"The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision." — Helen Keller

NONPROFIT Communications REPORT

MONTHLY COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR NONPROFITS

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Some of What's Inside...

Use Powerful Stats to Help Illustrate Your NP's Impact

How far out geographically do your organization's services reach? The community in which it is located? The county? The state?

Once you've answered that question, it can be powerfully influential for you to identify key facts or statistics that most favorably illustrate the impact of your agency or institution on the residents of your service area.

Assemble a handful of key employees and brainstorm a list of questions to be answered to identify and prioritize your most impressive statistics. Then use these questions when meeting with prospects to help build your case for support.

Review these generic questions as a way to help you come up with those more applicable to your own organization:

- ✔ What percentage of our city's residents have been served by this agency in the past year?
- ✔ What percentage of this county's citizens are made up of graduates of our institution?
- ✔ How many lives have we saved in the past five years?
- ✔ What percentage of our city's business owners are our graduates?
- ✔ How much money has the county saved as a result of our preventative measures?

Lyric-Writing Program Promotes Special Talents in Children

By Megan Venzin

For the past three years, Midtown Manhattan's Kaufman Music Center (New York, NY) has celebrated the special talents of local youth through Accentuate the Positive, a lyric-writing program sponsored by the Johnny Mercer Foundation that provides elementary and middle school students the opportunity to explore their love for music. Nearly 600 students participate annually in a four-week residency where they work with professional performing artists to write and produce their own songs. "With the Accentuate the Positive classroom lessons, students share their work orally with their peers, often singing and performing their own work," says Elizabeth Crone, a Kaufman Music Center teaching artist. In addition to working within the classroom, students are also invited to attend the Broadway Playhouse concerts, featuring the work of the teaching artists with whom they've collaborated. During these public performances, some students have the opportunity to participate in select musical numbers, while others are invited on stage to play games with the performers.

Performances Sell the Audience

"This is our chance to share the 'wow moment,' because the audience gets a chance to see just how involved and excited the kids are to learn about these American lyricists and composers," says Crone. "We have invited board members and friends to attend the concerts with the students, and this experience is often a selling point for many to get more involved with the program."

Sean Hartley, theater wing director, is the creator and writer of the Broadway House concerts and has been key in making the Accentuate the Positive program accessible to students across the city. He says creating this outlet for students has raised awareness for Kaufman Music Center. "The Accentuate the Positive program has enabled Kaufman Music Center to fulfill our mission to extend our influence beyond our own four walls and to serve a population greater than our own geographical neighborhood," Hartley says.

Providing a unique platform for students to express themselves both in the classroom and through public performances has attracted participants Kaufman Music Center didn't initially expect. After working primarily with students in public and private schools, the program has become available to the home-schooled network as well. "This has been a great extension for us as we were able to invite a new audience to the program but also share other Kaufman Music Center programs with these students," Crone says. Crone attributes the success of Accentuate the Positive to its solid mission of providing students with an opportunity to explore their talents, continued support from the Johnny Mercer Foundation and Kaufman Music Center's creative efforts to reach untapped audiences.

Sources: Elizabeth Crone, Teaching Artist, Kaufman Music Center, New York, NY. Phone (212) 501-3300. Website: www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org

Sean Hartley, Theater Wing Director, Kaufman Music Center, New York, NY. Phone (212) 501-3300. E-mail: shartley@kaufmanmusiccenter.org. Website: www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org

Confirm Appointments

If you've scheduled an appointment with someone that will cover several topics, send an appointment confirmation that includes your agenda. Doing so has a threefold purpose: 1. It confirms the appointment, 2. further cements it in the person's calendar and 3. allows the individual the opportunity to better prepare for your call.

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Online Patient Portals Improve Customer Relations

Many of the diabetic patients at Gwinnett Medical Center (Westborough, MA) are using "healow" (Health and Online Wellness), a patient portal and app, to book regular appointments for check-ups. The online system is designed to reach out to patients with chronic conditions every four months to ensure doctors see them at least twice a year, as recommended. "One of the biggest benefits this practice is able to appreciate is new and existing patients are able to request appointments at times that work best for them, and in turn, the front office is spending less time trying to reach patients via phone," says eClinicalWorks Spokesperson Heather Caouette. "Online communication for appointments and other non-urgent clinical reasons helps improve patient engagement and create a much better consumer experience."

