Public communication strategies for low-budget environmental campaigns: a guide for environmentalists

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Public Communication Strategies for Low-budget Environmental Campaigns:

A Guide for Environmentalists

by

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The environmental community is beginning to recognize the power of framing environmental issues in ways that resonate with the public and using the media to reach target audiences. Many low-budget environmental groups, however, lack staff members with expertise in designing strategic and persuasive communication plans. Currently, there is limited literature focusing specifically on environmental campaigns or on public communication strategies that are feasible for low-budget environmental groups seeking to influence the public. To assist low budget environmental groups in implementing campaigns that are successful in persuading and mobilizing the public, this guide identifies and explains the key components that lead to effective public communication strategies within a campaign. It begins by exploring the underlying components of persuasive communication, including audience research, effective messaging, and appropriate messengers. Because environmental initiatives are often challenged by industry, the guide also examines techniques environmental campaigners can use to overcome intense opposition from wealthy adversaries. Nearly half of the guide is devoted to low-budget strategies for delivering a message to the public with chapters devoted specifically to campaign materials, earned media, paid media, and interpersonal communication. The goal of public communication campaigns is not only to communicate to the public but also to motivate people to take action to create positive change. The final chapter in the guide, therefore, discusses the important role of grassroots organizing in conjunction with public communication. The information provided in the guide is based on data gained from in-depth interviews with twenty environmental professionals with experience working on campaigns for environmental organization of various sizes, locations and issues.
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Finally, I thank my family for always being there to listen and support me.
"Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country."

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

As President Franklin Roosevelt declared, Americans live in a democratic society where they have the power to shape the government through their voting power. As consumers, United States’ citizens also have some control over industry. To harness that power in order to create positive, long-term changes for humans and the environment, environmental groups must inform and motivate the public to influence those with decision-making power. ¹ A public communication campaign is a vehicle for motivating citizens to exert collective pressure.

The cohesive nature of public communication campaigns makes them a potent method for persuading and motivating citizens and channeling their concern into an influential voice demanding change. However, campaigns are high-risk endeavors. They require a major commitment in time and other resources, and even then, they can fail to fulfill their purpose or have adverse effects. The risky and demanding nature of campaigns in terms of funds, human resources, and time may deter low-budget environmental groups from implementing them. Yet campaigns at all levels, from the local to the global, have been and continue to be critical in shaping a positive future for

¹ In campaign literature, such campaigns are sometimes referred to as public will or public engagement campaigns, but such terminology focuses on the intended outcome—moving the public will or engaging the public. The purpose of this paper is to examine public communication campaigns as a technique for achieving that outcome.
the environment and humanity by changing policies and industries that would destroy the environment.

As the term suggests, communication is the heart of public communication campaigns. Without effective communication, a campaign cannot persuade people or have any hope of motivating them to take action. As Chris Rose says in his manual *How to Win Campaigns: 100 Steps to Success*, "Business has money, government has law, but campaigns have only public support. Communication is the campaigners’ instrument for change, not simply a way to publicize an opinion." Communicating effectively and persuasively is an art. While the staff of national environmental groups and those with larger budgets often include a Communication Director and/or a Campaign Coordinator, the staff of low-budget environmental organizations may include only a handful of individuals who perform multiple tasks.

Minimal literature currently exists on public communication campaigns and even less that focuses specifically on environmental public communication campaigns, so low-budget groups interested in campaigning have few resources at their disposal. In recognition of the power of campaigns, the essential role of communication, and the challenges of communicating with a low budget, this guide seeks to aid environmental groups in implementing effective public communication strategies within low-budget campaigns.

The information included in this guide is a compilation of existing literature and the ideas gained from twenty in-depth interviews with environmentalists, who have worked for local, regional, national, or international environmental organizations or consulting groups that offer strategic communication services to environmental groups.
The professionals interviewed for this guide had a minimum of five years of environmental campaign experience or 10 years of communication experience including some environmental campaign work. Many of the environmentalists interviewed have experience working on both low-budget and better-funded campaigns. The basis for the interviews is that low-budget environmental groups that lack communication specialists and campaign experience can benefit from the knowledge of environmentalists who have learned techniques for implementing successful public communication campaigns despite limited funds.

The guide begins in chapter one with an overview of the vital steps in planning a campaign. Chapters two through four each focus on an essential element of effective public communication: researching the target audience, developing an effective message, and gaining trust and credibility. Since environmental campaigns often face fervent opposition from groups that make a profit at the expense of the environment, chapter five examines techniques for dealing with and overcoming wealthy adversaries. Chapters six through ten explain and provide examples of various types of mediums that can be used to deliver a campaign message to a public audience. The guide concludes with chapter eleven, which explains the importance of grassroots organizing in conjunction with public communication strategies. A valuable feature of this guide is the case studies and examples provided by the environmental professionals who contributed their campaign knowledge, lessons, and experiences. The goal of this guide is to provide low-budget environmental groups with the knowledge and tools for effective public communication that they might implement successful public communication campaigns for the betterment of the earth and its inhabitants.
CHAPTER 1

PLANNING A CAMPAIGN: THE BASIC ELEMENTS

"You can't really do a whole lot if you don't really know what you want."
Jeanette Russell, Grassroots Coordinator for National Forest Protection Alliance

Any successful communications endeavor depends upon effective planning. A solitary communication event requires a great deal of planning itself. So a campaign, a series of activities working cohesively toward a goal, needs significantly more planning. While there are many considerations that must be taken into account, a campaign plan can be broken down into six basic steps:

- Establish a goal
- Identify decision makers
- Identify target audiences
- Assess resources and constraints
- Develop strategies
- Evaluate strategies

Carrying out a campaign is a costly undertaking, not only in money but in human time and resources as well. By following these six key planning steps, you can help to ensure your efforts produce positive results.

Establish a Goal

While setting a goal may seem like an obvious step, many groups fail to clearly define their goal, which is perhaps the most vital element of a campaign. If you do not know exactly what you want to achieve, you are not likely to succeed. In Communication Skills for Conservation Professionals, Susan Jacobson points out, “Goals
generally address problems. Conversely, identifying problems is a good way to formulate goals...the more clearly the problem is stated, the more targeted a goal will be” (86). It is essential that the goal not only identifies the problem but also states a solution (Britell 2).

It is important to avoid setting colossal or general goals like “Controlling Global Warming” or “Reducing water pollution.” A goal should be something very specific and feasible for an organization. By setting a specific goal such as “Improving the water quality of X river” or “Improving recycling in X city by 25%,” it is much easier to determine detailed objectives and strategies to achieve that goal. In addition, “being very specific about your goal helps everybody understand what you want—from agency staff to your own volunteers” (Britell 2). Without a feasible goal for a campaign, there is no end in sight, which can make the campaign seem daunting. A goal reminds people what they are heading toward and keeps them motivated.

**Identify Decision Makers**

Once your organization has identified its campaign goal, it must figure out who has the power to make the necessary decisions to make the goal a reality. The people with that power are the decision makers. The decision maker(s) might be a state legislator, a University president, the CEO of a company, the Forest Service, or city council members. After identifying decision makers, the next step is to figure out, through research, how to influence those decision makers and persuade them to perform the desired action. This research might include examining decision makers’ voting history and donors, talking to individuals who have had contact with those decision makers, or speaking directly to the decision makers. While there are exceptions, it often
takes public pressure to motivate decision makers to perform the requested action. Political officials, from senators to mayors to city council members, are elected; they must represent citizens to stay in office. Public pressure can also influence CEOs and company managers, whose salaries depend on consumers. Once you identify the decision makers, you need to figure out which individuals or groups of people influence them.

Identify Target Audiences

In some cases environmentalists can work directly with decision makers, so the decision makers themselves are the target audience. In many situations, however, the voice of environmentalists is not enough to convince decision makers to take appropriate action. Thus, a campaign’s target audience is often the people who can influence the decision makers. This audience can range from a small group of individuals to a majority of the public. Some political officials can be influenced by pressure from a few of their major funders. Conversely, it may require significant public pressure to convince a corporation to stop using products made from old-growth forests. Whatever the situation, it is imperative to establish the target audience in order to choose appropriate strategies.

In a public communication campaign, it is generally beneficial to limit your target audience in order to have a greater impact with limited resources. Some people will never support environmental campaigns, such as employees or managers of mining companies or the timber industry. There is no point in wasting resources trying to convince them. There are others, such as outdoor enthusiasts and conservationists, who generally support environmental initiatives, and therefore, do not need to be targeted with the same message delivered to undecided members of the public. Those individuals represent a campaign’s base of support and should be targeted with a different message.
and through different mediums that encourage them to increase their involvement in the issue. Since the uncommitted middle generally represents the majority of the public, those are the people who must be reached in public communication campaigns. A campaign message should be developed around their concerns. When effectively targeted and motivated with a persuasive message, the undecided sector of the public has the power to pressure decision makers and demand change.

"Conversion experiences are rare. You don’t see the soldier throwing down his gun and joining the hippies. What you’re really going for is the gray, uncommitted middle in public discourse."—Twilly Cannon, Former Senior Member of Greenpeace's National Campaign Team

Assess Resources and Constraints

Once you identify your campaign’s goal, decision makers, and target audience, you must assess the campaign’s resources and constraints to determine what strategies are feasible. This involves developing a campaign budget and creating an inventory of human resources in staff, volunteers, and allies both within and outside the environmental community. It is important to be realistic about a campaign’s financial and human resources in order to determine the maximum capacity a campaign can achieve. An inventory will enable you to determine whether you should run paid advertisements or focus on gaining earned media, or whether you should do a direct mailing or a literature drop. With a thorough assessment of resources and constraints, you can discuss possible strategies for influencing decision makers and achieving your campaign goal.
Develop Strategies

Once you know what your campaign is capable of based on money and human resources, you can evaluate a range of specific strategies to reach the target audiences. Campaign strategies might include lobbying, litigation, and public communication. Campaigns work like ladders with multiple levels. Each strategy should have specific objectives that lead to the ultimate campaign goal. While many environmental campaigns utilize multiple strategies, this guide focuses on public communication strategies, since public communication and involvement is the backbone of successful public communication campaigns.

There are many types of public communication strategies available to low-budget campaigns. Some strategies are more appropriate than others for reaching particular audiences and achieving specific objectives. Existing literature on environmental campaigns and the information gained from the twenty interviews conducted for this guide suggest that the choice of strategies within a campaign are issue, goal, and audience specific and that mixing strategies is a common phenomenon. The following example of a public communication campaign in opposition to a proposal to lift a ban on mining activities illustrates how a campaign plan should be broken down into different strategies that correlate with specific objectives and audiences.
**EXAMPLE: Ballot Initiative Campaign**

**Goal:** Get voters to vote against a proposal to lift a ban on certain mining activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivate the campaign's base of supporters to get involved in the campaign effort</td>
<td>Supporters, volunteers, members (the base)</td>
<td>Our opposition has millions; our power lies in people. We need your help.</td>
<td>Grassroots organizing—email alerts, interpersonal communication, gatherings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuade business owners to object to the bill and vote against the ballot initiative</td>
<td>Business owners (hotels and restaurant owners, outfitters)</td>
<td>Mining will threaten tourism and cost millions of tax dollars in clean-up</td>
<td>TV and radio ads directed at business community, earned media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach absentee voters before they send in their ballots and convince them to vote against the bill</td>
<td>Absentee male and female voters</td>
<td>Mining poisons water and costs taxpayers money.</td>
<td>Direct mail, Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve widespread public awareness of mining problems and convince the majority of voters to vote against the bill</td>
<td>Voters, particularly women</td>
<td>Mining pollutes water sources and threatens water supplies</td>
<td>High-profile events in conjunction with interpersonal communication, earned media, and material distribution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluate Strategies**

Campaigns are never perfect no matter how well planned they are. A message may not work for one sector of the target audience, a medium may not reach the intended audience, or a public event may not get the hoped for media coverage. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the public communication strategies used within campaigns to determine whether or not they are cost effective, they need modification, or they should be continued. Basically, evaluation is the process of collecting information to determine
the value or worth of something (Amnesty International). Setting specific objectives for the strategies leading to the ultimate campaign goal enables campaigners to compare the intended outcomes of strategies with the actual outcomes. According to Amnesty International’s Campaigning Manual, “useful and practical evaluation can be done with relatively small amounts of time and other resources, and does not require specialist expertise,” so low-budget groups do not need to skip this integral component of effective campaigning.

Evaluation should occur throughout the implementation of a campaign to determine whether or not the chosen methods achieve their objectives, which enables the campaign to be revised if necessary. Because of time and resource constraints, it is not feasible to evaluate every component of a campaign (Amnesty International). Instead, the components chosen for evaluation should be based on their importance and the ease with which they can be evaluated. There are various types of evaluation that focus on different elements of a campaign, including the process, outcome, and long-term impact. Evaluating the long-term social impact of a campaign requires a lot of time and expertise, so it is more important for low-budget groups to evaluate process and outcome.

Evaluating the campaign process means measuring the efforts and direct outputs of a campaign. Questions that should be answered in this type of evaluation are how many materials have been distributed?, how many people have campaign materials and mediums reached?, how much news media coverage has the campaign received? (Communications Consortium Media Center). Evaluating the process can be completed easily by keeping a detailed record of all materials produced, activities carried out, and
coverage in the media. By comparing campaign objectives with completed tasks, you can determine how well the campaign is being implemented.

