddings, family celebrations
- Commercial users – local businesses looking for affordable meeting or training space

Each of these audiences has different needs and motivations. For example, a parent looking for a safe, affordable venue for a children's party will care about facilities and price, while a business will want reliability, wi-fi, and professional presentation. Understanding these needs allows you to tailor your marketing messages effectively.

Benchmarking data shows typical hire prices range from £5/hour to £25/hour, with specialist spaces reaching up to £1200/day. While price matters, the real value lies in highlighting what makes your space distinctive. Consider:

- Unique Selling Points (USPs): parking, catering kitchen, stage, central location
- Packages: meeting + refreshments deals, weekend celebration bundles
- Flexibility: discounts for repeat bookings, block hires, or filling quiet times.

For more information about the practicalities of developing your community space hire offer, check out letting and marketing your building in Managing your Community Building.

Promotion and messaging

Once you know your audiences and your offer, the next step is communicating it. Good marketing uses a mix of digital channels, community networks, and word-of-mouth to reach people. Consistency is key – repeating a few clear messages is more effective than trying to say everything at once.

Examples of messages

- Social media (short): "Affordable, welcoming community space available for parties and meetings."
- Newsletter (paragraph): "Our centre offers flexible rooms for up to 100 people, with kitchen and parking. Every booking supports local community programmes."
- Website (longer): Describe facilities, share testimonials, and explain how hiring supports the community.

Using social media to market your space hire

Social media can be a powerful tool for promoting room hire — but it works best when used strategically and realistically, given the capacity of most community organisations.

Opportunities

- Cost-effective reach: Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Nextdoor allow you to reach large local audiences without high advertising costs.
- Showcasing your spaces: High-quality photos and short videos bring the space to life better than text.
- Community storytelling: Sharing testimonials, hirer spotlights, or 'behind the scenes' posts builds trust.
- Targeted ads: Paid campaigns can reach parents or local businesses within a 5-mile radius.
- Repeat engagement: Regular updates keep your space in people's minds.

Challenges

- Time commitment: To be effective, social media requires consistent posting and monitoring.
- Algorithm limits: Organic reach is declining (social media algorithms are making it harder to reach your followers without paying); boosting posts may be necessary (you may need to pay for your posts to get your message seen).
- Content demands: Audiences expect engaging, visual content.
- Conversion gap: Likes and comments don't always equal bookings — clear calls-to-action are vital.

Where social media works best

- Promoting events and celebrations
- Sharing community impact stories
- Advertising time-limited offers
- Building a local network by tagging partners (tagging on social media means linking to another user's profile in a post, photo, or comment by typing the "@" symbol followed by their username)

Where it may be limited

- Corporate or formal hires often look elsewhere (Google, LinkedIn, venue directories)
- Complex bookings need more detail than posts can provide
- Should complement, not replace, your website and direct marketing.

Key takeaway: social media is most effective as a shop window and storytelling tool. It should be used alongside a professional website and other marketing methods to turn interest into bookings.

- Keep your website updated and mobile-friendly
- Ensure clear signage and a welcoming first impression
- Use regular emails or newsletters to stay in touch with past users
- Share photos and stories on social media
- Promote via local press, noticeboards, and community events.

Think about the customer journey as a funnel: Awareness → Interest → Enquiry → Booking → Repeat hire. Your marketing should aim to move people along this pathway.

Measuring success and continuous improvement

Marketing only works if you know what is successful. Monitoring and evaluation should be built into your space hire plan. Tracking data helps you adjust your approach and use your time wisely.

Useful Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) include:

- Percentage of bookings from repeat customers
- Lead time from enquiry to confirmed booking
- Ratio of community vs commercial bookings
- Average hire rate achieved
- Customer satisfaction feedback.
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Metric	Target	Current	Notes
% repeat bookings	40%	28%	Increase loyalty
Average hire rate	£20/hr	£17/hr	Adjust pricing
Enquiry-to-booking conversion	60%	45%	Improve follow-up

Continuous marketing is essential – not just during a funding crisis. Build it into your annual plan and budget, and keep testing, measuring, and refining your approach. Successful space hire marketing combines clarity of offer, strong community connections, and consistent communication.

Audit and update your space hire marketing: step-by-step

Use this as a 90-day sprint plan. Work through each step, tick it off, and record actions/owners/dates.