More than 35 million patients access their health data via healow, and approximately 13,000 independent practice organizations use this product to connect with their customers. The healow app sees 2,000 downloads on a daily basis.

Caouette says using an online patient portal like healow can improve patient relations for the following reasons:

- "The healow suite of products includes a patient check-in kiosk, online appointment booking, telehealth solutions and mobile applications that directly connect patients to their own and family health records as well as facilitate two-way communication between providers and patients to improve the overall health-care experience for patients and physicians," Caouette says. "Patients and physicians can communicate with each other to optimize care delivered."
- Appointment scheduling via an online widget or app lets patients book when it is most convenient for them — not only when the office is open for phone calls.
- Taking into account patient preference for communication can lead to better engagement.
- "Since more informed patients are generally healthier patients, this could lead to better care outcomes," Caouette says.
- Online portals and apps often include a messaging service, which eliminates the costs and time associated with sending reminder mailings.
- Online portals keep doctors informed and patients engaged. "Patients trust their doctors and are more likely to remain engaged if that provider is involved," Caouette says. "As a wholly owned subsidiary of eClinicalWorks, an industry leader of health-care IT solutions, healow is able to feed information into the electronic health records system to keep providers informed of patient activity."

Source: Heather Caouette, Spokesperson, eClinicalWorks, Westborough, MA. Phone (508) 836-2700, ext. 10203. E-mail: heather.caouette@eclinicalworks.com. Website: www.eclinicalworks.com

Share the Cost of Creating Media Lists

Compiling detailed media lists can be time-consuming and expensive. There are companies, such as Bacon's Media, that allow you to research and contact media sources through their website (www.bacons.com) and purchase precompiled media directories.

While these resources are convenient, they can be pricey. Consider splitting the cost with another organization in your area that reaches out to similar media outlets. Likewise, borrowing last year's media directories from another nonprofit can save you money, and you'll find the directory listings don't change much from year to year. Compare notes and see what contacts they have whom you should include in your list, then share your list with them. By sharing information and splitting costs, you will not only save money but also gain another great resource for finding important media contacts.

Look for Staff With Reporter, Producer Experience

By Sarah Ammerman

When adding to your communications team, hiring someone with prior newsroom experience, either as a reporter or a producer, can be advantageous.

In August 2014 Whitman College (Walla Walla, WA) brought on a new media relations strategist who had spent the first 15 years of her career as a TV news producer. "Many former reporters/producers have found stimulating new careers on the other side of the desk as media relations specialists," says Michelle Ma, chief communications officer at Whitman College. "They differ from those who come from a strictly PR background; they've lived in the newsroom and know the real demands placed on reporters. They can leverage that experience to get your story out in the right tone at just the right time. What's more, they also come with a huge cache of contacts in the news industry, which is invaluable."

While not every organization may have the good fortune of finding a former producer or reporter who is the perfect fit for its communications office, for those that have the ability to bring on someone with newsroom experience, there are many benefits. "Besides giving me strong writing and time-management skills, my former career made me really comfortable communicating with the media," says Gina Ohnstad, media relations strategist, Whitman College. "I know how reporters and producers think because I was one. I understand their deadlines, time constraints, schedules and, most importantly, their daily challenges. Now I always stop and think, 'Would I have covered that story?' before I make my pitch."