In addition to evaluating campaign processes, you should also evaluate the outcome of communication strategies. It is more difficult to gather information for this type of evaluation because it involves an assessment of the target audience’s beliefs and attitudes, but it can be accomplished through a number of low-cost techniques. One way to get a sense of the public’s understanding of and stance on an issue is to read letters to the editor and opinion editorials. You can also evaluate the public’s response to a campaign’s communication strategies by comparing your organization’s membership before and during the campaign to determine whether or not there is an increase. In addition, you can gain a general sense of the extent of public support for the campaign issue by tracking attendance at campaign events and activities with attendance sheets and other means. Your organization can also develop its own surveys and ask a random sample of people to fill them out or conduct small-scale phone polls for more accurate and helpful information about the effectiveness of various communication strategies. The survey could include questions about peoples’ knowledge of an issue, from what source(s) they gained that knowledge, and how they feel about the issue.

There are also techniques you can use to evaluate specific mediums. For example, websites should track the number of people visiting the site and provide visitors with the opportunity to provide feedback. If materials, such as pamphlets and newsletters, are distributed to organization members, contact those individuals and ask them whether or not they consider those materials useful. Another possibility is providing a 1-800 number on all campaign mediums used, such as posters, radio ads,
direct mail pieces, and websites, which people could call to get more information or to comment on the issue. The amount of people using that number could demonstrate, to some extent, whether or not campaign messages are reaching the target audience and increasing the public’s awareness of the issue.

It can be difficult to separate specific campaign strategies from the compilation of all the efforts. It can also be challenging to separate campaign initiatives from other factors affecting policy and public opinion to determine their effectiveness. However, using one or multiple evaluation tactics can provide at least a general sense of a campaign’s strengths and weaknesses, which is useful in directing the campaign toward success.

Overview

With strategic planning, an environmental campaign can have a momentous impact. Without a well-defined campaign plan, a campaign will lose focus, drain resources, and fail to achieve the intended goal. An organization that does not have time to plan certainly does not have time to implement a campaign.
Chapter 2

RESEARCHING THE TARGET AUDIENCE

"If you end up spending money by putting either the wrong argument or the wrong mode of communication to the people, you are just wasting money."

—Kelly Rigg, Former Greenpeace Campaign Director

For any public communication strategy to be effective in convincing a target audience, campaigners must not only know who their target audience includes but also its values, beliefs and knowledge about the issue. Based on evaluations from a number of campaigns, Hyman and Sheatsley (1947) found that people have a tendency to attend to, interpret, and remember messages that are consistent with their prior attitudes and experiences (Rogers and Storey 827). In order to shape messages that your target audience can relate to and will thus pay attention to, you must gain an understanding of the audience through research. For example, if you are trying to end motorized boating on a particular section of X River, you need to know how the target audience feels about the river. Does the audience use it for fishing, canoeing, motorized boating, swimming, or as a source of drinking water? By knowing those details, you are more likely to develop a message that will resonate with the target audience.

It is also vital to know where the target audience gets its information. Putting an ad in the newspaper or a spot on the radio does not guarantee communication with the target audience because communication only occurs when the intended receiver actually receives the message. Some people get their information from TV, some people only read magazines and newspapers, and others listen to the radio on their way to and from work. It is crucial to recognize that different mediums reach different sectors of the
public and to choose communication mediums accordingly. Adequate research greatly improves your chance of communicating with the target audience. The remainder of this chapter describes a variety of low-budget research techniques.

**Polling and Focus Groups**

Polling and focus groups, which companies and well-funded non-profit organizations use to research public attitudes, concerns, and activities, cost tens of thousands of dollars. While polling and focus group data is ideal if an organization has enough money, many environmental groups do not have the financial resources to hire agencies to conduct polling or focus groups specifically for their campaign. That is not to say a low-budget environmental group cannot use existing focus group and polling data. Sometimes a number of groups pull their resources together to finance polling or focus groups and then give other environmental groups the opportunity to review the data. Unlike companies that compete with one another over consumers, environmental non-profits have a common goal—improving the health of the environment. So there is no reason not to ask to review data from other environmental organizations.

Another way to obtain existing polling data is through Internet research. For instance, PollingReport.com, a nonpartisan resource on trends in American public opinion, contains free polling data on American’s perceptions about a host of issues including elections, education, war, and the environment. For $95 per year, subscribers have access to state-by-state polling data about topics covered in the presidential race as well as ballot initiatives. Often polling agencies post slightly dated polling data online, and though those polls may not deal specifically with an environmental campaign’s issue, they can provide beneficial demographic information. According to Jim Britell in
Organize to Win: A grassroots activist’s guide, there is another “quick, free, and easy way to know exactly where any community stands on environmental issues and it is more accurate than polls:”

For voting tabulation purposes, counties are subdivided into small geographic areas called precincts. Our county [in Oregon] of 20,000 people has thirty precincts. Historical voting data is always available down to the precinct level. Voting behavior for any precinct tends to be stable and predictable over time. To determine exactly how many people in any area hold pro-and anti-environmental attitudes, analyze precinct-voting data from past elections. This data is generally available from the voting registrar in your county and is increasingly being posted to the Internet. Some candidates and ballot measures present voters with stark black and white, pro- and anti-environmental choices. These are called ‘cutting’ or ‘wedge’ issues...A recent issue would have banned all clearcutting on private lands in Oregon. If you analyze precinct voting results on these ‘cutting’ ballot measures, you can tell exactly how many people at the neighborhood level support environmental protection, and exactly where environmental support is weak and strong...Precinct-voting history provides a sort of x-ray into the views of citizens right down to the neighborhood level. (Chapter 2)

Careful research may unveil plenty of information about specific communities or potential audiences.

Simple Surveys

If your organization cannot afford to hire professionals to conduct research, another possibility is to develop and implement your own simple surveys with a small population segment, especially if you are working within a small city or community. Campaign volunteers could set up information tables in high-traffic areas and not only talk to individuals about the issue but also ask people who approach the table to take a few minutes to fill out the survey. Volunteers could also canvass specific neighborhoods with the survey. Though surveys produced in-house do not have the advantage of software to analyze data, they can still enhance campaigners’ understanding of
community attitudes by asking simple questions about how much people know about an issue, what their concerns are, and where they get their information. Organizations located near a college or university can also take advantage of their situation by recruiting interns to develop a research strategy for the target audience. It could even be a thesis project, thus benefiting the student as well as the organization.

**Conversations with Community Members**

Environmental campaigners who are unable to find existing polling data and do not feel comfortable developing their own survey can go out and talk to people. The advantage of small, low-budget environmental groups is that they tend to be very grounded in their community. If the goal or your public communication campaign is to reach a specific community, start talking to people on the street, at the bar, at the grocery store, in an elevator, or at city council meetings. If your campaign seeks to gain protection for some river, spend time at the river and talk to people recreating there about the issue. It is useful to talk to friends and family as well as strangers about campaign issues to figure out what resonates with them.

You can also learn how different people feel about an issue through house parties. Inviting friends and asking them to bring their friends to a party or a potluck creates an opportunity to speak with strangers about campaign issues. Jeanne Clark, Director of Communications at PennFuture uses what she calls information focus groups:

[The focus groups] are especially good around the holidays, when you go to parties with people you don’t know, and you have no idea how you are going to survive. When someone asks what you do, you test your most recent messages that you are working on and see if you get a blank response or see how people respond...You can’t do a message in a vacuum or among people who think just like you.
In addition to talking directly to members of the public, start reading letters to the editor and opinion pieces to find out public concerns and hot topics.

Overview

Knowing the target audience is as important for low-budget organizations as it is for higher-budget organizations when it comes to developing public communication strategies. With limited resources, low-budget groups simply need to be more creative in conducting research. Blindly choosing a message and mediums to deliver that message without an understanding of the target audience is a not a recipe for successful public communication.

"You better know what your issue is, and you better know how people feel about that issue, otherwise, you won’t win."—Bryony Schwan, National Campaign Director for Women’s Voices for the Earth (WVE)
"We will always be outspent in our campaigns, and we will always be misrepresented. Therefore, to win, we need to be connecting up with something that runs strong and deep with most citizens."

—Mary O’Brien, in “Preparing for a Campaign”

Every act of communication, whether it is a one-on-one exchange, a TV advertisement, a postcard, or a newspaper article, contains a message—the words and information being conveyed. But for public communication strategies within a campaign, the message must be more than information; it must be a persuasive argument. Campaigns are purposive. They seek to produce positive change or prevent negative change by motivating people, both decision makers and the public, to action. To be successful in motivating your target audience with any public communications strategy, you must be very strategic in developing your message. While appropriate messages vary based on the situation and audience, there are common characteristics of good messages, which will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

Develop a Slogan

When developing a public communications strategy to persuade an audience to support some issue or take action, environmental groups should learn from the messaging techniques used by successful companies. Successful companies brand themselves and their products or services with short, catchy slogans: Hungry? Grab a Snickers, 15 Minutes could save you 15% or more on car insurance, Shouldn’t your baby be a Gerber baby?, Subway eat fresh. People remember those slogans and immediately identify them
with the company they represent. Slogans are useful for creating awareness about campaigns as well as products. You have probably heard the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's slogan "Parents: the Anti-Drug" or the U.S. Army's advertising campaign slogan, "Be all you can be."

"One of the most powerful things that you can do for your campaign is craft one slogan or one message that rings through everything you do."
—Gerik Kransky, Campaign Coordinator of the Save the Blackfoot. Vote NO on I-147 campaign in Montana

The purpose of a slogan is not to list all the benefits of a product or explain an issue. Its purpose is to capture the audience's attention while characterizing the campaign issue in one simple message. You can make a slogan more catchy or memorable by choosing words that rhyme or sound good together, using repetition, or playing off common phrases.

**Examples of Environmental Slogans & Messages**

"Give a Hoot, Don’t Pollute"
"Berner’s Bay, Don’t Give it Away"
"Remove the Dam, Restore the River"
"Don’t turn our open space into an Open Pit"
"Ignorance is Toxic"

By using one slogan in every communication medium you use, including brochures, direct mail, newspaper ads, banners and posters, or the radio, you will create an identity for your campaign that the public will recognize. Slogans are more applicable to paid media than earned media, which consists of news stories, op-ed pieces, and letters to the editor. However, campaigns that do not buy TV and radio ads or other paid media
can still create a slogan to use on banners, posters, and other cheap materials. Whether or not your campaign has a slogan, it must have a clear, simple message.

**Keep the Message Simple**

No matter what issue you are dealing with, you must hone it down to one or two simple messages to communicate to each of your target audiences. It should not contain a lot of words or complex thoughts. That can be a challenge for environmentalists dealing with complex, scientific issues, but it is absolutely necessary. You must suppress the urge to explain the entire issue to the public because you will lose your audience long before they understand it. According to Chris Rose’s “12 Basic Guidelines” at campaignstrategy.org, “…the task is to find the pieces of an issue or concerns which are unacceptable to a big enough group of people to get the effect you need.” You have a very limited amount of time in public communications to get your audience’s attention and deliver your message before they lose interest, so your message must be a simple idea the public can quickly understand.

The wording of a message can have a tremendous impact on its effectiveness. Environmentalists deal with scientific issues and work within the regulatory system, so they learn to speak that language. When developing a message for the public, it is critical to realize average citizens do not speak that language. Talking in scientific terms, such as expressing air pollution in terms of parts per million, is not going to work. Use the language mainstream citizens can understand. For instance, people understand the phrase “Growing Greener” much more than “Environmental Bond.” Instead of “Late Succession Forests,” which has little meaning to most Americans, talk about “Old-growth.” Complexity does not motivate people. Instead, it “makes people feel
confused—and if they feel confused, they will think you are confused, and not worth listening to” (Rose). To ensure that your message is going to be understood, test it on non-environmentalists and make necessary changes before delivering it to the public.

Americans are bombarded by messages and ads on the radio, on TV, on billboards, in the newspaper, and through every other possible communication channel. Thus, they develop selective attention, a protective method receivers use to prevent overload. Based on an individual's ability to process and store messages, he or she only perceives useful information or information that has immediate value. That means that as a campaigner, you have only a few seconds to get your audience members’ attention and gain their interest. A short, simple message will be heard, while a long, complicated message will be ignored.

**Repeat the Message**

Once you have a slogan and/or a simple message, you must repeat it over and over in everything you do. You need to coordinate your message throughout every media you use: TV, radio, posters, direct mail, banners, your website. You must say the message at least once in every interview you give, so it is repeated in the news. When people receive a message over and over in many different mediums, they begin to recognize it, which makes it more difficult to ignore. After repeating the primary message, you can supplement it with talking points in communication mediums that allow for more detail, such as fact sheets, newspaper editorials, and direct mail.

"By the time you think that you just can’t stand to hear it one more time, that might be the time they are starting to get the message."—Kelly Rigg, Former Campaign Director for Greenpeace, Co-founder of the Varda Group
Choose a Message that Resonates

A short, simple message repeated over and over again is necessary, but it is not enough to convince an audience to support your position. Your message must also resonate with the target audience based upon its concerns, interests, or beliefs. An audience of urban residents may require a much different message than an audience of ranchers. While some people might be moved by messages about protecting old growth forests for their intrinsic value, others may be convinced by the health benefits of protecting trees. Because the public is very divided in its view of the world, researching your audience is crucial to the success of your public communication activities. In general, citizens are more concerned about issues that pertain to their daily lives, so pointing out their self-interest in an issue is a good strategy. While there is no cookie cutter message or appeal that works for every audience, there are several types of messages commonly used by experienced environmental campaigners. They are described below.

