Spreading the Word: Maximizing Impact Through Strategic Communications

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Strategic Communications 101

• Connect with target audiences to deliver messages in a way that they can be received, understood, and acted upon

• Allows organizations to:
  - Raise awareness, educate, or inform
  - Build understanding
  - Change/initiate behavior
  - Prevent misunderstandings
  - Present a point of view
Elements of Strat Comms

- Goals and Objectives
- Audiences
- Channels and Tactics
- Key Messages
- Evaluation
Goals and Objectives

- Goals are broad and mission oriented
- Objectives are concrete steps to achieve goal
  - Should be SMART:
    - Specific
    - Measurable
    - Achievable
    - Relevant
    - Time-based
Audience

- Can be business community, lawmakers, average citizens, job seekers, funders, press...the list goes on!
- Multiple audiences for each communications objective
- How does your audience communicate and/or receive info?
  - Meet them there!
- What do they want to know?
  - Share what’s relevant!
Message Development Basics

- Know your audience
- Organize and structure message
- In most cases: KISS
  - Print story average quote = 27 words
  - Broadcast story average quote = 9 seconds (x 3 words/second = 27 words)
- Buy-in and consistency
- Anticipate scenarios and questions (good and bad, easy and hard)
Channels and Tactics

- Website
- Fact Sheets
- Newsletter
- Social Media
- Press
- Events
- ETC., ETC., ETC.
Make Tactics Fit, Don’t Fit Tactics

• Tactics should fit audience

• Tactics come last
  – Too often organizations decide on tactics and try to fit their goal to that tactic
  – By doing the strategic planning first you can determine tactics that maximize desired outcomes

• Resource and staff driven
  – Don’t commit to a tactic you can not properly execute
Execution (Digging into tactics)

- EARNED:
  - media relations
  - blogger relations
  - Influencer relations

- PAID:
  - advertising
  - banner ads
  - Google AdWords

- OWNED:
  - website
  - blog content

- SHARED:
  - social media
  - word of mouth
  - referrals
Earned Media

- Keep small, targeted, and updated list of media contacts
  - Know their beat and what types of stories each contact covers

- Pitch newsy stories
  - Anything that is timely, new or unusual, community-oriented, significant, unusual, human interest, etc.

- Continued Engaged
  - Can be informal
  - Be helpful (answer questions, refer to other groups/people)
Writing a Press Release

- Reads like an article with goal to be picked up by journalists
- Strong headline, subhead
- Get right to the point; the Five Ws
- Attributable quotes
- Hard numbers
- Grammatically flawless
- Contact information
- Limit to 1-2 pages
- Include organization’s boilerplate statement
- Put on your website!
Writing a Media Advisory

- Alerts media to upcoming events with the goal to have them attend and cover the activity
- Event may or may not be open to the public
- Strong headline, subhead
- Address 5 Ws, but in a different format
- Answering the “why” articulates newsworthiness
- Helpful to describe what reporters will see at the event, especially for visual-dependent TV media

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<th>Media Advisory</th>
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Interview Tips: Control the Message

- Repeat the question back without emotional or polarizing language
- Prepare short, memorable soundbites
- Do not use industry jargon
- Do use relevant facts, figures and names
- Be sincere and conversational
- Make eye contact, be mindful of body language
- “Bridge” from the reporter’s question back to your key message(s)

Examples of Bridge Statements

- We find the more important issue is...
- I think it would be more accurate to say...
- I have heard that too, but the real focus should be...
- What I’ve said comes down to this...
- Let me emphasize again...
- What matters most in this situation...
- While ____ is important, it’s also important to remember that...
- It all boils down to this...
- I would describe it differently...
- Before we leave the subject, I need to add...
Social Media

- Develop a strategy
- Know your audience (Yup, again!)
- Post consistently
- Engage – with your content and through conversations
- Promote others
- Measure and adjust
- Do only what you can do well!
  - Driven by staffing and resources
Social Channels

