

## How to guide: Promoting u3a membership online

### Introduction

The purpose of the guide is to suggest how you can make your vital interest group offer irresistible to current and potential new members.

- Promote membership of your u3a
- Advertise your u3a
- Raise the profile of u3a generally

This guide explains how to use different online platforms to promote your u3a and to recruit more members [?]. There is a separate guide in the ***Retention and recruitment Toolkit*** about using Facebook adverts.

Your experiences of using this guide are of vital importance. Please send your suggestions for improvement to [feedback@u3a.org.uk](mailto:feedback@u3a.org.uk).

### **Where might we promote the u3a online?**

Some of the most popular online sites where you could advertise your u3a are:

- Ebay
- Gumtree
- NextDoor
- Local Facebook selling groups
- Facebook Marketplace

This guide focusses on Ebay, but the general principles apply to other platforms. **Please note there is likely to be a cost for advertising your u3a.**

### **Why should we promote u3a online?**

By recruiting new members online, you make your task easier and cheaper. Sites vary, but their general benefits are that:

- You will be advertising to people who are already online. They may be younger than many existing members, since younger people tend to be more familiar with the internet.
- You can pitch your advert to younger family members as well (e.g. *Buy Mum a Mother's Day present which will change her life*)
- You can reach large numbers of people for relatively low cost
- You can publicise u3a even to people who don't actually take up membership
- You can place multiple adverts at the same time to appeal to different people around different events e.g. retirement, Christmas, Mother's and Father's days, birthdays, etc.

## **How does it work?**

The process is broadly the same for the different sites. You need to:

- decide what you are offering. Is it primarily membership of your u3a (and everything your u3a is doing) or is it an offer to join a specific interest group with, in addition, all the benefits of membership of your u3a?
- make sure your offer is attractive, and promote its benefits.
- set up processes to receive donations (ie payments), and to inform, welcome, enrol and induct new members.
- open an account with the site.
- arrange to receive donations (e.g. PayPal for Ebay selling). Strictly speaking these payments are donations.
- identify which sites are best to reach your target audience(s).
- use the sites to pitch your offer to your target audience(s). Use lots of photos and if possible (depending on the site) very short video clips as well as text.

You are likely to pay a fee to the internet platform for any memberships which are bought, and that will be deducted from the money you receive from the sales. On Ebay, for example, you pay an insertion fee, plus a selling fee. The insertion fee is to list an item – normally a flat 35p per listing.

Ebay often has offers where 50 - 100 listings from the same seller are free. There is also a sales or final value fee. If you promote membership on Ebay, you pay a flat 10% of the cost of that membership.

***An example of using this approach on Ebay is at the end of this guide.***

## **What are the problems?**

You need to ensure that your offer reaches your intended audiences, and provide a geographical focus for your offer. How you solve this depends on which site you use.

### **1. Reaching your intended audiences:**

People searching Ebay won't be searching for u3a. So, you need to do two things.

- use the tags or descriptors which best describe your offer. In the worked example, the tags used are: membership, experiences, new friends, activities, learning, healthier lifestyle.
- word your description carefully. Promote benefits. Remember you may be promoting benefits of membership of an organisation that is unknown to the reader. And don't promise what you can't deliver. If you don't want people from 150 miles away, say so, or at least say that you do want people from within a radius of x miles from your u3a.

## **2. Providing a geographical focus**

Some sites are local by definition, e.g. Facebook selling groups, or NextDoor.

Other sites including Ebay, are national if not international in scope.

Gumtree lists offers by county.

Do you want a new member who lives a long way away? Will you disappoint someone who joins and only discovers that you are 150 miles away after they have paid for membership?

There are some ways round this:

You might want to recruit distant members, if you feel that your *online* offer is sufficiently robust. Should you price your membership differently for online members?

If you want your offer to appeal locally, you can use the site's settings to restrict your offer. On Ebay, for example, you could use the settings so that your offer is only available for collection.

You need to make sure that prospective members know what they are paying for in terms of what you have available now, such as public meetings and interest groups, and what you anticipate you will open up if and when social distancing is eased.

## **Next Steps**

Once you have created your first on line offer, why not post the same or similar offers on other advertising sites, following the principle of develop once, use many times.

The same principle would suggest that you pitch several offers with slightly different content on each selling platform.

On the next page is an example of an advert on Ebay.



Free postage

Mouse over image to zoom



Have one to sell? [Sell it yourself](#)

Description

Postage and payments

### membership, experiences, new friends, activities, learning, healthier lifestyle

Condition: --  
Time left: 6d 15h (17 Sep, 2020 06:40:40 BST)

**£10.00** 0 bids

Enter your max. bid

Submit bid

Make offer

Watch this item

100% positive Feedback
Free postage

Postage: **Free Standard Delivery** | [See details](#)  
 Item location: Nottingham, Carlton and Gedling, United Kingdom  
 Posts to: United Kingdom | [See exclusions](#)

Delivery: Estimated between **Wed. 23 Sep. and Thu. 24 Sep.**

Payments: 

Returns: No returns accepted | [See details](#)

[Report item](#)

Shop with confidence

 **eBay Money Back Guarantee**  
 Get the item you ordered or your money back. [Learn more](#)

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**Seller information**  
**turner20002** (102 ★ )  
 100% Positive Feedback

[Contact seller](#)  
[See other items](#)

Looking for a Great Deal?

We've got everything you need.

Shop Now →

eBay item number: 333716606680

Seller assumes all responsibility for this listing.

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**No longer in fulltime work or raising a family? Join your local U3A to meet new people and enjoy exploring a wide variety of interests, at low cost.**

£10 will buy you membership of Carlton and Gedling U3A in Nottinghamshire for a year. We have over 20 interest groups which are meeting outdoors or on line during this period of social distancing. Groups include Walking (x2), Film, Winetasting, Discussion, Grouchy Girls, Film, Classical Music, Cycling, Grouchy Girls, Bonsai, Opera, Classical Music, Knit and Stitch, History, Radical History, Reading, Poetry appreciation, Photography, Bird Watching, French, Memory course. More groups are starting all the time.

Carlton and Gedling U3A is part of a UK-wide collection of locally-run interest groups that provide a wide range of opportunities to come together to learn for fun. People enjoy exploring new ideas, skills and activities together. There are 1,039 U3As with over 430,000 members. U3As are open to everyone who's no longer in full-time work.