For other communicators who do not have prior newsroom experience/knowledge, Ohnstad offers the following tips for building strong relationships with reporters:

- **Don't send out blanket e-mails or press releases.** Tailor each message to your contact. This requires knowing their beat; read their articles and blogs and watch their TV segments. When you contact them, let them know you are familiar with their work and that is why you are reaching out.
- **Be a news consumer.** Read, watch and listen to as much news as possible. Be aware of trends in what's being covered, who is covering it and how.
- **Timing is everything.** News cycles don't last very long and reporters are quickly on to the next thing, so you don't have a lot of time to get your information to them.
- **Don't oversell.** If you are contacting reporters constantly with story ideas that are not very good, you will quickly be disregarded. Save your pitches for the stories you know will really resonate — the stories that have the best chance of being covered.
- **Respect reporter deadlines.** Be mindful of when you contact reporters. For example, 4:30 is a really bad time for TV reporters.
- **Be conversational and direct.** Drop the jargon and flowery writing and give it to them straight. Reporters don't have a lot of time to read long, complicated pitches.

Sources: Michelle Ma, Chief Communications Officer, Whitman College, Walla Walla, WA. E-mail: mamk@whitman.edu. Website: www.whitman.edu

Gina Ohnstad, Media Relations Strategist, Whitman College, Walla Walla, WA. E-mail: ohnstagz@whitman.edu. Website: www.whitman.edu

Highlight Your Speaker Series With a Varied, Dynamic Approach

When promoting your speaker series, do you take a multifaceted approach, promoting your event before, during and after?

Elon University (Elon, NC) brings well-known speakers to campus for its fall and spring convocations, as well as a variety of different lecture series. Daniel J. Anderson, vice president for university communications, explains the efforts used to announce and publicize the speakers in advance of their arrival: "We begin by announcing the speakers months in advance, as soon as they are booked. It's important to get these dates on class calendars and get the word out to external audiences. Also, at the beginning of each academic year, we have a prominent display in our Campus Center, which has the photos of the major speakers for the year along with the dates of their appearances."

In addition to these efforts, as the date of each particular speech approaches, the appearances are publicized via the university's website and in e-mailed newsletters. Local media are invited to attend, and the university live-tweets each speech. It also provides extensive coverage via its website and social media accounts, including video clips of each speaker.

Anderson says one tactic that is no longer considered effective when promoting their speaker series is using print brochures and special mailings promoting each speech. Conversely, the most effective method for promoting speakers is engaging audiences via social media. "We always get extensive feedback and engagement via social media on the stories, photos and video clips we post. Alumni, parents, friends and even prospective students who were not able to attend the event get a full accounting of the speakers' messages."

For other organizations looking for ways to increase interest in their speakers, Anderson recommends a well-rounded approach when publicizing a speaker series. "I highly recommend doing extensive news coverage of the speakers, with stories written in journalistic style, photo galleries and numerous video clips. All of this content has a hungry audience on social media platforms. Amplifying the speakers' messages to your audience on many different channels dramatically increases the impact of the event and reflects well on the institution," he says.

Source: Daniel J. Anderson, Vice President for University Communications, Elon University, Elon, NC. E-mail: andersd@elon.edu. Website: www.elon.edu

Advice for Sharing Sad News

Creating a sense of transparency and trust with your audiences will make the process of sharing distressing news via Facebook less worrying.

When the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo (Fort Wayne, IN) lost its beloved giraffe Kalahari, staff posted a photo along with a message on Facebook to share the sad news with the community. The message, posted in December 2014, stated: "It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Kalahari the giraffe. Kali, as she was called by her keepers, received amazing care as she battled arthritis and other ailments related to her advanced age of 25 years. She will be greatly missed by her keepers and many fans."

The post received over 1,800 likes and was shared 350 times. Cheryl Piropato, education and communications director at the zoo, says the timing of the post was important. Knowing staff members could not share the news with their own family and friends until the zoo had acknowledged it publicly, they decided to release the news of Kalahari's death relatively quickly to ensure staff and community members alike were able to grieve her death. Piropato cautions that waiting too long to share upsetting news can put added pressure on staff members and keep them from processing the situation.

Piropato adds that because the zoo has endeavored to create a sense of inclusion and transparency with their social media presence, it was particularly important to share this news in a very public way to avoid attendees finding out about the giraffe's passing at a later date.

For other organizations looking for both delicate and effective ways to share sad news via social media, Piropato has this advice: "Getting everyone on the same page is important. Make sure all staff members are ready for the announcement and are available in case media, or others, have questions. Additionally, ensure you have all necessary information before you post anything to avoid sending out an incomplete message."