Public Health

Everyone wants to be healthy, and they want their families to be healthy. At the same time, many citizens are much less concerned about “environmental issues,” such as protecting wildlife habitat, using alternatives to pesticides, or reducing fossil-fuel consumption, which seem distant and unrelated to their everyday life. What many citizens do not realize is that environmental protection tends to go hand-in-hand with maintaining and improving public health. For that reason, environmental groups are increasingly framing environmental issues in terms of public health when developing messages for the public. Public polls about the environment continually reveal that
American citizens care about clean water and clean air. If your goal is to stop a gold mine, your message to the public could focus on the health impacts of mercury in their drinking water. If the goal of your campaign is to prevent a particular forest from being logged, your message to the community could focus on the role of the forest in preventing erosion and preserving water quality. The key is to highlight the health impacts of an issue rather than the "environmental" impacts.

People support messages that affect them personally, and health issues affect everyone. A message depicting an environmental problem in terms of human health will resonate with a much larger audience than a message about protecting the environment for its own sake.

"If we are talking about the dangers of oil, some people might not be moved by how an indigenous community would be uprooted because of an oil line, but when they think of the human health impacts or childhood asthma rates because of combustion of fossil fuels, it is something that opens their eyes."—Michael Brune, Executive Director of Rainforest Action Network

Economic Benefits

In addition to health issues, people tend to respond to messages that hit them in the pocketbook. People get upset when they feel their money is being wasted, their tax dollars are paying for bad policies, or their businesses are threatened. Presenting a message in terms of the target audience’s economic interests in protecting some forest, stopping a mine, or buying fuel efficient vehicles, may have a much greater influence than a message that focuses on protecting the environment.
When Coeur d'Alene Corporation proposed a gold mine on land surrounding Berner's Bay in Alaska, the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SACC) sought support from outfitters and business owners to oppose the mine, based on their economic interests. Sea kayaking outfitters, fishing and hunting guides, as well as businesses offering cabin rentals and supplies depend on the pristine nature of the area to attract visitors. Though the business owners may not consider themselves environmentalists, they had a common interest in protecting clean water and wildlife habitat, which their businesses depend on. Using an economic message, the SACC gained allies and supporters outside the environmental community.

You can also develop messages that focus on the public’s economic interests as taxpayers. In Berner’s Bay, Coeur d’Alene Corporation was close to bankruptcy just 10 months before it proposed the mine. So one of Southeast Alaska Conservation Council’s messages was “If the mine opens and the company goes bankrupt, taxpayers could get stuck with enormous mine waste clean up costs.”

One of the benefits environmentalists have in public communications is that activities and projects that do not make sense from an environmental standpoint are often illogical from an economic standpoint as well. Identify the economic interests of your target audience in an issue and you may be able to cast a much wider net with your message.

Recreation

In some situations, the most effective message is one that focuses on the audience’s personal connection to or use of nature. Many people appreciate nature for the recreational opportunities it offers, such as camping, hiking, skiing, horseback riding,
hunting, and fishing. For those individuals, a message about the potential loss of a quiet river because of motorized boating or the loss of popular hiking trails to development can be very powerful. Hunters may be motivated by messages about preserving wildlife habitat to protect hunting opportunities. There are so many ways environmental issues can be framed. Environmental campaigners must figure out how members of the target audience view a forest, a river, a community park, or wildlife in order to frame messages in a way that personally connects the audience to the issue.

Preserving a Natural Legacy

Another message that sometimes resonates with Americans is preserving the environment for future generations. National polling shows that people care about their children when it comes to the environment. Even parents who do not spend much time outdoors themselves want their children and grandchildren to have the opportunity to see old-growth forests, swim in clean rivers, or hike in Wilderness areas. Other people are moved by messages about preserving legacies. For environmentalists campaigning to preserve a national park from destructive activities, an effective message might be about protecting America’s national treasures for our children. Regions, states, and even small communities often have their own legacies, which can be used for campaign messaging. Ranchers in the west, for instance, may have a common interest with environmentalists in protecting rural areas from urban sprawl and other development. Environmental campaigners communicating to ranchers about the need to prevent development could frame the issue in terms of protecting the West’s ranching legacy. However, a message based on the value of nature will only work for audiences that hold those values, so you
need to figure out what your target audience’s sentiment is toward a region, forest, or river to determine whether or not such a message would have a strong appeal.

Offer a Solution

"In the presence of creditable arguments from logos and ethos, the environmental argument from pathos must find a balance between despair, which itself can be paralyzing, and some motivating hope." —Judy Segall

Messages about threats to clean air and water, the health implications of pesticides, the loss of recreational areas, or the value of a particular forest do little good if they do not offer people a solution or provide specific action for them to take. You cannot just scare, anger, or impassion people; you must also tell them what they can do about the problem. The solution or action you provide must be something very specific that the audience can easily understand and perform. For example, global warming is an abstract concept for most people, so “stop global warming” would have little meaning or effect on a public audience. Instead, campaigners can explain to target audience members how they can reduce their own energy consumption by car pooling, turning off lights, taking shorter showers, or other tangible solutions.

People are more likely to support your position if you communicate feasible alternatives to poor environmental practices. For example, one of the Rainforest Action Network’s (RAN) campaigns is to stop old-growth forests from being destroyed for wood and paper products. Instead of just telling consumers to stop buying old-growth products, RAN offers alternatives, such as purchasing certified sustainably harvested wood, reclaimed or recycled lumber, non-wood building products, and recycled or certified, tree-free paper.
If you present an issue in a way that demonstrates readily available solutions to the action you are criticizing, people are more likely to support your effort. In the case of RAN’s old-growth campaign, once people realize that there are logical alternatives, they are likely to agree that “we don’t need to convert 2,000-year-old trees into toilet paper,” as Executive Director Michael Brune put it. People support ideas when they understand what specific actions they can take to tackle the problem, so effective messages must contain or be supplemented with solutions the audience can act on.

“Everybody does messaging a little different, but for me it is like a fable: there is a hero, there is a villain, there is a threat, and there is a solution. So you are identifying who the threat is and what the problem is and then you’re sweeping in there and coming up with who can solve the problem. The hero can be you or it can be the audience.”—Liz Banse, Director at Environmental Media Services

Offering a solution and explicit actions people can take to address the problem gives people hope. Hope is really important because people tire of doom and gloom messages. If possible, it is better to phrase messages positively in terms of saving valuable assets such as “clean” water, “fresh” air, or “healthy” forests rather than in negative terms like “stopping” a logging project or “preventing” habitat loss. Positive messages that offer a solution are both empowering and motivating, while negative messages may only cause despair.

The following case study demonstrates a campaign that developed an effective message using the characteristics discussed in this chapter.
EXAMPLE: Effective Messaging in the Save the Blackfoot. Vote No on I-147 Campaign

Overview
I-147 was a Montana ballot initiative to overturn I-137, the initiative Montana voters approved in 1998 banning new and expanded open-pit cyanide-leach mining in Montana. The primary funder of the initiative campaign was Colorado’s Canyon Resources, which had proposed an open-pit cyanide-leach mine along Montana’s upper Blackfoot River. Save the Blackfoot. Vote No on I-147 was a ballot initiative campaign opposed to I-147 and organized by a steering committee of staff members from three environmental and conservation organizations.

Target Audience
Because I-147 was a statewide ballot initiative, the target audience was Montana voters. Polling data revealed that clean water resonates with everyone, while public health resonates specifically with women. It also showed that private property rights are particularly important to rural landowners, while taxpayer dollars for cleaning up mining pollution is a primary concern of the business community.

Primary Message
No Cyanide. No on I-147 or vote AGAINST I-147 was the simple message that the campaign organizers wanted the public to hear, if nothing else. Though “No Cyanide. No on I-147” and “vote AGAINST I-147” mean the same thing, the coalition switched to “vote AGAINST I-147” because the language on the ballot was For/Against I-147 rather than Yes/No to I-147. It is important to use the most relevant language, so people cannot misinterpret your message.

Talking Points Supporting the Message
A campaign’s primary message to the public should be included on every medium used. In mediums that allow for more information, that message can be supplemented with talking points or the rationale behind the message. The Save the Blackfoot. Vote No on I-147 campaign appealed to its audiences’ health, economic, and property rights interests by communicating the following threats posed by I-147:

- Open pit, cyanide-leach mining is an extremely destructive type of gold mining. It has resulted in severe, long-term water pollution.

- Open pit, cyanide-leach mining harms private property.

- Open pit, cyanide-leach mines are costing Montana taxpayers millions in reclamation costs.
• There is nothing new in I-147 that would protect neighboring private property rights, prevent water pollution, or protect taxpayers.

To some extent these talking points or rationale for the primary message “No Cyanide. No on I-147” were targeted to specific groups of people within the general audience of Montana voters. For example, a TV ad that ran in Billings, MT talked about the costs in taxpayer dollars to clean up mining pollution because Billings is a business community. A radio advertisement that reached north central and eastern Montana, primarily rural areas, discussed the threat of cyanide mining to private property because that audience consisted largely of ranchers with significant acreage. Regardless of what talking points were used on TV and radio ads, direct mail, and other mediums, they all came back to the main message of voting no/against I-147.

Solution

In this case, the solution or action presented to the target audience was to vote against I-147. In other words, people could avoid the problems associated with cyanide mining by voting against the initiative that would allow cyanide mining.

Overview

A message is the essence of communication. Therefore, campaigners must tailor the campaign message to the target audience for successful communication. While appropriate messages vary based on the target audience and the situation, successful messages share common characteristics: they are simple, they resonate with the audience, and they offer a solution.
A compelling message is not always enough to convince an audience; the audience must trust the source of the message, the messenger, and believe the message itself to be credible. According to Rogers (1983), people tend to see their peers as more "trustworthy than are professionals or experts or others more socially distant from members of the campaign audience, but professionals or those perceived to be in positions of authority are more likely to be considered competent or knowledgeable" (Rogers and Storey 837). The individuals chosen to deliver a campaign message should be based on the target audience. When communicating relatively new or scientific issues, an expert’s testimony could add credibility to the message. If a message focuses on emotion, the target audience may be persuaded by a personal story from someone within its community. It is necessary to be very deliberate in choosing messengers and using accurate information to ensure that the target audience does not dismiss your message.

Non-Environmentalists as Messengers

"To a certain extent, you can’t just buy ads, do direct mail, and make phone calls and tell people you are right. You need to get your message in the mouths of people who are reputable.”—Gerik Kransky, Campaign Coordinator of the Save the Blackfoot. Vote NO on I-147 campaign

The messenger must be someone who is trusted or believed to be credible by the target audience. Environmentalists are often not the best messengers for the public.
Many people, today, are still wary of environmentalists, who are often seen as being opposed to jobs and the economy or as the Chicken Little type who always say the sky is falling. You must take your ego out of the decision and determine who will be most effective in persuading the target audience.

Many people are impressed with credentials, so using professionals to deliver messages related to their expertise often lends credibility to a campaign. For instance, polling has shown that the public trusts medical professionals. When Women’s Voices for the Earth (WVE) sought to shut down medical waste incinerators in Montana, they used medical professionals to deliver their message. Similarly, when the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) campaigned against an Oregon bill that would eliminate the state’s pesticide tracking program, it used a nurse on their radio ad and other medical professionals to write letters to the editor and Op-eds. The public also tends to trust scientists. Scientists are appropriate messengers for communicating new scientific findings, such as the harmful effects of genetically modified foods.

In other situations, the best messenger may not be a professional, but rather, someone trusted within the target audience’s community or someone who resembles members of the target audience. For example, a fisherman would be an effective messenger for delivering a message about protecting stream water quality to a fishing community. A local rafting guide may be a persuasive messenger for communicating to recreationists.

A trusted messenger is even more important when the target audience is a group of people who often oppose environmentalists, such as ranchers. Environmentalists trying to convince a group of ranchers to build riparian barriers to keep cattle from
polluting streams should look for sympathetic people within the ranching community to use as messengers. Do not be afraid to look for messengers in unlikely places. For example, there may be ORV users who oppose snowmobiling in Yellowstone and other National Parks or retired Forest Service employees who oppose logging in particular forests.

Another possibility is to use a victim or someone with a personal story related to the campaign issue to deliver the message. People are motivated and interested by personal stories, which is why newspapers have feature sections. The following example demonstrates how one campaign used an individual with a personal, tragic story about toxins in cosmetics to deliver its campaign message.

**EXAMPLE: Effective Messenger in the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics**

**Overview**
The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics is a coalition of public health, education, religious, labor, women’s, environmental and consumer groups. The mission of the coalition is to protect the health of consumers and workers by requiring the health and beauty industry to phase out the use of chemicals that are known or suspected carcinogens, mutagens and reproductive toxins.

**Issue**
The first issue the campaign addressed was the presence of phthalates, a family of chemicals used to dissolved other ingredients, in many beauty products, such as cosmetics, perfume and deodorant. Phthalates have been shown in animals test to damage the lungs, liver, and kidneys and to harm the developing testes of offspring.

**Message**
Chemicals linked to cancer and birth defects do not belong in cosmetics. Period.

**Messenger**
One of the individuals the coalition used as a messenger was a retired supermodel whose baby boy was born with hypospadias, a birth defect of the penis, which is consistent with the kind of reproductive defects found in animal studies on phthalates.
According to Bryony Schwan, the National Coordinator for the national toxics collaboration Coming Clean, "She couldn't have been a better messenger because here is a woman who has probably used more cosmetics and products than anyone else, and she had a child with birth defects. And she didn't say 'my child's birth defects were caused by these chemicals,' but she said 'I have to wonder if all those chemicals, all those products I used all those years are the reason why my child was born with birth defects.' That is all she had to say. And of course, the media just loved her. So that was a very effective messenger."