- **Facebook**
  - Still King of Social Media
  - 1.4 Billion Daily Active Users and 2.13 Billion Monthly Active Users (December 2017)
  - New 2018 Pew study: 68% of U.S. adults are Facebook users
  - 58% of rural adults

- **Twitter**
  - 328 million active monthly users; 24% of Americans use Twitter
  - 74% of Twitter users use the service to get news
  - Users tend to be young, educated, and above average income
    - 36% of American 18-29 use Twitter
    - 80 percent of Twitter users are “affluent millennials”
Social Channels

• LinkedIn
  - 500 million users; 25% of Americans
  - 40% are daily users
  - College graduates and high-income households
    - 50% of Americans with a college degree use LinkedIn, compared with just 9% of those with a high school diploma or less

• Instagram
  - According to Pew, only platform with significant growth of users since 2016 (only started measuring Snapchat this year)
    - 35% of U.S. adults use this platform, an increase of 7% since 2016
  - 60% of users visit daily
What to Post

• Valuable to your audience
  – Informational, educational, entertainment, appeal to emotions
• Variety
  – Videos, links, images, gifs/emojis
• Native content
• Clear and to the point
• Add your take
• Can be evergreen
Engagement!

• Content that generates reactions, likes, comments, shares, clicks, etc. is the goal

• Partnerships

Q1: Why is economic diversification important to Appalachia and how do we build it in the Region?
#ARC2017

JOIN THE CONVERSATION
Tell us what #TransformingAppalachia means to you on 

Upload a video or share a post
Between 1990 and 2013, the number of office-based primary care physicians in Appalachia increased by 31 percent.

But in 2013, Appalachia’s supply of primary care physicians was 13 percent lower than the nation’s.

Figures based on number of physicians per 100,000 population.

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

Since 2001
a partnership between ARC and East Tennessee State University has cultivated student leadership.

nearby 2,000 students
conduct original community-based research supporting economic development.

from 20 schools across Appalachia
organize student research teams for a capstone conference in Washington, D.C.

Have participated in the Appalachian Teaching Project
Hashtags

• Most appropriate on Twitter and Instagram
• Helps people find your content
• Compiles content around event, conversation, or interest
• Use responsibly

• Instagram:
  - Should be relevant and specific
  - Posts containing 4 or 5 hashtags received an average of 22 interactions compared to 14 interactions on posts with zero hashtags

• Twitter:
  - Can see a 100% increase in engagement by using hashtags
  - HOWEVER, using more than two hashtags can make engagement drop by an average of 17%
Resources

• Graphic Design
  - Canva (mobile and PC versions)
  - Adobe Spark
  - Typorama (mobile app for iPhone only)
  - Phonto (mobile app for iPhone and Android)

• Video Editing
  - Android: Cyberlink Power/Director
  - iOS: iMovie

• Image Resizing
  - https://sproutsocial.com/landscape

• Royalty-Free Stock Photos
  - Pixabay, Unsplash, Stocksnap, Photopin
  - https://blog.snappa.com/free-stock-photos/ (21 free sites)

• Royalty-Free Music
  - https://blog.hootsuite.com/creative-commons-music-resources/
When and How Often to Post

- Learn when your audience is online
  - Facebook Insights/ Tweriod.com
When and How Often to Post

• Posting frequency is topic, audience, and channel specific
  – Quality over quantity
  – Rule of thumb:
    – Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram: No more than 1/day
    – Instagram stories: Total story less than 1 minute
    – Twitter:

• Build a calendar
  – Aim to plan content each week
  – Try to check platform daily to engage
    – Like or share posts you are tagged in and/or those of partners/influencers
    – Respond to comments
Measure and Adjust

• DATA! Native Analytics and Listening Tools
  - Followers
  - Reach
  - Impressions
  - Engagement
    - Likes
    - Comments
    - Retweets/Shares
    - Clicks
Recap

• Integrate communications into all organizational goals

• Be strategic

• Only do what you can do well

• Be consistent

• Be flexible and willing to change course (based on analytics/evaluation)
Appalachian Regional Commission