Source: Cheryl Piropato, Education and Communications Director, Fort Wayne Children's Zoo, Fort Wayne, IN. E-mail: cheryl@kidszoo.org. Website: www.kidszoo.org

Keep Your Website's News Fresh

Providing a running list of news coverage for your organization can be an important way to tell its story. Taking the time to keep it updated, fresh and comprehensive can increase engagement not only on your website but also with your organization.

Carol Dougherty, associate headmaster of the Perkiomen School (Pennsburg, PA), works hard to ensure the school's news and media coverage is a major part of their website and is kept updated. Dougherty shares some of her tips on how to keep things fresh.

1. **Make fresh news happen.** Always designate time to write and post the news. If it is not on your calendar, something else will be, and last week's news will be on the top of your site. Set goals as to how many new stories you want to post weekly. Make time once a month to brainstorm news topics. There will always be slow news times, so create a go-to list of your institutions' talking points that can become news.
2. **Don't try to do it by yourself.** Talk about your work to others — constantly. Create a team of colleagues who will feed ideas to you. Carry a notecard with you that is dedicated to news ideas. Always be on the lookout for what you can post.
3. **Use review and breakdown.** Every three months, look at what you have posted. Were there dead spots? Assess why nothing was posted — was it because there was no news or did other work interfere? Did big stories get enough traction; should they have been a series instead of just one post? Are your stories articulating your mission and message? Set one or two standard elevating goals (like one post per month that reflects keywords in the mission statement) for the next three-month cycle and then evaluate.

Source: Carol Dougherty, Associate Headmaster, Perkiomen School, Pennsburg, PA. Phone (215) 679-9511. E-mail: cdougherty@perkiomen.org. Website: www.perkiomen.org

Professional Opinion

Nonprofit Communicators Possess a Special Role

Q: What are some of the advantages of being a nonprofit communicator? What is special about this role?

"Having come from a NYSE-traded media company 10 times the size of Farm Sanctuary, I came from a place where I had the luxury of being able to hop over to a number of resident experts in fields ranging from SEO and user experience to Pinterest and Facebook. These are people who went to battle with ROI-guaranteed results," says Lindsay Morris, senior manager, communications and marketing, Farm Sanctuary (Watkins Glen, NY). "I left that world for the nonprofit communicator challenge. And I've learned that best practices actually differ quite a bit when you move from mainstream lifestyle, or entertainment-focused content, to content designed around what stirs the consumer on an inherently more personal and even moral level. You can't hole up in the war room with a list of what works when you're part of a movement that requires deep listening and constant conversations. And you don't even have enough spare employees to draft from current projects to do so, let alone the level of sophistication in software or expensive technology.

"Thanks to that challenge," she says, "our entire communications team — really, our organization as a whole — has the unique opportunity to engage more cerebrally with our audience and to mutually benefit from each post, photo, video and interpersonal exchange. That is our advantage and a great selling point for the work we do as nonprofit communicators."

— Lindsay Morris, Senior Manager, Communications and Marketing, Farm Sanctuary, Watkins Glen, NY. E-mail: lmorris@farmsanctuary.org. Website: www.farmsanctuary.org

Website Features

Post News Clips on Your Website

By Alexandra Kesman

Boston Children's Hospital has created a special section on its website where it houses news clips, or links to media coverage the hospital has received. The database, which has been ongoing for at least 10 years, tells the story of the hospital (see www.childrenshospital.org/news-and-events/news-clips).

According to Kristen Dattoli, media relations manager at the hospital, the news clips are valuable only to the point that the content to which they are linked still exists. Dattoli says: "We typically use clips that can be linked directly to. We are in the process, however, of doing a sweep of all of the clips in our newsroom to determine which links are still working and which have been deleted. The last thing we want to do is keep something up that doesn't work."

Another challenge is televised news coverage. Many news stations do not provide online videos, and media archive services can be costly. "We are in the process of trying to find ways to go beyond just including YouTube links for televised stories," continues Dattoli. "We are also investigating ways for some of our own original content/videos to appear in the newsroom."