Low-budget environmental campaigns have less access to former supermodels or other celebrities than national campaigns. However, that does not mean you cannot find the parent of a child who developed chronic asthma from air pollution, a woman who became infertile from exposure to pesticides, or a small-scale farmer forced out of business by factory farms. Emotional stories from average citizens can have as great an impact on an audience as celebrities. Giving an issue a face by using real people with real stories to deliver a message is much more powerful than talking broadly about the negative impacts of an issue on a generalized group of people.

Although it is a good strategy to find someone outside the environmental community to act as a messenger in an environmental campaign, it is important to select individuals who are both articulate and able to stay on message. It will not benefit your campaign to use someone who goes off message during interviews or press conferences or who is unable to speak clearly and fluently about the campaign. Your message and your messenger must work simultaneously in public communications. When choosing a messenger, consider the level of trust the target audience has in that individual as well as his or her public speaking ability.
Environmentalists as Messengers

Sometimes environmentalists do act as messengers in environmental campaigns. In those situations, you have to work extra hard to gain the trust of the target audience. If your target audience consists of people who have a tendency to be skeptical of environmentalists, it is important that you do not fulfill their stereotypes. Do not go to a public meeting wearing dreadlocks, for example. Instead, dress like them, speak like them, and show them that you are an “average” person like them, rather than a radical. People often have more faith in those who resemble themselves. If your target audience is college students, it may be appropriate to dress in jeans and a t-shirt when communicating with them. On the other hand, if you are trying to reach the business community, dress in business attire. That is not to say you should try to be exactly like the members of your target audience, but you should take measures to ensure that your demeanor does not stop them from hearing your message.

Diverse Voices

Having diverse voices lends more credibility to a campaign than only having a group of environmentalists. By finding messengers and other supporters outside the environmental community willing to get involved in the campaign, environmental groups can often run campaigns without using their name as the leader. For example, the Save the Blackfoot. Vote No on I-147 campaign in Montana, which was organized by a steering committee of environmentalists and conservationists, labeled itself a coalition of landowners, business people, conservationists, and Montana taxpayers for clean water and rural traditions. This title demonstrates that the campaign was not just funded and supported by environmentalists but also by non-environmentalists in Montana. When
Citizens for Public Accountability (CPA) led an Oregon right-to-know campaign, it never mentioned itself as the organizer (O'Brien). “We had spokespersons who were CPA members; and some who weren't. We never mentioned CPA; we simply referred to ‘citizens’ working on this campaign, and so that's how the newspapers, and radio and TV talked about the campaign (O'Brien). Using many people with diverse backgrounds and interests to deliver a campaign message is not only beneficial in gaining credibility, but it is also helpful in motivating the target audience to jump on the bandwagon and get involved in the campaign.

“"In the conservative west, you really have to do a good job of getting that diverse voice to show that it isn’t just the green people carrying the message.”—Randy Rasmussen, Campaign Coordinator for the Natural Trails and Waters Coalition

Accurate Information

The accuracy of a campaign message also plays a significant role in gaining and maintaining an audience's trust. Make statements you can support with science, personal testimony, or other forms of evidence. If there is no current science to back up your argument, you can acknowledge that and still have an effective message. For example, if there has been no scientific study to determine whether or not a certain chemical used in food processing is harmful to humans, your message could be “we are not sure whether or not this chemical is harmful for human consumption, but in case it is, we have an obligation to prevent its use until a scientific study can be conducted.” If people feel they are being manipulated or lied to, they will reject your message very quickly, and it will be nearly impossible to regain their trust. It is also important, particularly for environmentalists who are often viewed as radicals, to keep an issue in perspective when
addressing the public. As Mike Matz, Executive Director of the Campaign for America’s Wilderness, explained, a local shopping mall does not mean the end of the world, but it does mean people will lose the various trails they use to walk their dogs. A good approach is to focus on impacts that are tangible to the audience in a manner that is as truthful as possible.

Overview

Campaigns rarely succeed without trust and credibility. Campaigns can acquire an audience’s trust by using honest and accurate information at all times. Appropriate messengers lend credibility to a campaign. Messengers play a pivotal role in public communication because they can either persuade an audience to consider an idea or immediately turn them away. Campaign messages based on truth and delivered by people the audience trusts have a good chance of being heard and paid attention to.
Chapter 5
DEALING WITH OPPOSITION

"If you have trust and credibility, you can win no matter what their spend is."
—Chris Rose, Environmental Communications Consultant

One of the challenges of implementing environmental campaigns is gaining support amidst intense opposition from industry and organizations with more money to spend on influencing the public. The purpose of environmental campaigns is generally to alter some practice or behavior that is detrimental to the environment. Since industries and corporations often engage in activities that degrade the environment, they are natural adversaries to environmental groups working to stop those destructive practices. Although activities that are harmful to the environment tend to be harmful to human health, adversary groups often have a lot of money to spend on aggressive campaigns to convince the public otherwise. Although environmental groups are typically far outmatched financially by their opponents, David did defeat Goliath, and environmental groups can gain enough public support to overcome powerful opposition. This chapter presents the common strategies suggested by experienced environmental campaigners to win public support and prevail over powerful adversaries.

Stay on Message, Don't Counter Message

A common piece of advice from experienced environmental campaigners is to avoid countering the opposition’s messages, even when they attack your message. Instead of being reactive, set the tone of the debate by staying on message and repeating it. A strategically planned message based on researched information about the target audience should cut through the opposition’s message to persuade the public. A message
must be repeated over and over again before the audience finally perceives it. If you constantly change your message in response to the opposition’s message, you will confuse people rather than persuade them. You will also forfeit the opportunity to communicate the one, simple message that is most likely to gain your audience’s support.

If you have ever watched political debates, you probably noticed that candidates have a few primary ideas they go back to no matter what question they are asked. It is an intentional strategy to focus attention on the key messages the candidate wants voters to hear and associate with him or her. It is also a valuable strategy for environmental campaigns to always pivot back to the key message, no matter what opposition says or does. Consider a situation in which your main adversary is a company dumping toxins into a river within your community. They may find “experts” to argue, “up to 50 parts per billion of the toxin are safe for humans.” Arguing against the company’s science would only confuse the public and dilute your message. It would be far more effective to rely on your one, simple message, “No toxins are safe. There is no reason to expose humans to any amount of toxins when there are plenty of alternatives.” Low-budget environmental campaigns have limited funds to use in saturating their target audience with their messages. Thus, a proven strategy is to use those funds to repeat the most important message over and over to the target audience rather than repeatedly changing the message in response to attacks from opposition.

**Attack the Messenger**

Another tactic for dealing with opposition is to attack the messenger of the opposition’s campaign without responding to its message. More often than not, environmental campaigns seek to protect public interest as well as the environment itself.
A campaign is generally necessary when something or someone, often a large company that stands to make a major profit, is threatening public and environmental health.

Whether trying to stop a cyanide mine, pass a bill to increase fuel-emission standards in your state, or implement another action to improve environmental and public health, your campaign will probably be challenged by a company or an industry unwilling to forfeit profits for environmental protection measures. Opposition parties often spend millions on advertising campaigns to gain public support for their own benefit. Therefore, environmental campaigns can sometimes deflate their opposition's entire campaign by identifying the company or organization funding it and how it stands to benefit.

The following case study demonstrates how one environmental campaign overcame a multi-million dollar company by sticking to its message and attacking the opposition's messenger.

EXAMPLE: Dealing with Opposition. Save the Blackfoot. Vote No on I-147

I-147

As mentioned in chapter three, I-147 was a ballot initiative filed with the state of Montana on March 2, 2004. If enacted by citizens on November 2, 2004, it would have significantly modified I-137, an initiative that passed in 1998 banning new and expanded open-pit cyanide-leach mining in Montana. It would have allowed the use of cyanide recovery at open-pit gold mines with appropriate practices and environmental safeguards.

Vote Yes to I-147

Vote Yes to I-147 was a $3 million pro-I-147 advertising campaign run by a coalition of Miners, Merchants and Montanans for Jobs and Economic Opportunity. Just under $3 million or 98% of the campaign funds came from the Colorado-based Canyon Resources Corporation. If the initiative passed, it would have allowed Canyon Resources to develop its proposed McDonald Gold Project and extract a 10.9 million ounce gold deposit along Montana’s upper Blackfoot River.

Message: We can have both a thriving mining industry and a protected environment. The primary talking points used in the Vote Yes to I-147 were that the initiative imposed
additional restrictions to protect surface and groundwater and that I-147 would create new good-paying jobs and fund services through tax dollars.

Save the Blackfoot. Vote No on I-147

Save the Blackfoot. Vote No on I-147 was a $450,000 campaign run by a coalition of landowners, business people, conservationists and Montana taxpayers for clean water and rural traditions. The campaign’s steering committee consisted of three individuals from non-profit environmental and conservation organizations. The purpose of the campaign was to stop I-147 from being passed to prevent Canyon Resources and other mining companies from constructing cyanide mines in Montana.

Message: No Cyanide. No on I-147. The primary talking points used in the Vote No on I-147 campaign were that cyanide mining pollutes water, and therefore, harms private property and costs taxpayers millions of dollars in reclamation costs. In addition, the campaign argued that I-147 contained no new regulations that would protect clean water.

Election Results

Montana’s I-147 was defeated by a 16-point margin, 42 percent to 58 percent.

The Success of the Vote No on I-147 Campaign

Though the No on I-147 campaign was outspent by the Yes on I-147 campaign by six times, it was successful. While a number of factors shaped the outcome of the vote, one of the primary factors was the strategic approach of the Vote No on I-147 campaign. With significantly less money to spend on its campaign, the coalition opposed to I-147 waited until three months prior to the vote to begin communicating to the public. Then, from the time it implemented the Vote No on I-147 communication campaign until the day of the vote, it stuck to one, key message, “No Cyanide. No on I-147,” and four talking points to support it. The coalition did not counter the Yes on I-147 campaign’s message about safe mining and more jobs, which would have enabled the opposition to set the tone of the debate. Without leaving that message, the environmental coalition also attacked the Yes on I-147 campaign’s messenger, Canyon Resources.

According to Gerik Kransky, Campaign Coordinator of the Save the Blackfoot. Vote No on I-147 campaign, “one of the most important things we did to disarm a 3.5 million dollar mass media campaign was attack the foundation of the campaign in order to delegitimize the message that they sent out, ‘safe mining and more jobs.’” The coalition did this by telling the public to “look who’s telling you this—a cyanide mining corporation from Colorado that wants to build a mine on the Blackfoot River. They stand to make millions of dollars, and they are spending millions to buy your vote” and then going directly back to their main message of No Cyanide. No on I-147. Kransky explained that by identifying the opposition campaign’s messenger, “we have made it so every campaign communication that comes from Yes on I-147 is an out-of-state company trying to buy your vote.” Following their defeat, the Miners, Merchants and Montanans for Jobs and Economic Opportunity’s spokesperson, Tammy Johnson, acknowledged that having Canyon Resources Corporation as the primary financial backer hurt the pro-I-147 campaign.

NOTE: This case study is meant to be an example of successful strategies for dealing with opposition. It is not necessarily an example of a low-budget environmental campaign since the coalition had a budget of $450,000.
Talk to Your Opponents

Though your instinct may not be to approach an opposing group that assails your efforts, talking to your adversaries before and during your campaign can be advantageous. You can develop a more effective campaign strategy if you know who can hurt you ahead of time and prepare for it. By identifying opposing groups and individuals and making an effort to talk to them about their concerns, you may be able to resolve problems before they arise or, at the very least, deal more effectively with their attacks on your campaign. Talking to opposition groups may even reveal that compromise or collaboration is possible. If that is not the case, there is still another benefit to talking to your opposition.

Reaching out and trying to talk to adversaries demonstrates to the public that you are the problem solver. Environmentalists are often viewed as opposition groups that file appeals and try to stop everything. Demonstrating your willingness to work with adversaries rather than resorting immediately to litigation or other means can work to break that stereotype and gain public approval.

“Call them, invite them out, go meet with them. If the timber industry is breathing down your neck, call a public forum. Reach out. Be seen as a problem solver.”—Matt Koehler, Director of Native Forest Network

Overview

A successful approach to overcoming opposition probably includes a combination of techniques. The important thing is not to despair or assume you cannot overcome an adversary that can greatly outspend you. Environmental campaigns have prevailed over
powerful opponents in the past, and they can continue to do so with determination and carefully planned strategies for gaining public support.

"Very few people are motivated to go to their decision makers and say ‘This clear-cut is good’ or ‘I go to Wyoming because I love to see those drill rigs’...Our side has the motivation that enables us to bring people into it if we are effectively doing our job. And there is nothing more effective than having people because they are the ones who vote.”—Mike Matz, Executive Director of the Campaign for America’s Wilderness
MATERIALS AND MEDIUMS FOR DELIVERING A MESSAGE

"Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee and just as hard to sleep after."

—Anne Morrow Lindbergh

After identifying the target audience, developing a message, and choosing messengers, the next steps is to determine what strategies will be most effective for communicating your message to the target audience, given your budget and human resources. There is a wide range of options for communicating to the public. In order to give the many types of strategies adequate attention, this guidebook divides public communication methods into the following categories, which will be discussed in chapters seven through ten:

- Campaign Materials
- Earned Media
- Paid Media
- Interpersonal Communication

Though these categories will be explained separately in the following chapters, it is important to note that, in reality, they overlap and work jointly for successful public communication. This chapter presents tips on delivering a campaign message effectively, regardless of what mediums and materials are used.

