

# Future-Proof Your Parks and Rec Promotional Strategy





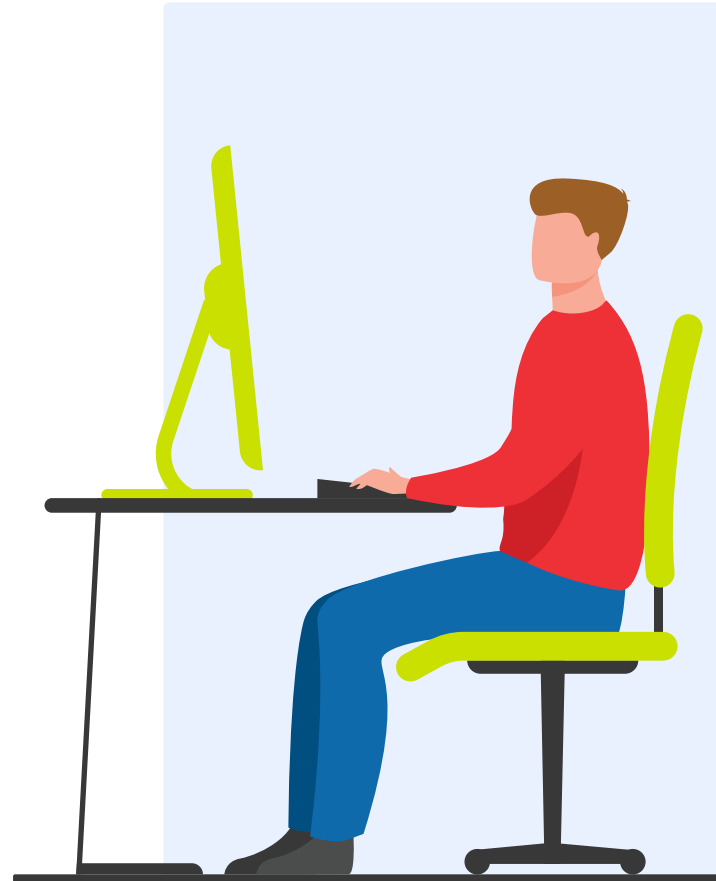
In an era where local governments and their parks and rec departments are resource-, staff-, and budget-strapped, you cannot afford to implement any programs that you cannot easily replicate.

That philosophy is true when it comes to your parks and recreation activity and league offerings, but it also applies to your marketing and promotions. Having the benefit of seasonal cyclicalty, parks and rec departments can maximize their advertising and promotion efforts by building sustainable and repeatable marketing initiatives that can easily be implemented at the same time every year to educate both long-standing and new residents about everything your community has to offer. By following this approach, you can effectively future-proof your parks and rec marketing strategy — which means stress-proofing your team too.



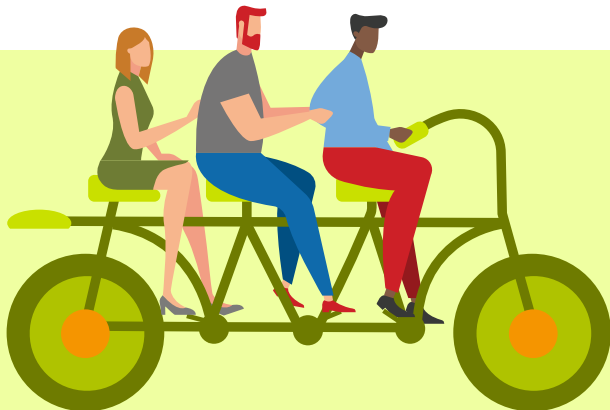
## What is Future-Proofing?

Future-proofing is a business strategy that may apply to a variety of administrative operations, not just marketing and promotions. Future-proofing refers to the practice of ensuring that no matter what changes occur in your industry, marketplace, or organization, you have established processes and systems to minimize the need for redundant work or complete procedural overhauls.