How does Boston Children's decide what items are worth being posted to the newsroom? "We like to focus on clips that tell the larger hospital story," replies Dattoli. "We look for pieces that help us showcase hospital research and innovation, patient stories/experience, physicians' and clinicians' breakthroughs. We also like to host pieces in our newsroom that are less about the outlet and more about the story."

Here Dattoli offers some advice for nonprofits looking to start their own news clips website archive:

- **Start slow.** Focus on clips you are most excited about and then build from there.
- **Get visual with your clips** if you can, by including a logo of the publication, if it's available, and a photo if it went along with the piece.
- **Showcase some of your social work,** (e.g., interesting Facebook stories that garnered you a lot of engagement). External communications is changing, and it's not only about traditional news clips anymore.
- **Showcase your original content.** Find ways to engage the audience by showcasing your most interesting work and stories.

Source: Kristen Dattoli, Manager, Media Relations, Boston Children's Hospital, Boston, MA. Phone (617) 919-3111. E-mail: kristen.dattoli@childrens.harvard.edu. Website: www.childrenshospital.org

Publicizing Events

Use Local Radio to Promote Events

Finding creative ways to promote your events is a necessity when you are working with a small budget.

Aside from advertising on your website or in promotional materials, don't forget to reach out to local radio stations for assistance. Most public stations will announce community events at no charge. Just fax a press release detailing your event and follow up with a phone call. If you are lucky, you might get to announce your event live on air.

Develop relationships with local DJs so you can reach out to them all year. Radio stations often broadcast live from local events, so make sure to invite them.

Customer Service

Secret Shopper Exercises Kickstart Bigger Conversations

In preparation for the Ohio Hospital Association (OHA; Columbus, Ohio) board of Trustees' annual retreat, a group of 18 CEOs and CFOs from hospitals of various sizes were asked to complete a secret shopper exercise. Each board member was asked to contact his or her hospital with a set of questions about a specific procedure in order to gain some insight into the consumer experience. Board members and OHA staff members kicked off the retreat by sharing their findings and discussing price and quality transparency in health care.

"This activity gave us the opportunity to look into the current environment to see a snapshot of the challenges and opportunities facing consumers," says Director of Public Affairs and Media Relations John Palmer. "It gave us an awareness and a glimpse into the topic of transparency." Some board members confirmed they were surprised at how difficult it was to receive concrete prices when calling their hospitals. Findings like this have helped open a dialogue for the improvements that need to be made surrounding price quality and transparency throughout the state. Palmer confirms steps are being taken by the OHA to look deeper into this topic.

"We believe this exercise served its purpose for starting the initial discussion," Palmer says. "Price and quality transparency efforts in states like Indiana helped them launch a website where patients can obtain pricing information for certain procedures and learn more about the hospitals as a whole." Taking the first steps to learn more about the customer experience is valuable when it comes to shaping the future of any nonprofit organization.

While Palmer says you don't necessarily have to run a full-blown campaign with hired consultants to gain a base understanding of where your organization stands in terms of customer service, he reminds industry professionals not to jump into the conversation completely uninformed and expect changes to happen organically. "When you take on a certain topic and create an exercise or campaign to learn more, you need to understand the purpose behind your efforts and use that knowledge as a way to set measurable goals and objectives," Palmer says.

Source: John Palmer, Director of Public Affairs and Media Relations, Ohio Hospital Association, Columbus, Ohio. Phone (614) 221-7614. E-mail: johnp@ohanet.org. Website: www.ohiohospitals.org

WEBSITE COMMUNICATIONS

Welcome New Students, Others With an Informative Web Page

Creating a page on your website dedicated to welcoming those who are newly involved in your organization is an impactful and efficient way to both greet newcomers and share important information.

Wayne State University (Detroit, MI) launched a page dedicated to welcoming newly admitted students in September 2014. When new students visit the page, they can click on a tab with personalized information for freshman, transfers, international students or veterans. All new students are directed to the page when they are notified of their acceptance and are redirected to the page in other correspondence as well.