Use Multiple Communication Channels

No matter what a campaign's budget is, it is essential to use multiple channels for delivering a campaign message to the public. A campaign with very little money could
focus on gaining media coverage and producing fact sheets or direct mail pieces. A campaign with a larger budget could use minimal paid media, such as radio spots, supplemented by other low-cost techniques including bumper stickers and earned media.

"I think it is the sweep of activities that make an impact; I don’t think it is just one.”—Megan Hill, Senior Director of RARE Pride campaigns

There are several logical reasons for using diverse communication mediums. Perhaps the most obvious is that people get their information from different sources. Even professional polling and focus group data cannot ensure that one outlet will reach the majority of a target audience, and low-budget environmental groups often rely on less accurate information about where their audience gets its information. Diverse communication channels enable a campaign message to reach a greater proportion of the target audience. Another noteworthy advantage is that different communication mediums are capable of delivering different types of information. While a poster or a 30 second radio ad only allow enough space or time to deliver the campaign’s primary message, the issue can be explained in greater depth in an opinion editorial, a factsheet, or through interpersonal communication.

Multiple strategies also reinforce one another for a greater impact, since people are more likely to perceive a message coming from a number of different sources. This is a marketing concept used by companies selling products or services. AT&T Wireless does not use one communication strategy, such as a direct mail piece, and expect to increase customers. It uses a combination of direct mail, television and radio advertisements, and booths inside department stores. To persuade and motivate an audience, environmental campaigns should operate under the same marketing principle.
Implement Communication Strategies in a Logical Order

Because every campaign is unique, there is no standard order or timeline to follow when choosing which strategies to use first, second, third and so on to deliver a campaign message. Communication strategies must be tailored to the goals, audiences, and available resources of specific campaigns in order to be effective. However, in every campaign, multiple communication channels should be implemented in a logical sequence that moves the audience from ignorance to action. The first step in moving the public to action is generating or increasing the public’s awareness of the issue. So it is necessary to determine which communication strategies within a campaign’s budget will be most effective for increasing awareness. When the majority of the target audience is aware of the issue, other strategies should be used to enhance the public’s interest or concern for the issue and brand the campaign. Once people care about the issue, strategies that are best for communicating a solution or specific action should be used.

On the next page, a hypothetical public communication plan demonstrates how strategies should build upon one another to move the audience toward action. The example is not a standard strategy timeline that can be applied to every campaign. It is only meant to demonstrate the process of implementing communication strategies in a way that systematically moves the audience to action. Strategies are not necessarily used in a first, second, third sequence, but they tend to overlap. For example, earned media can be used throughout a campaign to supplement other mediums, such as paid ads, that cost too much to be used continuously. Interpersonal communication is another communication channel that does not cost anything and is highly effective, so it can overlap other strategies throughout a campaign.
EXAMPLE: Public Communication Timeline

**Earned Media:** Generate public awareness for the campaign issue by holding a public event/demonstration to gain media coverage. Focus on interpersonal communication at the event and distribute information to the people who attend.

**Direct Mail:** Send direct mail pieces to the target audience shortly after media coverage (within the week) to reinforce the message and tell people to contact their representatives. Direct people to the campaign website where they can find more information and send or modify a pre-written letter to their representatives.

**Bumper Stickers/Posters/Fliers:** Hang posters, distribute free bumper stickers, and pass out fliers directly to people to brand the campaign and maintain public awareness and concern about the issue. Direct people to the campaign website, where they can learn more about the issue and send a letter to their representatives.

**Radio Advertisement:** Increase the campaign’s momentum by using 30-second radio spots to repeat the campaign’s primary message.

**Interpersonal Communication:** Move the public to action by talking to people at booths, tables, and on the street. Ask individuals to sign pre-printed postcards to their representatives or write their own letter to their representatives or letters to the editor.

**Rally/Protest:** Once there is widespread public support and a large volunteer base, hold a rally in front of political officials’ offices.

When choosing strategies and in what order to implement them, it is also important to consider how intensive they are or how much risk they involve. It may not be wise to use strategies like direct action, which requires a lot of time and resources, or television ads, which tend to be expensive, at the beginning of a campaign when there is not a lot of public awareness about the issue. In the case of direct action, if members of
the target audience are unaware of the problem or issue, they may associate direct action with radicals. So by using direct action first, a campaign stands to waste a lot of time and energy without gaining public support. In the case of television and other paid media, ads are likely to go in one ear and out the other if the public has no previous understanding or awareness of the campaign issue. Thus, using paid media first could waste a good portion of a campaign budget without having a significant impact. A better option might be to begin with less intensive strategies and gradually apply more intensive and risky strategies as a campaign gains momentum. Again, it is important to note that every campaign is different, and every audience is distinct. You should, however, consider the risk of various strategies based on available resources and how much time, money, and energy potential strategies will require.

Use Visuals

Visuals can greatly enhance the power and persuasiveness of written or verbal communication with their ability to command attention, rouse curiosity, and explicate an issue without overwhelming people with a large amount of text. Pictures, videos, symbols, and other images can supplement words to illustrate a campaign’s key ideas and points. In fact, experts claim that visual aids can increase an audience’s comprehension and retention of information by 50 to 200 percent (Bunnell and Mock 1990). Iconic or symbolic images, such as a dolphin in a driftnet, capture the essence of a campaign, so they can overcome language and cultural barriers (Rose). Dramatic pictures combined with short explanations help an audience to understand or sympathize with a campaign message. Photographs of a clear cut, an oil-slicked bird, or a gold mine’s tailing heap are much harder for people to forget or ignore than words, which makes them effective in
motivating people to action and reminding them what they are fighting for. Photographs or video can also act as evidence to support a campaign message because they can show the stumps of logged old-growth or oil spilling into the waters of Prince William Sound. Thus, they are harder to argue with than words alone. When deciding on communication channels to deliver your message, consider ways to incorporate visuals.

**Be Creative**

Chapter four discussed the need to develop simple, compelling messages to get people’s attention amidst thousands of other messages. The techniques used to deliver a campaign message also determine how much attention it receives. Delivering a campaign message in an innovative or creative way can make it stand out from the rest to form a lasting impression. Try to think outside the box rather than relying on direct mail, press conferences, or bumper stickers just because other groups use them. Instead of immediately choosing the most common communication outlets, brainstorm and discuss the feasibility of innovative techniques for breaking through the noise to reach the public.

**Overview**

Implementing a variety of communication channels in a logical order, using visuals, and being creative are common characteristics of successful public communication. The specific communication materials and mediums an environmental campaign can choose from ultimately depend on its budget, human resources, available time, and target audience. The next four chapters present an array of potential public communication channels for low-budget campaigns, beginning with campaign materials.
Creating materials to distribute or post are timely and cost-effective ways to deliver a campaign message to a public audience. These materials, such as banners, posters, bumper stickers, and t-shirts, are sometimes referred to as generated media because an organization produces them or pays a company to produce them but does not pay for time or space as in television or newspaper advertisements, which are called paid media. Because generated media is cheap compared to paid media, many materials can be produced to spread the word and brand the campaign. Some forms of generated media like direct mail pieces and posters are generally used independently, while other materials are often used as visual or distributable supplements to events or rallies, as in the case of banners and buttons. This chapter provides descriptions and examples of various generated media available to low-budget environmental campaigns.

**Banners**

Large, attractive banners used in visible public locations, at events or press conference, or as part of direct action activities can be a cost-effective means of getting the public’s attention. Campaign organizers and volunteers can produce banners cheaply with a variety of materials, and the banners can be used repeatedly at different locations. Effective banners contain one, simple message, such as a slogan, that conveys the campaign message quickly and clearly to people passing by. They also have eye-catching colors and designs that make them visible from their backdrop while still being legible. People are more likely to pay attention to banners that look professional or attractive than ones that look thrown together. You may be able to find a professional design agency
willing to produce a banner for you at a discounted rate. If not, you can seek volunteers or professional allies with design experience or artistic abilities to direct the banner production. Low-budget groups can greatly benefit their campaign by identifying and using the skills of their members and volunteers.

**Posters**

"*Pasting fliers—that is age old, tried and true.*"—Kelly Rigg, Former Greenpeace Campaign Director

Attractive posters are a cost-effective way to communicate a simple message. While they may not allow you to target a specific audience, they can be produced and duplicated rather cheaply and posted in many locations to increase the likelihood that your target audience notices them. While you may need to get permission, they are most effective in high traffic areas, such as store windows, airports, bus stations, universities, and libraries. Posters do not allow much detail or information because people rarely stop to read a poster with small print. To get noticed and read, posters should be eye-catching and contain only one, simple message that someone can read as they walk by. If your campaign has a website, it is beneficial to put your web address on the poster so people who want additional information know where to get it. On the following page are some examples of campaign posters.
1/4 of all motor vehicle collisions in this area involve wildlife. Don't let them involve you.

This poster was used in the Stay Alert! Stay Alive! wildlife-traffic safety campaign. Obtained from SMARTRISK Navigator website.

As part of its old-growth campaign, the Rainforest Action Network saturated major U.S. cities with these posters in April 2004 with the help of activists and volunteers.

**Bumper Stickers**

Like posters, bumper stickers are a useful and cheap method for building recognition for your campaign by communicating a simple message or slogan. People tend to exhibit the bandwagon effect; they believe something or act a certain way because other people do or act that way. Unique bumper stickers can legitimize a campaign by demonstrating its popularity and the support behind it, in turn, gaining more supporters. In order to be effective, bumper stickers must get on bumpers and be visible on moving vehicles. Producing many bumper stickers and dispersing them for free at a number of
locations is a good approach. To be legible on a car, the sticker should contain few words, while still getting the basic message across, as shown in the following examples.

On this bumper sticker, produced by the EPA, a simple phrase combined with a clear visual gets the message across.

Montana’s Clark Fork Coalition produced this popular bumper sticker during its campaign to remove Milltown Dam to restore the confluence of Montana’s Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers. The sticker communicates the problem and the solution in few words using a catchy slogan. Contrasting colors makes the sticker eye-catching and visible on moving vehicles. The website included on the sticker, however, is difficult to read because of its small font and was probably not effective.

Friends of Lolo Peak, a Montana citizen’s group, produced this bumper sticker in its effort to stop the development of a ski resort on Lolo Peak, MT. The bumper sticker uses repetition for a catchy slogan and provides a website for additional information in large enough font for people to see from other vehicles.
All of these bumper stickers communicate a campaign issue in a short, catchy slogan, which allows drivers to read and understand them in one glance and to remember them. The contrasting background and foreground colors used on the bumper stickers make them legible and eye-catching.

Direct Mail/Literature Drop Material

Direct mail differs from posters, bumper stickers, and t-shirts in that it can be more targeted and include more information. Direct mail is a form of advertising or distributing information directly to a target audience through the mail. A literature drop is a cheaper version of direct mail in which volunteers and staff members deliver direct mail pieces to the target audience’s doors rather than paying postage. Direct mail can easily target people based on their location. For example, when Women’s Voices for the Earth was working on a campaign to close a Veteran Hospital’s medical waste incinerator in Helena, Montana, they sent direct mail to everyone in a zip code near the incinerator.

The key to successful direct mail is creating a hook or designing it in a way that makes the receiver want to read the document. If you do not get the receiver’s attention right away, they are likely to discard it as junk, and the money you spent on the direct mail piece will be wasted. The main message of your direct mail piece should resonate with the target audience and be very visible to draw the receiver in. While a direct mail piece should not contain so much information that people skim it or shy away from it completely, it can direct people to a website for additional information. It should also request some action, such as voting for or against a ballot initiative or contacting decision makers.
The following direct mail piece produced for the Save the Blackfoot. Vote No on I-147 demonstrates the characteristics of an effective direct mail piece. It is in a postcard format, so the receiver does not have to open an envelope, which makes it more likely to be read rather than thrown away unopened. The front of it draws the receiver’s attention using human interest, a picture of a Montanan and a compelling quote. The backside of the postcard explains in one paragraph how mining hurts private property. Then it asks people to take specific action—to vote against cyanide mining in Montana. It also provides a website for additional information.
Other Ideas

There are many other materials you can create and distribute to deliver your campaign message. Buttons, t-shirts, mugs, hats, and other items can be given away or sold to brand and popularize your campaign, while delivering its basic message. Fact-sheets, fliers, and other print materials can be handed out directly at events or in public places. There are many possibilities. The important thing is to choose materials that are most likely to reach and influence your target audience.

Overview

Campaign materials come in many forms from direct mail, which is very targeted, to posters and bumper stickers, which are not good for targeting but can brand a campaign. Because generated media does not include a fee for time or space, it can be a cheap alternative to paid media for delivering a message. Generally, materials cannot contain much information, so they are most effective for communicating the main campaign message and gaining attention. Like any medium, campaign materials should not be used alone, but instead, be one component in a mix of communication channels.
"The news media is unquestionably the most powerful force informing Americans' impressions and opinions."

—AORN Media Manual

Unlike companies that can spend millions of dollars on TV and radio commercials, newspaper and magazine advertisements, or pictures on the sides of city busses to sell their products or services, low-budget environmental campaigns must find cheap ways to deliver their message to their target audiences. For that reason many environmental campaigns rely heavily on earned media, which may take the form of opinion editorial pieces, letters to the editor, or media coverage of the issue or activity. The most obvious benefit of earned media is that is it free, which means even campaigns with almost no money have access to at least one communications outlet. Another advantage of earned media is that issues covered in the news or discussed in the editorial section of the paper tend to become the topic of public discussion. Finally, people are more likely to view paid media, rather than earned media, as a marketing scheme, regardless of whether it is intended to sell a product or promote an action with environmental and public health benefits.

