

A Guide to Advertising Local Alpha Courses

The 2007-8 Alpha Invitation promotional materials have been designed to promote Alpha courses and events, with space to add local course details and they link directly to advertising nationwide. Ideally use these materials to advertise your course and try to ensure that advertising begins in September to coincide with the national advertising campaign.

The Alpha Publications Brochure lists the full range of promotional materials - available from the **Alpha Publications Hotline 0845 758 1278**. Electronic resources can be downloaded free from the resources page of uk.alpha.org/runningcourse

What should your advertising include?

Adverts which look professional, are clear and without too much clutter are the most eye catching.

They should contain the following:

- I. **The 2007-8 Alpha Invitation image and Alpha branding** so that people recognise that your Alpha course is part of the national initiative. As well as the Invitation creative image, this also includes the wording 'The Alpha Course' in black trajan font accompanied by the website **alpha.org** and the Alpha logo – it works well to have these elements in a white band across the bottom.
- II. **Key Alpha course information** – the date, time and place of your course.
- III. **Contact details** - where they can register or get more information: name, email, telephone number, website (your course website or **alpha.org**).

Advertising ideas

Be creative – you know your community and the best way of inviting them to an Alpha course. There are lots of free and low cost ways to advertise.

Here are some ideas to get started:

- **Posters** – look for highly visible places in the local area to display posters.
 - ❑ Shops, doctors' surgeries, libraries, community centres, leisure centres, health clubs, pubs, cafés and schools are often happy to display them, especially if you are planning an event for the entire community like an Alpha launch event.
 - ❑ Church members can put up posters in their homes or businesses, and nearby churches which are unable to hold a course might be willing to display posters.
 - ❑ It can be eye catching to fill a notice board or space with several posters, or to combine posters of different sizes.

- **Invitations and leaflets** – overprint Alpha invitations and postcards with details of your course.
 - ❑ Deliver them house to house, give them out in the street, at events and guest services.
 - ❑ Get your whole congregation involved; we have heard of taxi drivers offering invitations to passengers and Alpha teams giving muffins out to commuters with an invitation.
 - ❑ Work with other churches to ensure that the whole village, town or city is invited.
 - ❑ Bear in mind that people might not come after one leaflet, but they may respond after they have received the second or third leaflet. One church leader reported that a member of his church ignored six leaflets and then on the seventh decided he would give Alpha a try!
 - ❑ Wallet cards are business card size invitations - they are blank on the reverse so a label can be added with local Alpha course details. They are ideal for everyone in the congregation to carry round in a wallet and give out anytime!

- **Other Alpha Promotional Materials**
 - ❑ There are a number of electronic promotional tools, including an email invitation, desktop wallpaper, screensaver and Alpha web banners, suitable for the congregation to use on their computers, websites and blogs (see the resources page of uk.alpha.org/runningacourse or on the Advertising & PR Tools CD Rom).
 - ❑ Invest in an Alpha banner to display in a prominent place on your church premises.
 - ❑ NEW Alpha drinks mats can be used in cafés, bars, youth groups or at launch events. They are designed to tell people about the Alpha course and to stimulate conversation.
 - ❑ Car and window stickers have proved hugely popular and are a good way to involve the whole congregation.

- **Local Publications** (also see 'Using PR To Promote Local Alpha Courses')
 - ❑ Most local newspapers and magazines have a 'what's on' section where you can submit details of your Alpha course for free.
 - ❑ You may also find that radio stations make announcements of local events free of charge and you can get your Alpha course included.
 - ❑ Church newsletters and magazines often have a wide readership and are a great way to raise the profile of your course and invite people.

- **Announcements, word of mouth and local networks.** Ask local churches if you can give a short presentation about Alpha to encourage their congregations to get involved and to invite friends. Show the 4-minute Alpha Invitation DVD and 60-second Factory Viral. Share your advertising and PR plans at a local Equip & Refresh day. Likewise, ask if you can promote Alpha through diocesan training days or seminars at local church conferences.

Paid Advertisements:

VAT - Please note that relief from VAT is granted to charities for advertising which makes known the aims and objectives of the charity, including courses that it provides. This will mean that the supplier does not have to charge you any VAT. A form for eligibility can be downloaded from uk.alpha.org/runningacourse or on the Advertising & PR Tools CD-Rom.

Newspaper and Magazine Advertising.

- ❑ Select the key local newspapers and magazines in your area. Ideally choose publications with the largest circulation.
- ❑ Often one company will publish several newspapers (daily/weekly or free/paid-for press). They may offer you a discounted rate to advertise in more than one of their publications.
- ❑ Contact the advertising department six weeks before you want an ad to appear. If you miss this deadline, still contact them as they may have advertising space available. Request a right-hand page position, near the front and try to advertise on a page which contains mainly editorial rather than other advertisements, as it will have more impact.
- ❑ Press advertising templates are available to download from the resources page of uk.alpha.org/runningacourse or on the Advertising and PR Tools CD ROM. These are in colour, black and white, portrait and landscape. Each has a blank space that can be used to insert local Alpha course(s) details. If you give the newspaper the text, along with the CD ROM, they can place the advert in the newspaper and insert your text in the blank space.
- ❑ We recommend that the following is included in any advert:
 - The key message 'explore the meaning of life' with an explanation of what the Alpha course involves
 - Details of all Alpha launch events happening in the area
 - Details of all Alpha courses running in the area
 - The current Invitation advertising image and the Alpha branding (this includes the wording 'The Alpha Course' in black trajan font accompanied by the website **alpha.org** and the Alpha logo – it works well to have these elements in a white band across the bottom).
 - Contact details for potential guests – email, telephone number, website (your course website or **alpha.org**).
- ❑ If you are planning to take out an advert, do talk to the advertising team to see if the editorial team can be persuaded to write editorial coverage for your Alpha event or course. See the guidelines 'Using PR To Promote Local Alpha Courses' and try to ensure that this is on a different page to your advert.

Billboards and other Advertising.

Please do talk to Alpha UK if you are interested in using other forms of advertising as we would be happy to supply you with the creative artwork in higher resolution formats and may be able to put you in contact with advertising companies who can help.