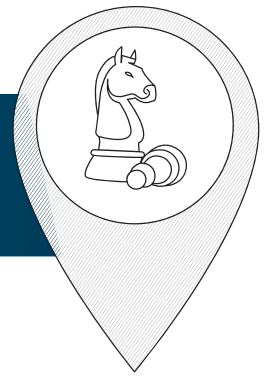


HOW TO DRAFT A SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



PRO-TIP: A good communication plan can enhance your advocacy efforts by amplifying your message and activities. To the contrary, being ill-prepared on communication gives your opponents the opportunity to score points.



START WITH DEFINING YOUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- It's not a plan if it is not on paper.
- Be clear about what you want to say about your issue, and then say it clearly.
- Make sure your message aligns with what will move your target audience ... not just what you think is important.
- Get buy-in on the communication strategy from your stakeholders so they can help carry / amplify your message.

USE MULTIPLE CHANNELS

Earned media

- Traditional: MSM news stories, op-eds, talk radio
- New media: blog writers, online news

Social media

- Amplify your messages by utilizing all of your organization's social media channels and those of your members and coalition partners.
- Make a plan and execute it ... don't just randomly post things.
- Provide content/suggestions to your members and coalition partners ... don't just leave it up to them or assume they know what to say.

Paid media

- Video is the best form of engagement on social media. Invest in some :06 videos to increase interest.
- Use mobile, desktop and video ads to drive traffic to social media.
- Paid boosts of Facebook posts and tweets.
- Targeted digital advertising ... such as geofencing your state capitol or influencers around legislators.

USE THIRD-PARTY VALIDATORS

- Find newsworthy voices on your issue that reporters may cover or that will ensure an op-ed gets placed.
- Find voices with a large following on Facebook or Twitter. Have your coalition partners/members repost and retweet.

BE PREPARED FOR RAPID RESPONSE

- A good communication plan anticipates the reaction of your opponents. Be prepared to answer reporters' questions and to respond on social media.
- Constantly monitor the pro-active communication of your opponents. Respond in the same news cycle to make sure your position is represented. On social media this means minutes and hours. There is no such thing as a 24-hour news cycle anymore.

DON'T FORGET YOUR MEMBERS/STAKEHOLDERS

- In order to leverage the communication channels of your allies, those allies have to know the who, what and why of the issue and plan.
- Don't assume they will be proactive ... make specific asks of them.

WHEN TO HIRE PROFESSIONAL HELP

- Your strategy will determine whether you need professional help or can execute with existing resources.
- A professional may bring extra credibility to your issue and additional relationships that will get you coverage.
- If you are executing a coalition communication plan, a professional may bridge differences within the coalition for a cohesive message.

REMEMBER: A communication strategy is a must for a successful advocacy effort. All the positive things you have to say can be destroyed, or at least undermined, by an ill-conceived response or lack of thinking through the proper response.