Despite its many advantages, there are also drawbacks to earned media. First, it is much more difficult to earn media attention or to get an opinion editorial piece printed than it is to purchase an advertisement. You also have less control with earned media. Whereas in paid media you can be very precise about your message, target audience, and timing, you cannot guarantee that your issue gets covered in a positive way in the news
media. In spite of these limitations, there are a number of techniques for getting letters to the editor or opinion editorial pieces published and for increasing a campaign’s chance of positive news media coverage, which will be covered in this chapter.

**Letters to the Editor**

The letters to the editor section of your local newspaper can be a valuable forum for presenting your issue or campaign to the local community. “Research on newspaper readership shows that letters from readers are widely read” (Jacobson 168). Unlike news stories about your issue or event, reporters do not write letters to the editor. While editors may fix grammatical errors or shorten letters, letters to the editor should reflect the values of the writer. However, environmentalists involved in the campaign cannot write multiple letters to the editor themselves and expect them to get published. The purpose of the letter to the editor section is to allow diverse public voices to share their views. To keep your issue visible in the opinion section of the paper, you need to persuade your members and volunteers to write letters to the editor and assist them in the process. Chapter eleven covers techniques you can use to aid them in the process. Sending a letter to the editor does not ensure that it will be published, but there are guidelines for making it more acceptable to the Opinion Editor:

- **Keep it short** and to the point. Concise, focused letters are more likely to be published than long, rambling ones. Generally letters are 300 words or less. Check your newspaper’s word limit for letters to the editor and do not exceed it.
- **Stick to one subject** per letter and limit the number of points you make.
- **Make it timely** by responding to a recently printed story or letter or by showing the current impacts of the issue.
Opinion Editorial Articles

An opinion editorial is also an opinion article written by a reader of a newspaper or magazine. The same rules that apply to letters to the editor apply to opinion editorials except that they tend to be longer, generally between 500-800 words. The difference in opinion editorials is that editors seek Op-Eds from people who are writing an opinion based on "expert" testimony. Thus, you must convince the opinion editor of the paper you are targeting that you are qualified to present a detailed analysis of the issue. While environmentalists involved in a campaign may be experts on the issue, it is sometimes more effective to find expert messengers outside the environmental field, such as local scientists or medical professionals, to write an Op-Ed piece about your campaign’s issue.

Good credentials, however, are not enough to get an Op-Ed piece published.

While evidence, such as facts and figures, is even more important in Op-Eds than in letters to the editor, Op-Ed articles should also have entertainment value. In other words, they should include more than dry facts and figures. They can contain human
interest, opinionated and passionate language, or controversial ideas. Just like news stories, editors want opinion editorials that inform, entertain, and engage readers. As the title suggests, Opinion Editorials are about opinions. If you submit an Op-Ed piece without a clear position on an issue, it will not be considered; it is the opinion that gets other readers “fired up” and keeps them reading the newspaper. If you can tie the article to a recent or upcoming event, a holiday, or topic of public debate, it is also more likely to get published. It does not hurt to contact the Opinion Editor of the paper and talk about possible angles and interests that would be publishable.

Submission guidelines for opinion editorials are usually a little more complicated than letters to the editor. Op-Eds should be typed and double-spaced with a suggested headline. They should be submitted with a short biography of the writer and cover letter highlighting the key points of the Op-ed. In most cases, Op-Eds should be submitted by regular first-class mail, unless the newspaper submission guidelines specify an alternative method. It is also a good idea to contact the Op-Ed Editor 3-10 days after submitting an article to ask if he or she received it and if it is being considered.

“Letters to the editor are effective if they are from as many people as possible, with each letter focusing on different aspects of the issue. Letters in the newspaper keep your issue alive. Op-Ed pieces are always more effective than letters. To maintain momentum, your campaign needs to constantly be in front of the public. Don’t ignore anti-environmental letters to the editor criticizing your efforts. Respond promptly to each one in the next edition. Do not attack the person who writes the negative letter-focus on the issue” (Britell).
Media Coverage

Getting the news media to cover your issue or event and write a positive story about it is a bit more complicated than submitting letters to the editor or Op-Ed pieces. There will always be many groups fighting for news media coverage, including your opposition, so you have to work diligently to make your issue interesting and newsworthy. In addition, you have to take extra measures to ensure that reporters who cover your issue hear your message and understand the issue correctly, since they are the ones who write the stories. Despite the challenges it presents, working for earned media is worthwhile; getting your issue covered on the television and radio news or in the paper grants it legitimacy in the public eye. The following four steps will guide you toward productive media coverage:

- Cultivate a Relationship with the Media
- Make Your Campaign Newsworthy
- Maintain Control over Your Message
- Contact the Media Appropriately

Cultivate a Relationship with the Media

Editors and reporters ultimately decide what issue and events are covered in the news, so it is beneficial to form a relationship with media staff. One way to cultivate a relationship is to continually talk to editors and reporters in person, on the phone, or through email to keep them informed about your issue. This means you are communicating with the media about changes and developments in your issue or campaign even when you are not seeking news coverage. Basically, dealing successfully with the press means being helpful and acting as a source of information regardless of whether or not you get in the newspaper or on TV. Reporters work in a fast-paced
environment where they are required to learn enough about an unfamiliar subject to write a story about it within a few hours. Therefore, reporters appreciate sources that provide them with factual information, get back to them quickly with answers to their questions, and occasionally provide them with newsworthy story ideas.

Trust is another necessary element for a positive relationship with the media. In order to gain the trust of editors and reporters, you must always provide them with credible information. The news media depends on accuracy to retain their readers, viewers, and listeners. Providing false information can quickly destroy your relationship with the media and diminish your likelihood of future coverage. If you do make a factual mistake or discover that the information you provided the media is not accurate, based on a new study, contact the media immediately to let them know.

"[Reporters] know that when I've got news, it is going to be news. It isn't going to be something masquerading as news. And they also know I am going to be honest with them." —Jeanne Clark, Director of Communications at PennFuture

In developing a mutually beneficial relationship with the press, you must also be respectful of their agenda and deadlines. The goal of reporters and editors is not to increase publicity for your issue; it is to produce timely stories that sell their newspaper or increase their television and radio news audience. If you want coverage, you need to make your issue newsworthy. If your issue is not newsworthy at the moment, do not waste the media’s time trying to get coverage. When your issue or campaign is newsworthy, be considerate of the media’s deadlines when sending a press release and contacting them by phone or email. It is also a good practice to thank reporters and editors when you get media coverage since people like to know their work is appreciated.
Make Your Campaign Newsworthy

While having a relationship with the media is advantageous, it does not ensure media coverage. Ultimately, your issue has to get the media, which means it must be newsworthy. To improve your chance of getting media coverage, you need to package your issue, press conference, or public event as a story that, from the media’s perspective, will sell to their audience. Reporters look for the following qualities in a story:

- Timeliness
- Proximity
- Unusual, sensational, or out of the ordinary
- Conflict or controversy
- Human interest

Your job is to find one or more of these elements in your campaign and highlight it when you contact the media.

Timely Information

The very word “news” implies information, events, or happenings that are new or timely. News stations compete with each other for timely stories because the public wants to know what is happening right now. They do not want to hear stories about things that occurred last week. Basically, current information and events equals urgency, while past information and events equals uninteresting. Hence, if you want media coverage, you need to contact the press about new information as it develops or campaign activities as they happen, not an hour, a day, or a week later. You can also make an issue timely by connecting your issue to a significant date, such as an anniversary or a holiday. For instance, the Campaign for America’s Wilderness recently created an outreach guide
for advocates entitled “Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act—with Action.” The guide offers strategies for local groups to create events to raise awareness and understanding about wilderness while gaining media attention. Organizing wilderness awareness events around the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act makes the events timely. Similarly, environmental campaigns sometimes organize special events on Earth Day or Arbor Day to highlight their issues. The following example demonstrates how groups can make their issues timely by linking them to holidays:

EXAMPLE: Timeliness in the No Dirty Gold Campaign

Overview
The No Dirty Gold Campaign is a consumer campaign organized by Earthworks, a non-profit organization that focuses on the impacts of mineral development, and Oxfam America, an international development and relief agency. The consumer campaign calls on retailers to identify and disclose the source of the gold they sell and to ensure that the gold in their products is not mined at the expense of communities, workers, or the environment.

Valentine’s Day Activities
The No Dirty Gold Campaign enhanced its timeliness by illustrating its relevance to Valentine’s Day and by organizing a visual public activity on the holiday. Below is an excerpt from the No Dirty Gold campaign’s Valentine’s Day press release, which is posted on the No Dirty Gold campaign’s website (www.nodirtygold.org).

VALENTINE’S GOLD JEWELRY SALES GENERATE 34 MILLION TONS OF MINE WASTE

“No Dirty Gold” campaign targets $16 billion U.S. gold jewelry market

WASHINGTON, DC --- Valentine’s sales of gold jewelry in the U.S. will leave in their wake more than 34 million metric tons of waste worldwide, according to estimates from EARTHWORKS and Oxfam America, leaders of a major consumer campaign aimed at changing the way gold is produced and sold. (The estimates are based on gold sales in the first two weeks of February.) The “No Dirty Gold” campaign, which is celebrating its first anniversary this week, has targeted gold sales because gold mining is arguably the dirtiest industry in the world---and most of the gold mined worldwide is used for jewelry.
"Gold loses its luster when it is produced at the expense of healthy communities, clean water and human rights," said Payal Sampat, International Campaign Director with EARTHWORKS. "Retailers and consumers are saying this price is too high." Valentine’s Day is the number one holiday for gold jewelry sales in the U.S. Today, campaigners will be distributing Valentine’s cards with the message, "Don’t tarnish your love with dirty gold," in front of major jewelry and watch stores, including Rolex and Fortunoff, on 5th Avenue in midtown New York City. They will be joined by a giant puppet depicting a chic shopper carrying shopping bags full of “dirty” gold jewelry. Consumers will be invited to join thousands who have already signed a pledge calling for alternatives to dirty or irresponsibly produced gold. Photos of the puppet, as well as the Valentine’s Day card and the pledge are on the www.nodirtygold.org website.

**Proximity**

Proximity or the closeness of a story to the audience is another characteristic of newsworthiness. If you have looked at a local newspaper, you probably noticed that much more space is devoted to local and regional stories than to national or international news. Generally, people are more interested in issues and events that affect their lives than ones that seem distant or unrelated, and the news media chooses stories accordingly. For instance, if 10 students from your hometown are killed in a bus wreck, the local news media will certainly consider it news. On the other hand, 10 students killed on a bus in a different state or another distant location probably will not receive coverage in your local news. To increase your access to the news media, you should find a way to make your campaign relevant to the news audience. Consider global warming. A story about global warming may not interest local reporters because it is a general topic that lacks proximity to a specific community or region. On the other hand, a story about the harmful impacts of changing weather patterns on regional crops is likely to get covered because it directly affects the people reading the newspaper and watching the TV news. You can piggyback a national or global issue with your own localized story. Whatever your issue, you should try to package it in a way that gives it proximity.
**Bizarre, Sensational, or out of the Ordinary**

Reporters also seek stories that are strange, rare, sensational, or interesting because they are different. People quickly tire of the same old stories, so reporters need to constantly pique their audience’s interest. You can improve your chance of getting media coverage by framing it in a way that is interesting and attention grabbing while still truthful.

**Conflict or Controversy**

The news media also loves conflict or controversy because those things generally lead to some change that affects people. Just like movies that contain a protagonist and an antagonist, real stories about opposing forces or groups are entertaining. Controversial issues often become a topic of public debate because people develop opinions about the side they think is right and share their opinions with others. Environmental campaigners should have little trouble highlighting conflict because, as Chris Rose points out on his website (www.campaignstrategy.org), “A campaign is about forcing a change to the status quo. Conflict is therefore built into, indeed almost defines campaigning…That is probably your most newsworthy opportunity.”

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics gained media attention with a controversial full-page advertisement in the New York Times (shown on the next page, obtained from www.NotTooPretty.org), which suggests that Poison perfume and other beauty aids contain toxic chemicals that are linked to birth defects. The campaign organizers made a blow-up version of the advertisement to display at a press conference. Because of the ads controversial nature and its direct attack on Poison perfume, TV cameras
went straight to the ad and put it on TV as part of the news. Thus, the campaigners supplemented the paid ad with free television coverage, which would have cost a great deal as a paid advertisement.

Your campaign may not have to have the money to put a full-page ad in the New York Times to bring attention to the controversy or conflict in your issue. A cheap and easy way to get media coverage is to show up at events where you will be the opposite voice. For example, a forest protection organization could attend a forestry event or hold a press conference outside the local Forest Service headquarters. Public protests also demonstrate conflict. Environmental campaigns are prone to opposition. While opposition can make it more difficult to achieve your campaign goals, it can be advantageous in generating media attention if the press is notified of the conflict of interests.