Julie Hasse, manager of content strategy and student outreach at the university, describes how the page came to fruition: "Previously, we included a Next Steps insert in each student's admit packet. It outlined for them as an incoming freshmen, transfer or veteran what they needed to complete to set themselves up for success prior to the start of their first semester. The print version of these next steps proved to be costly, and with decreasing budgets within higher education we chose to put this content online. With the content online, it is able to be constantly updated and evolve as the year goes on. We realize students are connected to the Internet more than ever, so we ensured this site was responsive to work with not only computers but mobile devices as well. It now provides a much more interactive experience, linking students to departments, and puts more resources at students' fingertips than we were able to do with a printed piece."

So far, the feedback from new students has been positive. The university plans to use analytics and heat mapping to evaluate the page and make any necessary updates or changes to it in the future.

For other organizations thinking of creating a similar page for their new students, supporters or others, Hasse offers this advice: "Starting the conversation of what content needs to be present is the first priority. Keep in mind that while it is a Web page and you can link to many different places, you still need to figure out how to best package your page content so it is user-friendly and digestible."

Source: Julie Hasse, Manager of Content Strategy and Student Outreach, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. E-mail: eg1926@wayne.edu. Website: www.wayne.edu

PLANNING PROCEDURES

Tips for Developing a Content Marketing Strategy

A strong content marketing strategy includes powerful visuals, thoughtful messaging and well-thought-out distribution techniques. Many times, the approach you took 10 years ago will not carry the same weight with your audience today, and for that reason it's important to create innovative content that includes a call to action.

Sandra Fathi, president of Affect (New York, NY), cites Charity Water, an international organization dedicated to delivering clean water to those without access, as having a strong content marketing strategy. "They have a balance of incredible stories, beautiful visuals of flowing water and content that's not just about the great work they are doing but that also shares the inspiring stories of folks who are donating," Fathi says. "Their content doesn't only focus on the plight of those without water in sub-Saharan Africa; it's about the young child in suburban Illinois who gave up a birthday gift to raise money for a good cause." Even though Charity Water may be a large-scale organization with a highly focused mission, Fathi says local nonprofits can still take some tips from it.

1. **Consider the shared interests between your organization and your audience.** "What a nonprofit organization thinks is most critical might not be what spurs the target audience to take action," Fathi says. Consider the interests of your supporters, and find creative ways to compel them to help you fulfill your mission.
2. **Get to know your target audience.** "If you're trying to reach teens, forget about Facebook, because they've already moved on to Instagram and Snapchat," Fathi says. Though this is just one example, it's important to consider where your target audience goes for their information and build your distribution strategy around the corresponding platforms.
3. **Tie metrics to your mission.** When measuring the effectiveness of your nonprofit's content marketing strategy, use metrics that tie back to your overall mission so you can identify areas for improvement.
4. **Pick one thing and do it well.** "Focusing on one core thing and doing it really well can be empowering and more effective than trying to be omnipresent on several channels without mastering any one domain," Fathi says. Charity Water demonstrated this with a strong mission supported by incredible photography, hero stories and a social media presence focused on peer-to-peer fundraising.
5. **Learn to repurpose your resources.** When budgets are tight, Fathi recommends repurposing content by designing visuals and content in multiple formats or finding new ways to utilize information captured in surveys.

Source: Sandra Fathi, President, Affect, New York, NY. Phone (212) 398-9680. E-mail: sfathi@affect.com. Website: www.affect.com

PREVENTATIVE STEPS

Ask a Surrogate to Defend Against Negative Publicity

Bad news happens, but preparing for it can help mitigate the damage. The best way to defend yourself in a negative story is to have someone else do it for you. Independent, third-party surrogates are ideal, since they can appear unbiased. Rely on those with whom you have already developed a close relationship. The ideal surrogate should have a special status, minimal connection to your organization and a reputation for offering a balanced perspective.

