

Telling your story: How you can *become* the media

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Shifts in communications:

1. Communications has become much more targeted, strategic, and more closely aligned with an organization's core work (i.e., communications and branding should be part of everyone's job now)
2. We are moving from a 'push out' info approach to a 'pull-in' story-telling approach that leads to conversations.

Created Media

Social media, citizen journalism and affordable communications tools means non-profit organizations can now become their own media channels, their own producers, and tell their stories directly to their core audiences. Getting in the media is still important, but increasingly difficult. So why not become your own media channel?

Step 1: Strategic Planning

1. Most non-profits have limited resources — both in time and money. A strategic plan will help your group focus those resources on the most important tasks and set priorities.
2. A good plan imposes discipline and clear thinking that will help you clarify your objectives and target audiences, sharpen your message and help you better understand the environment in which you will be delivering that message.
3. Strategic planning will help your organization integrate all of its communications work on a particular issue.
4. A good plan will help ensure that everyone in your organization is on the same page when they communicate with the rest of the world.

Components of a Communications Plan

1. Organizational Goals and Key Objectives
2. Situation Analysis
3. Past communications activities
4. Communication Objectives
5. Target Audiences
6. Desired Actions/Outcomes
7. Key Messages
8. Strategies (strategies before tools)
9. Tactics & Tools
10. Workplan & Timelines

Networking for Good research

1. People are more likely to do things if they see other people doing them, even if it counters what they know is logical.
2. People are easily persuaded by other people whom they like
3. When it comes to problems, the bigger the numbers, the less people often care
4. People are hardwired to understand our world through emotions and stories, not just facts.

Networking for Good research – making these findings work for you

1. Make strategic use of photography and images (a strong image looking out to the viewer can be very powerful)
2. Avoid the guilt trip – people often react poorly to being told something is their fault
3. Tell a story

Planning stage questions:

1. What needs do you have as an organization, and, can creating content help achieve these needs or ease some pressure points?
2. Who has the capacity to create content? What resources can you offer? Can you create a culture where everyone is a marketer?
3. What are the risks, and how can they be mitigated?

Step 2: Determining your audiences

You need to know about your key audiences - Participants, Supporters, Influencers

Know your audiences from several perspectives:

- * Demographic (age, gender)
- * Geographic
- * Socio-economic (education, income)
- * Psychographic (values and lifestyles)

Step 3: Developing your stories – and overall organizational narrative

Stories – in print, video, audio or other forms – are a powerful way to put ideas into the world. A good story can demonstrate impact, make a connection or inspire action in a much better way than a report or a statistical analysis ever could. Storytelling allows us to dig a little deeper and discover the real people working on real solutions in the real world.

Story stage questions:

1. What is your organization poised to accomplish? What are your key successes, what has been your impact? What obstacles have you overcome?
2. What are the differentiating factors of your organization? What makes you unique?
3. Who are the people that differentiate your organization?
4. Who have the best stories? Who are the most credible storytellers? Are there 'beneficiaries' who will tell their stories?

Qualities of an effective message:

- * Clear and simple (please, please avoid jargon & all those 'TLAs')
- * Brief
- * Believable
- * Compelling
- * Delivered by the right messenger

Step 4: Deciding on your channels & ‘shows’

Identifying the right channels through which to deliver your messages is important to a successful content marketing program, but it should not happen in isolation. You should consider the context in which your audience will view the content. ‘How’ and ‘Where’ your audience is consuming your content can be just as important as the messaging within.

Video

Tell a story, be compelling

Keep it short

Practice technique:

- Use an external mic

- Keep it simple

- Use a tripod or monopod

- Turn off autofocus

- Get b-roll (cutaway footage)

- Fill the frame

- Don't reframe in the middle of an answer

Have beneficiaries, volunteers create content too

Brand your YouTube (and Vimeo, etc.) channels

Embed video on your websites, in social media releases, etc.

Photos

Exhibits (sometimes in unlikely places)

Photo essays in magazines, on websites

Photo posters

Integrate effective photography throughout web and mobile

Practice technique:

- Fill the frame

- Focus on the eyes; be careful of autofocus

- Shoot in high resolution

- If you have to use flash, soften it

- Overexpose in backlight situations

- Use large aperture (small f-stop) to blur background

- Fast shutter speed freezes action

- Composition: rule of thirds; lead the eye

Other channels & tools

- * Podcasts
- * Blogs
- * Annual Report
- * Stories (create a styleguide)
- * Newsletters
- * Website
- * Infographics
- * Social Media
- * Memes
- * Performance
- * Graphic novels
- * Gaming

Effective ways to repurpose content:

- * Put the same story on different channels
- * Edit for a different audience / Make long stuff short (and vice versa)
- * Remake a story into a sidebar for another story
- * Pull out quotes and testimonials
- * Update an old story
- * Turn a story into a 'Top 10' list
- * Turn it into a FAQ or resource page
- * Add a timely update to your evergreen material
- * Turn bullets/lists into a slideshow
- * Create an infographic
- * Reformat into handouts or collateral (i.e. give-aways)
- * Create a quiz
- * Offer it as a guest article or blog post
- * Transform an article into a back-and-forth interview

Step 5: Keeping the conversations going

But creating quality content by itself is not enough. You need to also nurture your connections to, and conversations with, your key stakeholders.

Your content is now a conversation, and that builds lasting relationships that will help you navigate stormy seas.

Dealing with criticism on social media:

* The best case scenario is that other supporters come to our defence or get involved in the discussion. This only happens when we've engendered feelings of trust and worth in our supporters

* When responding to criticism, we shouldn't be defensive or negative, but honest and responsive.

* Except in obvious cases of libel, spam, or unethical/ vulgar/ racist comments, censorship of people's comments should not be considered an option.

<i>Without a content strategy...</i>	<i>With a content strategy...</i>
You publish a random collection of articles and other content.	Each piece of content you create fits into the larger story you are telling.
You report on activities and focus on your organization's goals.	You focus on supporters' and participants' goals, and how your work helps them and achieves impact.
You feel like a salesperson as you write.	You feel like a journalist as you write.
Readers may feel like you are interrupting or pushing information on you.	Readers are likely to think of you as an invited guest offering stories they want, and info they need.
Your website, newsletter and social media channels are all managed separately.	You tailor and repurpose content for different channels, but the core messaging remains the same.
Marketing, fundraising and program staff talk to each other only when they need something from someone.	Marketing, fundraising and program staff work (and strategize) together constantly.
Your communications are reactive, ad hoc, often unplanned.	Your work is planned, but with built-in flexibility to adjust as needed.
Your communications, messaging and purposes are unpredictable.	Your communications are consistent, like a promise made and kept.
You talk <u>to</u> audiences, providing information.	You talk <u>with</u> participants, supporters and influencers, telling stories.
You worry about negative comments about your organization, and can act defensively.	You welcome dialogue, get involved in discussions, and take your lumps as part of the overall story.