Set outcomes (SMART)
- Revenue target (£) and utilisation target (% of available hours)
- Community vs commercial split (e.g., 60/40)
- Priority audiences (e.g., local SMEs, families, instructors)

Inventory your offer & USPs
- Room-by-room spec (capacity, layouts, wi-fi, AV, kitchen, parking, accessibility features)
- Quality check first impressions (entrance, signage, cleanliness)
- Photograph & 30-sec video walkthrough for each space
- Draft a clear USP list (what you do better/differently)

Run a quick SWOT
- Strengths (e.g., free parking) | Weaknesses (e.g., tired photos)
- Opportunities (new instructors, hybrid working) | Threats (new competitor)

Analyse last 12 months of demand
- Utilisation by day/part (weekday daytime, evenings, weekends)
- Average lead time (enquiry → booking) and conversion rate (%)
- Source mix (website, word-of-mouth, social, directories)
- Repeat vs new bookings; average achieved rate vs list price

Gather customer insight
- Short survey to last 3–6 months' hirers
- "Lost enquiry" check: why didn't they book?
- Collect 3–5 testimonials with permission to publish

Competitor & partner scan
- List 5–10 nearby alternatives (capacity, price, packages, policies)
- Map where you win/lose; identify 2–3 partner channels to follow and analyse

Refresh pricing and packaging
- Simple price architecture – prices per hour / half-day / full-day for different types of users (e.g. hire by community groups, commercial organisations, statutory organisations, individuals for parties etc.) + add-ons
- Peak/off-peak & shoulder-time (neither peak nor off-peak) incentives
- Packages for key segments (Children's Party, Training Day, Micro-Wedding)
- Loyalty/ block-booking offers

Tighten your messages
- 3 core messages (Benefit + Proof + Impact on community)
- Objection handlers (messages or pre-planned responses designed to address potential customer concerns or hesitations regarding i.e. parking, accessibility, cost…)
- Tone of voice guide (friendly, clear, inclusive)

Upgrade your assets
- New photos, floor plans, accessibility statement
- Downloadable PDF spec sheet per room
- Short enquiry scripts & follow-up templates

Fix the website journey
- Mobile-friendly; clear 'Hire our spaces' menu link
- One page per space - specs, photos, enquiry call to action (CTA)
- Fast enquiry form + auto-reply
- Add testimonials, FAQs, clear T&Cs
- Basic Search Engine Optimisation to maximise visits to your website: titles, descriptions, alt text (descriptive text that serves as a digital alternative for images, videos, and other visuals), consistent details

Strengthen local presence
- Google Business Profile complete with photos and link
- Consistency across directories and noticeboards
- Social media: pin a hire post (use a post about room hire to pin at the top of your profile so it stays visible to new visitors in the future); monthly user stories

Speed up enquiry–to–booking
- Reply within 1 business day (ideally same day)
- Easy availability check and quotes
- E-signature agreements; easy payments

- Follow-up rhythm: +48h, +7d

Build a nurture & reviews loop
- Keep a CRM/spreadsheet of enquiries
- Post-event thank you + review + rebook offer
- Quarterly email to lapsed hirers with offers

Calendar strategy
- Fill quiet slots with targeted campaigns
- Themed promotions tied to the year
- Quarterly open day / taster sessions

Accessibility, inclusion & trust
- Accessibility info online; inclusive imagery
- GDPR-compliant forms & consents
- Publish community impact line

Track KPIs & iterate monthly
- Create a one-page dashboard and review monthly
- Lock in a 90-day action plan
- Prioritise by Impact vs Effort, assign owners, add dates

KPI	Target	Current	Action
Enquiries / month	40		
Enquiry→Booking conversion	60%		
Avg. achieved rate	£/hr		
Utilisation (peak/off-peak)	%		
Repeat bookings	40%		
Lead time (days)	↓		

Further resources

There are resources and webinars on the Assets Hub on My Community covering all aspects of acquiring, developing, refurbishing and managing community buildings.

These include resources:

- Capital Funding Directory
- Writing a business plan for a capital project
- Assessing the feasibility of a community asset project
- Revenue funding sources to support project development costs

Transforming Community Spaces webinars:

- Securing funding for your capital project
- Renovating and adapting your space to meet community needs
- Taking your project from testing viability to a detailed business plan
- Why community engagement is key to your success
- Managing a community building
- Succession planning: community shares & community assets
- How community assets can benefit from climate action and energy efficiency
- Renting your space for the benefit of your community

Locality believes in the power of community to transform lives. As the leading national experts on community assets, we help communities take ownership of land and buildings, manage finances and governance, and connect with others running similar spaces – find out more.

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Locality is the national membership network for community organisations that bring local people together to meet local needs. Locality supports local community organisations to be strong and successful, helping them to build a fairer society. Locality provides specialist advice, peer-learning, resources, and campaigns to create better operating conditions for our members.

Unlock the power in your community with us

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