Decide the Type of Speech You Want to Prepare

Whether you are preparing a speech for your nonprofit's CEO or plan to make your own delivery, it is important to recognize that there are various types of speeches:

- ✔ **Persuasive** — those intended to influence people's opinions or actions.
- ✔ **Entertaining** — written to do just that: entertain the audience.
- ✔ **Informative** — speeches meant to teach or inform.
- ✔ **Demonstrative** — much like informative speeches, demonstrative deliveries teach but also show how to do something.
- ✔ **Commemorative** — pay tribute to a person, a group of people, an institution, or an idea.

The type of speech you prepare will be determined by the occasion and the anticipated audience.

Rebranding Campaign Benefits From Extensive Outreach Efforts

If your organization is planning a rebranding effort, consider reaching out to your various audiences for their input on which direction your campaign should take.

Before introducing their new brand in the fall of 2013, Meredith College, (Raleigh, NC), along with the help of outside consultants, sought input from many of their constituents to gain insight into how the college was perceived by others.

The study consisted of two parts: first an online survey of 2,200 people (including prospective and current students, faculty, staff, alumnae and parents), then 40 in-depth phone interviews with business leaders, high school guidance counselors and high school principals.

Melyssa Allen, news director at Meredith College, explains the purpose of these efforts: "This was a perception survey, and so the questions were designed to uncover what constituents thought about Meredith College and other schools with whom we compete for students. The questions included strengths of the college, what kind of majors Meredith is known for, where Meredith stands among other schools in our region, etc."

The questions asked in the phone interviews differed somewhat from those in the online survey and included asking interviewees what types of majors and new programs they would like to see offered at the college. The list of individuals chosen for the phone interviews was compiled from recommendations from the college's admissions office as well as other campus leaders.

After the surveys and phone interviews were completed, the college was provided with a written report of the results. Findings were also presented to the marketing team, administrators and faculty/staff on campus.

"With the perception study's findings as a foundation, Meredith's marketing department staff worked with a creative firm to develop the branding campaign," says Allen. "The brand has been well received by our constituents. In the first year of the brand, Meredith had a 29 percent increase across all social channels, reaching a total of 14,000 fans. Additionally, as part of the brand launch, Meredith launched a new website, which had a 60 percent increase in users over the previous year."

For other organizations considering taking a similar approach to gathering opinions from their audiences to fuel the rebranding process, Allen shares these thoughts: "Both of the consultants with whom we worked specialize in higher education, which was beneficial and made the process work smoothly. I would suggest other organizations make sure their in-house marketing team stays very involved in the process throughout."

Source: Melyssa Allen, News Director, Meredith College, Raleigh, NC. E-mail: allenme@meredith.edu. Website: www.meredith.edu

Speaking Tip

To help hold the attention of your audience, vary the pitch and volume of your voice as you talk. Your message will come alive and have greater impact.

Help Your CEO Distinguish Your Nonprofit From the Pack

Those persons involved in fund development should help their organization's CEO in reputation-building efforts. "People like giving to a winner" is a truism for any charity. That's why it's in your best interest to have the chief ambassador pointing out accomplishments and quantifying how your organization is making a positive difference in fulfilling its mission.

What role can you play to that end? Consider these ideas:

1. **Help identify your organization's accomplishments and share them with your boss.** These may be statistics that compare your nonprofit's standing to others'. They may be anecdotes from persons who have benefitted from your services. Or perhaps an employee has achieved something that should be shared with the public.
2. **Do your part to place your CEO in the public's eye.** Work smart at identifying selective speaking opportunities for your CEO. Help to author articles, editorials and other written communications on behalf of your boss that will portray a favorable image of him/her and your organization.
3. **Be proactive at introducing your CEO to key players — donors, prospects, community leaders and others.** Take your boss on selective calls. Schedule meetings with the "who's who" of your community or state. When key visitors come to your agency, bring them by the CEO's office for a brief "hello."
4. **Exhibit public respect for your CEO.** When networking out in the community, always show admiration for your charity's leader. After all, in the eyes of the public, that person is the chief representative of your cause. People can easily sense if there is any hint of disdain.