**Human Interest**

Chapter four discussed the effectiveness of using a messenger with a personal story about an issue. Human interest stories are sometimes referred to as “the story behind the story.” They make issues and events more real and concrete to the news audience by showing how those issues or events impact people. While hard news stories that focus specifically on the issue at hand may fail to hold an audience’s attention until the end, human interest stories are often read in detail because people can relate to them. This is made apparent by the explosion of reality television programs in the past few
years. People are intrigued by other people’s lives and problems. Stories about someone suffering, struggling, overcoming obstacles, or doing something unique are remembered and passed along. In general, people are more emotionally moved by an in-depth story of one person or one family’s struggles than a general story about the struggle of hundreds of people because it is easier to identify with one person than a group of people.

To get reporters interested in your issue, find people with compelling personal stories who are willing to come forward and talk about the issue and how it affected their lives.

"Human interest sells papers, and feature stories are probably the first article a person will read."—Liz Banse, Director at Environmental Media Services

Frame the Issue for Better Coverage

While timeliness, proximity, sensationalism, conflict, and human interest are characteristics that may pique the media’s interest and get you an interview or get them to your event, they do not necessarily ensure that your issue will get a good story in the paper or on the news. There is a big difference between getting a story about your issue on the front page of the newspaper and getting a short article next to the obituaries. Your goal is to not only peak the media’s interest but also to frame your issue in a way that makes it a priority story. Two useful strategies for improving earned media content are creating action and using visuals.

According to Chris Rose, “News is not about ideas or concepts; it is about things that happen” (www.campaignstrategy.org). Environmental campaigns can create news by doing something, such as protesting, leading a rally, hanging banners from downtown buildings, or blocking a logging road. Stories that get the most attention in the newspaper and on the television and radio news usually contain action, someone or some
group doing something. Action should not be a substitute for the characteristics reporters seek in a story, but rather, it should supplement or highlight those newsworthy elements.

Visuals are useful for gaining media coverage, since visuals sell newspapers and increase the television media’s audience. Both newspaper and television reporters are more likely to cover stories that offer opportunities for photographs. When doing a demonstration or action, visualize the picture you want to see in the paper or on the television news, and then figure out how to make that happen. Consider all the factors that will affect the quality of a photograph or video. According to the Ruckus Society’s Media Manual, “A dramatic newspaper photo of your action will draw many more readers than an article...Consider everything: lighting, camera angle, visibility of the target, size of the banner, even the clothes your activists are wearing.” In order to get the media to your press conference, rally, demonstration, or another activity, let reporters and editors know that there will be photograph opportunities. The case study on the following page provides an example of using a creative visual to get television coverage.

Visual public action can take on many forms from standing along the street with banners to non-violent direct action, such as a tree sit. In addition to attracting the news media, highly visible public activities are useful in directly communicating a campaign message to a local community. If you have ever been near the scene of an accident, you may have noticed a large crowd of bystanders gathering. Humans are inquisitive by nature, so they often stop to investigate a crowd, unusual activities, or visual demonstrations. Witnessing or participating in an activity or event has a greater impact on the public than learning about it in the news. Public activities also enable personal contact and conversation, which are valuable in gaining volunteers for your campaign.
and motivating people to take action. The two categories of visual public action that will be described in the following pages are public spectacles and direct action.

EXAMPLE: Using Visuals in the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance’s Campaign

Overview
The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA)’s mission is to build strong and lasting public support for wilderness preservation by focusing its attention on grassroots activists and public outreach campaigns. In 1995, Utah politicians posed a wilderness bill (H.R. 1745/S.884) that would leave nearly 4 million acres of roadless BLM land in Utah open to development. The bill used “hard release” language, which prohibits the BLM from managing, considering, or recommending any non-wilderness lands for potential wilderness designation. “Soft release,” on the other hand, means that the managing agency can evaluate non-wilderness lands for potential wilderness designation in their regular planning process.

Press Conference
The SUWA held a press conference in an effort to convey to the public the difference between hard release and soft release language in a Wilderness bill. The press conference organizers contacted local TV and newspaper stations and told them the press release would have an interesting photo opportunity. The SUWA demonstrated the meaning of soft and hard release language visually. They had two pictures of beautiful Wilderness scenes in frames; one represented hard release and the other soft release language. The picture that represented soft release language was cut in half. Half of that picture was lifted out and set aside for future consideration for wilderness, while half was left in the frame to represent land currently designated as Wilderness. The other framed picture was also cut in half. To demonstrate hard release language, demonstrators smashed the glass with a bat, pulled half of the picture out and ripped it up to show that it could never again be considered for wilderness designation. The scene with the bat swinging and the picture being torn up was played on all the TV stations that evening.

Public Spectacles
Public spectacles, such as street theatre, tours, and demonstrations that visually replicate the problem can draw crowds of potential supporters as well as the media.

While these types of activities may require lots of volunteers and activists, they can be done with any budget. The key to their success is planning along with creativity. Well-
organized spectacles gain people’s attention and create an avenue for distributing informational materials and informing viewers.

The types of public spectacles at your disposal are limited only by your imagination. RARE, an international non-profit that educates and trains citizens from 28 countries to implement RARE Pride campaigns, uses puppet shows, beauty contests, karaoke festivals, and other creative techniques to communicate forest protection to small communities. The state Public Interests Research Groups (PIRG), an alliance of state-based, citizen-funded organizations that advocate for the public interest, also use public demonstrations to gain media attention. For example, PIRG groups have held chainsaw ensembles in front of Forest Service headquarters to bring attention to bad forest policies.

As part of a national Greenpeace campaign in the 1980s, Greenpeace activists in New England built a mock-oil rig to publicize their opposition to oil and gas drilling on Georges Bank. Activists took the mock oil rig, built out of cheap materials, on a tour and displayed it at press conferences they organized in coastal communities. The tour required a lot of leg work in hauling the display, organizing media events, and recruiting volunteers, but it was an inexpensive endeavor.

The following case study presents another low-cost tour that used a powerful visual to gain public support and media attention.
EXAMPLE: The Healthy Forest Reality Tour
Organized by American Lands Alliance

Overview
American Lands Alliance is a national conservation organization that brings grassroots voices and issues to the attention of national decision makers, provides national leadership on forest policy issues, and assists activists in protecting forests and wild lands. One the communication strategies American Lands Alliance organized to generate national awareness against the Bush administration’s bad forest policies including the Healthy Forest Initiative was a “Healthy Forests Reality Tour.”

The Tour
The Healthy Forests Reality Tour involved a 6-foot in diameter, 600 pound slice of a 440 year old Douglas Fir that was carried 3,000 miles from Oregon to Washington D.C. and showcased in a number of locations and events in between. The slab was cut from a stump that remained after a clearcut project in Oregon that targeted old-growth trees. To increase the tour’s visibility, American Lands Alliance coordinators contacted forest activists in cities the tour would pass through and asked them to coordinate local activities and contact the media for the demonstration. In Ashland, Oregon, the slice of Douglas Fir participated in a July 4 parade and visited a congressman. In Minnesota, the slab was set up at the entrance of the state fair, where Mark Dayton, the U.S. Senator from Minnesota, made an appearance. Activists displayed the slab in front of U.S. Senator Conrad Burns’ office in Missoula, MT and in front of the Athens County Courthouse in Ohio. After traveling across the country, the symbol of bad forest policies was exhibited on Capitol Hill.

Communication
While the slab of wood was a poignant visual on its own, activists created a timeline based on the tree’s rings. Small arrows pointed to various rings with dates and notes to indicate important dates in the tree’s history, such as Shakespeare’s birth-1564, the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock-1620, the Declaration of Independence was signed-1776, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated-1865, and man first walked on the moon-1969. Activists also displayed pictures of forests prior to being logged and of clear cuts and massive logs on a poster board. In addition, they distributed informational materials about old-growth and forest policies and spoke directly to representatives and members of the public about the issue.

Costs
The tour was heavy on organizing and planning but low on costs. While there were transportation costs in taking the display from Oregon to Washington D.C., the two tour drivers were not paid. Activists obtained the slice of Douglas Fir by sawing it from a stump and smuggling it from the logged forest. There was also the minimal expense of producing informational materials for distribution.
“Literally hundreds of people came up and asked ‘what is that,’ and we told them that the government is logging the last of these trees on their land. And that was a really good public outreach strategy for us.” —Lisa Dix, American Lands Alliance Coordinator of the Healthy Forest Reality Tour.

Non-Violent Direct Action

“Civil disobedience and other ‘actions’ like being chained to a tree, seldom stop bad projects. They may serve a variety of useful functions and memorialize or ceremonialize losses, but usually don’t actually stop anything. Civil disobedience is a last resort; never the first.” —Jim Britell in “Organize to win: A grassroots activists’ guide”

A more controversial public strategy for communicating a campaign message is non-violent direct action. Non-violent direct action encompasses activities that are public, defiant, disruptive, or even illegal. It can take on a number of forms from activists chaining themselves to trees to stop them from being cut down to hanging a banner on the side of a corporation’s headquarters to denounce its anti-environmental practices. Non-violent direct action is often used as a last resort to communicate an issue to the public in a compelling manner. While some direct action activities can convey an issue solemnly,
others use humor or irony. The following examples illustrate how several environmental groups brought attention to environmental injustices using direct action.

**EXAMPLES: Using Direct Action to Communicate a Message**

**Greenpeace**

Greenpeace is an international non-profit that uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems. In 1989, Exxon Valdez, a single-hull tanker spilled approximately 11 million gallons of oil into the waters of Alaska’s Prince Williams Sound when it crashed into Bligh Reef. In response to that accident, the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 was enacted to minimize oil spills by changing the standard tanker design from a single to a double hull or bottom. In 1994, Exxon Valdez was still transporting oil because, according to the Oil Pollution Act, single hull tankers can operate until 2010. To remind people of the consequences of single hull tankers, Greenpeace activists snuck aboard Exxon Valdez the night before it launched and hung a banner that said “Stop Me Before I Spill Again.”

**Rainforest Action Network**

The Rainforest Action Network, an organization that campaigns for tropical forests and their inhabitants, led a two-year grassroots Old Growth Campaign to pressure Home Depot to stop purchasing and selling old-growth wood products. In addition to many protests in front of stores, banners, and street performances, activists also used direct action—“Dead Rainforest Tours” inside Home Depot stores. Activists acting as tour guides led customers to different locations within the store where wood products from old-growth forests and rainforests were displayed. In at least one case, activists obtained the codes for a Home Depot store’s intercom system. From the rafters, activists announced to all the customers in the store which aisles contained wood that had been ripped from the Amazon and so forth.

**The Friends of Red Hill Valley**

The Friends of Red Hill Valley is an 800-member community organization dedicated to the protection of Red Hill Valley in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. In 2003, the group protested the development of a Red Hill Expressway in the middle of Red Hill Valley, which would require 40,000 trees to be cut down. Organization members and supporters used direct action, chaining themselves to trees and occupying bridge construction sites, to stop construction workers from beginning the project. The protestors were successful in postponing construction and shedding light on the issue, but eventually construction did begin.
Direct action can be performed by a handful of activists or thousands of citizens. Direct action generally requires a lot of planning, and it is most successful when well organized. While it often does not stop the protested activity forever, it is frequently effective in gaining media attention and intensifying the issue. Yet choosing to use direct action is not a decision that should be taken lightly. Because of its defiant and sometimes illegal nature, direct action can make environmentalists appear extreme or radical, which can potentially turn the target audience away. Non-violent direct action should not be an isolated strategy. People are more likely to accept and support direct action when they know other strategies have proven futile. Before choosing to use direct action, check out the Resource section of this chapter or the many other websites that offer information and tips on non-violent civil disobedience or direct action.

**Maintain Control over your Issue**

"*My number one rule for people I train is 'don't open your mouth unless you know what you are going to say.'*"—Jeanne Clark, Director of Communications at PennFuture

Getting the media to cover your issue, event, or activity does not guarantee that you will get a positive story in the paper or on television. Reporters like drama and sensationalism, and they often press the people they interview with questions designed to elicit radical answers. Unfortunately, it is often the one quote that was off message and a bit radical that gets quoted in the newspaper and on the television or radio news. Thus, it is very important for campaign messengers, who may be community members with little public speaking experience, to maintain control and stick to the campaign message. A good campaign spokesperson always goes back to the campaign message, no matter what
questions are asked. He or she repeats the message several times to ensure that the reporter gets it and will use it in a story. Sticking to the message can be difficult when dealing with reporters who are skilled in getting the information they seek, so the best way to maintain control is to practice or train.

Cameras and microphones can be very intimidating, and people tend to go off message when they are nervous. To prepare messengers for an interview, it is a wise strategy to practice through role-playing. According to Liz Banse, the Seattle Associate Director of Resource Media, a non-profit organization that works to improve coverage of environmental and public health issues, her organization trains messengers or spokespeople through mock interviews. Liz or another trainer schedules an appointment for a phone interview with that individual. Then, the trainer calls at the appointed time as “a reporter” and asks perhaps 20 questions that real reporters would ask. Once the mock interview is complete, the trainer assesses the interview and tells the messenger which quotes a reporter would probably use, whether or not they are on message. If necessary, they continue to practice. The Native Forest Network used similar tactics when preparing a tourism industry official to be a messenger at a big media event. According to NFN Director Matt Koehler, “He was pretty rough at first...we just spent the whole day with him, just hammering him on camera and getting his message down. And the next day, he did about eight interviews, and he was so happy that he was on message.”

Practice is the key to maintaining control over a campaign message. If you are a low-budget campaign relying primarily on earned media to reach your target audience, you must ensure that your message is coming out in the news. You would not give a
public speech without adequate preparation. Likewise, you should not participate in an interview unless you have practiced staying on message.