## How Can Parks and Rec Departments Future-Proof Their Promotional Efforts?

Future-proofing your marketing is as simple as planning in advance with a flexible, repeatable execution strategy that will allow you to continually connect with your citizens while leveraging the right message, via the right channels, at the right time. If that does not sound like a simple approach, consider these tactical best practices to future-proofing your parks and rec promotions.



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## Ask Citizens for Feedback

A future-proofed marketing strategy requires citizen dialogue — not a monologue. Ask questions that offer more value-based insight beyond questions such as “how did you hear about this class?” Dig in to understand why citizens sign themselves and their families up for activities, what facilities they enjoy most and why, and what community resources are most valuable. These preferences are not likely to change year-to-year, so understanding what lies at the core of citizens’ needs will help you build a sustainable messaging strategy.

## Choose Flexible, Scalable Technology Solutions

There was a time when local governments, and particularly parks and rec departments, were building proprietary online tools to manage their facilities and activity registrations. The problem with this approach, however, was that such systems were often unsustainable, as they required the expertise of one individual IT staff member to make continual updates, and when that individual left the department (or the administration), the system could no longer be updated to grow as the needs of the parks and rec department grew.

Today, parks and rec teams are enjoying greater sustainability by partnering with third-party software providers with solution offerings that are flexible and continually maintained with code-base updates and feature enhancements. Such tools allow local governments to integrate digital course materials, promote upcoming activities via social media, and contact past registrants via email about future opportunities, all without needing to continually evolve, update, or replace the technology fueling the promotions.



# Promote the Value of Parks and Rec Engagement — Not Just Individual Offerings

Citizens may first engage with your parks and rec department upon learning about a specific activity, class, or sports league of interest. The secret to them continuing to take part in events and activities season after season and year after year lies not just in one class or event. It lies in their awareness of your parks and rec department as a holistic provider of local wellness and community-based services. Make sure your marketing includes overall brand messaging that reinforces the value of parks and rec participation. By offering citizens an experience, rather than a catalog of “products,” they will not need to know about specific classes or be targeted by specific advertising channels to seek out opportunities to get involved and take part.

## Find a Diversified Communication Strategy That Works. Rinse and Repeat.

Experiment with trackable, testable marketing channels to see which ones directly result in the greatest number of program registrations. Once you find the sweet spot of affordable, diversified communications, rely on that strategy year-over-year. Test new mediums when and where it makes sense (and budget dollars allow), but if you do not need to start from the beginning with the building of a marketing plan at the start of every year, you will expedite your go-to-market strategy, engage with citizens where they expect to find you, and take advantage of future-proofed workflows.





## Build and Maintain a Consistent Team

A critical component of a future-proofed marketing strategy relies on an internal team that does not suffer from perpetual attrition and need constant retraining. Create a culture where individuals are valued, the team collaborates, and employees are rewarded for their contributions and individual achievements. In such an atmosphere, employees will be more likely to remain with your department, which means season after season and year after year, your team members will know their roles in executing sustainable, repeatable marketing and promotion activities.





## Conclusion

The benefit of future-proofing your parks and rec promotional activities is about more than ensuring a sustainable critical component of your operations. It is about freeing up time to focus on other fundamental components of your operations, such as grant development, accessibility compliance, program enhancements, and facility management. Future-proofed marketing is sustainable marketing that leads to recurring revenue and allows you to continue offering citizens the high-quality parks and rec experiences they appreciate and expect.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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CivicPlus Associate General Manager Brian Stapleton, works with our Recreation Management solution. He is primarily responsible for ensuring our parks and recreation software continues to adapt to the needs of our customers. Brian stays immersed in the trends and technologies impacting parks and recreation departments so that he can serve as a critical link between the Recreation Management product development and service delivery teams to ensure our product continues to evolve as the needs of local government evolve. Brian earned a Master of Business Administration degree in Management from Western International University.