



MEDIA DEVELOPMENT AND TOOLS

Media Development (The 5 M's)

Considerations

Before you begin crafting your campaign, think about some questions:

- Who is the target audience?
- What message will move the audience to future action?
- Who can help deliver your message?
- What type of media will help deliver your message?
- What informational materials will help you deliver your message?

Market

The first step in developing an effective media campaign is to determine your target “market” or audience. Knowing who you are trying to address is integral to focusing your message, and your market should be specific enough to allow for a tailored message that is both informative and persuasive. You should figure out whose support you need to reach your goals, then prioritize your target audience by how difficult it will be to reach them, and finally understand how your goals will serve their interests. Your market might include elected officials, community leaders, or specific demographic groups. Don’t spend time on your opponents; your time is better served by engaging those who can actually be persuaded.

Message

Once you have identified your market, consider what they already know and think, then develop your message. Your message should be clear and concise. The goal of your message is to change behavior, so you should consider the current thoughts and actions of your market on the topic, and try to affect the future thoughts and actions so that they align with your goals.

Messenger

Whether it’s you or someone else from your community or organization, the messenger needs to have credibility in the minds of your target audience. This credibility can come from expertise, experience with an issue, familiarity with the audience, or good will (i.e. celebrities). The messengers can either be advocates or organizers: advocates being outsiders who support a cause but are not a beneficiary, organizers being insiders who will benefit.

Media

It is important to choose the proper media tool to get out your message. There is a wide variety of tools to choose from, allowing for a more tailored approach to conveying your message. Mediums include television news stories or interviews, news conferences, radio talk shows, and a slew of others. Consider your audience carefully when selecting which media tool you will employ. (**Media Tools**)

Materials

Sometimes it's helpful to create media materials that reinforce and further your message. These may include brochures that allow for colorful and brief content to quickly inform your audience. Newsletters might help you keep your audience up to date on the latest developments on your issue. Reports will offer a more detailed analysis of your message. Electronic sources like website, emails, and listservs can be used to quickly disseminate your message to a large audience. In general, materials should serve to reinforce your message, not to introduce it.

Media Tools

Press Advisory/Release

Press advisories or releases are brief (1-2 page) informational notices to the press of an event or announcement and offer free publicity if they are picked up by a reporter or news agency. They should seek to answer the 5 W's: who, what, when, where, and why. While advisories are intended to inform the press of an upcoming event, releases should be a bit more detailed and provide enough information for a reporter to write a story. Press releases can include position statements in response to news stories, supplemental information on an issue, or the announcement of new partners or organizations that have joined your effort. Send out press items by both email and fax to a wide variety of media as you never know who may find your story newsworthy. Relationships with particular reporters can provide an inside track to wider coverage.

There are a few guidelines for writing effective press advisories and releases:

- Place your name, organization, contact information, and releases date in the heading
- Try to keep it to one page double spaced
- Be concise, clear, and informative
- Create a powerful headline in bold print to draw in your audience
- Outline the story and give all the important information in the first few sentences
- Present a news angle
- Include a quote on your story, along with credentials that indicate the person's expertise
- Provide a brief background on your organization at the end of the page
- End with it with # # #

Press Conference

Press conferences allow you to speak directly with the media and shape your message and presentation. Press conferences should be publicized through press advisories that are brief and contain directions to the location. Call select media and gauge the interest in your event, then write invitations to reporters indicating why they should come. Remember to never hold press conferences on Mondays.

There are a few guidelines to holding an effective press conference:

- Hold it at a location convenient for reporters
- Make sure the location will draw attention to your issue and provide good photo opportunities
- Schedule during slow news periods to increase media attendance
- Make sure there aren't conflicting events that might compete for news coverage
- Hold it in the morning to avoid conflicting with reporters deadlines
- Create media kits with informational materials
- Provide a contact point of further inquiries

Letter to the Editor

Newspapers all have a page dedicated as a forum for reader's comments and thoughts. These letters are typically brief and concise, so follow this model. Letters to the editor can provide reaction to a news article, editorial, policy announcement, or legislation. They can serve to clarify specific points, correct information in a previous article, present position statements, or inform readers about your organizations efforts and call them to action. Submit your signed letter to any newspaper that your audience might read, but be wary of sending the same letter to competing newspapers in a specific area. Many newspapers even allow submissions online.

Opinion Editorial (Op-eds)

Op-eds are independent explanations of your personal opinion on an issue, where regular editorials reflect the opinion of the newspaper's editor. A good op-ed will focus on a single issue and present your opinion clearly within the first sentence. Specific examples will serve to reinforce your point and a conclusion with proposed solutions will help guide the audience to action. You may want to seek out an editor that is interested in your opinion for advice before you begin.

Local vs. National Press

The local press may be the best place to start as they are generally the most accessible. Activities going on at the community level fit best with a community level newspaper. Make sure to take the local news angle and explain how your activities or issues affect the local community. Advantages of using the local press include proximity and broadcast of your message to relevant local areas and an automatic interest in any issues affecting the community. Local press is best used when your target audience in local government, community organizers, local businesspeople, or other members of your community.

The national press is a good choice if your issue affects people at a much larger scale than the community level. For this reason, the national press is much harder to engage. Advantages of using the national press include expansive broadcast of your message, and enhanced credibility and credence for your issue. National press is best used when your target audience is national government, national corporations, national interest groups, or the public at-large.

Press Lists

A press list is a compilation of local and national media outlets where you will send information. Include both print and broadcast media. Compile a packet of materials about your cause, including stories and editorials that address issues important to your community and your projects. The list should contain the name of the media source, a street address, phone and fax numbers, an email address, and appropriate contact persons. Media directories are also available for purchase.

Acknowledgements

This is part of a series of National Policy Training Materials for Community Forestry Practitioners, prepared through a collaborative effort of American Forests, the Communities Committee, the National Network of Forest Practitioners, and the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, with support from the Ford Foundation.