Accommodating Attendees

Use Guidelines to Provide Direction for Attendees

If your organization regularly hosts events on your premises, consider creating a guideline for attendees to answer frequently asked questions as well as inform them of any rules or stipulations you may have for your guests.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (New York, NY) includes a section within the visitors page of its website titled, Attending an Event (http://lc.lincolncenter.org/visitor-guide/attend-an-event). This section details the logistics of finding the right concert hall, what to expect when arriving late and other general guidelines for attending performances at the center.

Peter Duffin, senior vice president of brand and marketing at the center, details why this section was created: "We decided to include the section because some of these questions are potential barriers for patrons attending events at Lincoln Center; also, for tourists and foreign travelers this was a straightforward way for us to make Lincoln Center easier to understand."

The section was compiled with input from the guest services team as well as the front-of-house staff who deal with patrons on a daily basis. "I see these kinds of guest services interactions as an opportunity to reinforce a welcoming inviting tone while stating how we operate," says Duffin.

In addition to the full list included on the center's website, some of this information is reiterated in welcome e-mails sent to attendees before each concert. Duffin says Lincoln Center staff is always willing to adjust and edit when necessary and considers the Attending an Event section a work in progress.

For other organizations looking to create a similar section for their attendees, Duffin shares the following advice: "Being transparent with guests about your policies is very important, but, as organizations are increasingly working to create a welcoming tone, this shouldn't come across as a list of commandments. You have to find a balance."

Source: Peter Duffin, Senior Vice President, Brand and Marketing, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.
E-mail: pduffin@lincolncenter.org.
Website: www.lincolncenter.org

Televised News

Is Your News Air-Worthy?

Local televised news coverage can be one of the largest sounding boards a nonprofit organization can utilize. However, it can be very difficult to be noticed by the stations and reporters amid all the news requests they receive on a daily basis. Mona Morrow, director of community affairs with Channel 9 affiliate WCPO (Cincinnati, Ohio), shares some of her tips for nonprofits when it comes to getting your news on the air.

When you first reach out to a television station, think about what they are looking for when it comes to programming segments. "Good reporters want to present interesting, informative news to their audience, quickly and concisely," says Morrow. "The reporter's role, however, is not to promote an organization; it's to inform the community. Determining if something is newsworthy is very subjective. The bottom line is that the decision is in the hands of the journalists."

How can you determine if your information is newsworthy? Morrow suggests asking yourself the following questions about the potential story:

- Is this something new, different, unusual, controversial or outlandish?
- Has someone done something heroic, highly admirable or unusual?
- Is this something that would catch the general public's interest?
- Does this have an impact on the general public?
- Does this relate to an already prominent local, regional or national issue or trend?

Your news needs to pass the "who-cares-and-why" test. Morrow continues, "Could you make a compelling case for the importance of this information to an overworked, underpaid assignment editor in 60 seconds, as compared to the other 200 releases in the daily file?" Morrow encourages fitting your news with the station's style and the reporter's identified focus.

If the media contacts you, be sure to return calls promptly and be sensitive to their deadlines. When you contact the media, Morrow says, "Accept that they're always busy. Leave a brief and specific voicemail with enough lead time. Give them a story that writes itself."

One of the best ways to receive televised coverage is by building relationships with the station and the individual reporters. "Know the people — and make sure they know you. Be familiar with the station, the shows and the style of individual reporters," says Morrow.

Source: Mona Morrow, Director of Community Affairs, Channel 9 WCPO, Cincinnati, Ohio. Phone (513) 852-4015. E-mail: mmorrow@wcpo.com. Website: www.wcpo.com

Communication Methods

Don't Forget 'Old' Communication Forms

In today's world it's pretty much mandatory to use e-mail addresses for quick correspondence. When reaching out to members, e-mail can be a huge time saver, but don't forget the "old-fashioned" communication methods — phone and snail mail.

While many organizations and homes have Internet access, not everyone is comfortable communicating or working primarily by e-mail. Although it's important to give the public access to downloadable materials on your website and to have documents available for e-mail, it's also important to provide hard copies of all materials. This is especially important if you cater to a community with limited computer knowledge or access. Keep hard copies of your publications on hand and let the public know how they can obtain them.

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