Contact the Media Appropriately

In order to get your issue or event covered by the media, you must both inform a reporter or editor about your story in a professional manner and gain his or her interest. This can be a difficult task with many organizations competing for attention. Generally, you contact the media about a story by sending a press release, which is a short story describing a newsworthy issue, activity, or event of public interest. Below are some tips to help you produce and deliver a professional and attention grabbing press release:

- **Identify reporters or editors** who would be most interested in your issue, such as reporters who cover environmental issues, and include their names on press releases and envelopes.

- **Choose one person** per news outlet to send your press release to.

- **Follow the standard format** for press releases, which enables information to be conveyed in a readable, accessible and professional manner. A press release should be typed on letterhead stationary or white paper with the organization’s heading at the top. The logo or heading should be followed by “PRESS RELEASE” spelled out in caps and in bold. If it is for immediate release, it should say For Immediate Release and be followed by the release date and contact information. Below the contact information are the headline and then the story itself. The document should be double spaced with wide margins and standard font and color. Indicate a second page with the word “more” at the end of the first page, and indicate the end with the symbol “####.”

- **Keep it brief and informative.** A press release should be no longer than one or two pages with short sentences and short paragraphs.

- **Structure it in news style** to make it easy for reporters to use. Like news stories, press releases should follow the inverted pyramid, which means the most
important information is placed at the top and descends to the least important information at the bottom. The lead paragraph should include the primary information (who, what, where, and when). It should both capture the essence of your story and peek the editor or reporter’s interest. The remaining paragraphs should provide additional details.

- **Make it attention grabbing**, so it stands out from other press releases. Editors and reporters read the headline first, so it must get their attention. Choose the most dramatic element of the story and use it in the headline. You can also supplement your story with human interest, proximity, or intriguing facts.

- **Use visuals** when possible. If you have a photograph or another visual aid that complements your story or will draw attention to your press release, send it with the release. If you are holding an event or activity with photograph opportunities, say that in your press release in a location that will be noticed.

- **Be timely**. Send the press release in advance, so the reporter or editor has time to review it and determine how he or she wants to cover the story. Check the media outlets for preferences on sending press releases by direct mail, email, or fax. Generally, you should send the release a couple days in advance, although this may differ for direct action.

- **Call the media**. Call the reporter or editor you sent the press release to, to ensure they received it and to ask if they have any questions. Ask if they plan to cover the story and if you can assist them in any way. Some press release guides also suggest making a courtesy call prior to sending your press release, which may help ensure that the press receives it.

These are the basic steps to an effective press release. For more information on writing and sending press releases, organizing a press conference, or making your issue newsworthy, check out the resources listed below.
Overview

Earned media is a cheap way to communicate a campaign message to a large audience, but it can be challenging and time consuming. The best way to get letters to the editor or Op-Eds published is to follow the newspaper guidelines and format them similar to news stories. Getting media coverage for an issue or activity is not easy, but it is a powerful way to deliver a campaign message. Campaigners can improve their chance of positive media coverage by forming a relationship with the media, making their issue newsworthy, maintaining control of the issue, and contacting the press appropriately. The most demanding task is making an issue newsworthy and framing it in a way that attracts the press. Reporters and editors want stories that increase the popularity of their newspaper or news station, so following the press's standards of newsworthiness is a good approach to gaining coverage.

Additional Resources

The Rainforest Action Network’s website contains an Activist Toolkit with a section entitled, “How to Use the Media to Broadcast your Message,” that offers tips on pitching a story, interviewing, writing letters to the editors and press releases, and hosting media events. It is available at: <http://www.ran.org/action/toolbox/media_intro.html>.

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation has a useful guide entitled, Campaigning Toolkit for Civil Organisations engaged in the Millenium Development Goals, which contains a very useful chapter on planning an event as well as other tips on organizing a successful campaign. It is available online at: <http://www.civicus.org/mdg/title.htm>.

The Ruckus Society has an Action Planning Manual that explains the functions of direct action and its symbolic nature and offers an outline for planning an action. It is available on its website at: <http://www.ruckus.org/resources/manuals/actionplanning/index.html>.

The Rainforest Action Network’s website contains an Activist Toolbox page with a section entitled “How to Organize a Demonstration.” It is available at: <http://www.ran.org/action/toolbox/demonstration.html>.
"We'll never be able to have enough resources to sell these campaigns or the issues we're trying to work on like McDonalds sells hamburgers or Chevy sells trucks...That isn't to say you can't make your paid advertising go a little farther—get a little better mileage out of them—by coupling them with an earned media campaign."

—Mike Matz, Executive Director of the Campaign for America's Wilderness

Advertisements on television and the radio, in the newspaper, and in other paid media allow a company or an organization to reach a large audience because the majority of the public uses those mediums for information and entertainment. While companies marketing their products and services use paid media heavily, low-budget organizations use it much less because of the expense of hiring professionals to produce ads and paying for time or space. In addition, paid media is only effective when purchased at a certain level of saturation. Spending your entire campaign budget on one television commercial that runs for one week is not likely to persuade an audience. A message must be repeated over and over before the audience even recognizes it, and using mixed communication channels that compliment one another is more valuable than using one paid media outlet. Nevertheless, some environmentalists have discovered ways to incorporate paid media into their communication plan, despite limited budgets. This chapter will discuss those techniques.
Radio

Local radio can be a relatively inexpensive medium for communicating to the public. While radio advertisements within major cities are expensive because the stations reach very large audiences, radio advertisements on stations that reach small cities, towns, and rural areas can be quite reasonable. In some cases, statewide radio is feasible for low-budget groups. For example, because Pennsylvania is predominantly rural, PennFuture has purchased statewide radio spots through a network that reaches mainly rural areas, at a reasonable price. So the feasibility of purchasing radio spots depends on the size of your target audience and its location. Part of what makes radio cheap is that the ads themselves can be produced easily and quickly because there are no visuals.

Another advantage of radio spots is that “the diverse types of radio shows make it easy to target a specific audience” (Jacobson 152). People tend to be loyal to certain music or talk shows; if you figure out what stations your target audience listens to, you have a good chance of reaching them. However, radio is often background noise, so your audience may only hear the message if it is repeated many times. Unfortunately, purchasing many radio spots can sometimes turn radio into an expensive media.

Local radio markets may also allow for more creative communication strategies, such as call-in shows or live broadcasts. Radio call-in shows enable you to go into much greater detail than a 30-second radio spot. They also allow you to answer callers’ questions and concerns and gain feedback. The Marin Institute’s website contains a media advocacy section that offers two suggestions for landing a spot as a radio call-in show guest. The first is to monitor local radio programs to gain a sense of what stories they feature and their formats. The second is to develop a relationship with local radio
hosts, reporters, and programmers to inform them about the issue and to ensure that you will not be used as a “lightening rod for its highly critical and even hostile audience” (The Marin Institute). By building a relationship with radio hosts, you may be able to coordinate a promotional live broadcast at an interesting event or demonstration.

Because radio lacks visuals, which are so important in a campaign, it is not likely to be effective if used alone. However, it is a flexible and relatively inexpensive medium that can be useful in communicating to a target audience when coordinated with other communication channels.

**Billboards**

Billboards can also be a cost-efficient way of communicating a message, though many environmental groups reject them as eyesores. Billboards average between $500-$3,000 a month, but they can soar to many thousands per month in major cities like New York City and Atlanta, Georgia. Since Americans spend a lot of time in their cars, billboards can be an effective way to reach them. While television and radio offer many stations to choose from, billboards are constant and visible to everyone who passes them. If you determine where you audience is likely to travel consistently and choose a billboard location accordingly, it will be seen repeatedly. Because of their immense size, billboards naturally draw people’s attention, and if they are colorful, unique, or funny, they often are remembered.

Like posters and banners, billboards cannot convey a lot of information. While people are unlikely to stop to read a poster, they certainly will not stop their vehicles to read a billboard. Therefore, a billboard should use visuals and minimal words to communicate a key message in a short amount of time.
Below is an example of a billboard used by PennFuture as part of its responsible farming campaign. The billboard communicates the evil of factory farms through humor and a compelling image.

![Image](image-source)

Image obtained from PennFuture website.

**Television**

According to most environmentalists, television is far too expensive for low-budget campaigns. Certainly, a thirty-second ad during prime-time television that exceeds $100,000 is unrealistic for small environmental groups. However, choosing stations with smaller audiences and finding alternatives to professionally produced commercials can reduce the cost of television significantly. Cable TV and local access stations that target a smaller audience are much more reasonable in price. Paying a professional agency to produce a television advertisement adds considerably to the expense of running television ads. The following example demonstrates how the Native Forest Network, an organization with an annual budget of $60,000, managed to use television advertisements to deliver its message.
EXAMPLE: The Native Forest Network’s Low-Cost Television Ad

As part of its campaign to stop the Biscuit Logging Project on the Siskiyou National Forest in southwestern Oregon, the Native Forest Network (NFN) ran a thirty second television ad featuring Orville Camp, a Selma Oregon resident who has lived and worked in the forests of southwestern Oregon his entire life. The ad ran 332 times on NBC, reaching approximately 400,000 homes in southwestern Oregon and northern California, according to Matt Koehler of NFN. Surprisingly, NFN managed to produce and run the TV ad for around $1,700. When NFN staff sought an estimate for running TV ads from Resource Media, they were given a quote of $21,660 for 364 spots, which included $5,000 for producing the ad. Instead, Koehler had friend and colleague Tim Lewis, an award winning documentary film producer, produce the ad for about $100. Then the NFN got a two-for-one non-profit deal to run their ad on KOBI, a VHF television station in Oregon. The ad ran all times of the day with some specific buys on nightly local news, Meet the Press, and the Today Show as well as rotators that ran anytime from 6 AM to midnight. Koehler, who claims television can be very inexpensive despite what many people think, said the NFN managed to run that ad for about $1,700 by “being creative and looking for people within the movement who are really good with video or photo work or who have friends that know layout work.”

The NFN’s Biscuit ad was not just a rare case of a cheap television ad. The NFN also ran ads on cable channels in Missoula, Montana and Montana’s Bitterroot region. Koehler notes, however, that television advertisements in large markets like Seattle or San Francisco are a different scenario, as they are far too expensive for low-budget groups.

The NFN’s experience demonstrates that television advertisements on local and cable television stations can be a feasible communication channel for low-budget campaigns.

The Safe Cosmetics Campaign is a national coalition campaign with a larger budget than the NFN, but its organizers also found a creative and cheap way to get an ad
on television. They purposely created a very controversial television ad and took it to several TV stations that they knew would refuse to run it. When the TV stations rejected it, campaign organizers wrote a press release to the media, explaining that TV stations refused to run the ad. Then the media ran the Safe Cosmetic Campaign’s ad as news because the news media plays to conflict and controversy.

Internet

“The reach and cost-effectiveness of the Internet is an incredibly empowering tool.”—Twilly Cannon, Former Member of Greenpeace’s National Campaign Team.

In the twenty-first century, the Internet is gaining momentum as a cost-effective campaign tool that enables communication and interaction with a mass audience. The Internet differs considerably from TV, radio, the newspaper, and other mass media in that it is cheaper, more versatile, and it has a greater ability to engage an audience. These characteristics make it a very useful tool for environmental campaigns that seek public support and involvement in order to create change. With its many capabilities, the Internet offers more freedom than traditional mass media to “provide the whole story” instead of a soundbite, “portray information in new and exciting ways,” and “show the story as it develops” (Keys). Along with the benefits of Internet communication come a number of challenges and problems not associated with other media outlets. The advantages and disadvantages of three methods of communication via the Internet are described below.

Websites
As more and more people subscribe to the Internet, many environmental groups are taking advantage of the popular communication medium by developing their own websites. Websites offer many benefits for delivering a campaign message. The combined costs of paying for Internet service and setting up and maintaining a website are relatively cheap compared to other mass media, and websites offer long-term communication as opposed to ads that runs a few weeks on the TV or radio. In addition, websites can communicate more detail and up-to-date information than other communication outlets, and people can access websites 24 hours a day around the world. Given those benefits, campaign websites can supplement the short, simple campaign message delivered through other communication outlets with additional information and an explanation. Websites enable visitors to choose what kind of information suits their needs. For example, websites can contain press releases and contact information for the media, related articles and publications for people who want more information on the issue, and an action section for people to contact decision makers. However, to be effective in delivering a message, websites require more time and effort than other mediums. Below are techniques for making a website a successful communication tool.

Advertise the Website

One of the challenges of a website is that no matter how well designed and useful it is, it is ineffective if people do not visit it. Unlike other mass media, which direct messages to an audience, audience members must access websites themselves. Campaigners must, therefore, use a number of techniques to drive a potential audience to the website. Many people use search engines when seeking information, so it is practical to register a website with as many search engines as possible. Another technique for
gaining visitors is to establish links from other websites. While the Internet is not a good medium for targeting a specific audience, links offer some targeting because campaigners can seek links on websites that are popular to certain groups of people. For example, a campaign to protect Pileated woodpecker habitat could place a link to its website on birder or bird conservation websites to reach people who are already interested in birds.

"You have to go to them, and then they will start coming to you. So you have to figure out where the big markets are—where are people going."
—Jeannette Russell, Grassroots Coordinator for the NFPA

It is important to recognize, however, that it is not always easy to get a link on other websites. Other organizations may have criteria for links to control the number of links they have on their site.

Campaigners can also steer people to their website through other mediums, such as bumper stickers, newsletters, posters, and direct mail pieces. As you may recall, two of the bumper sticker examples in chapter seven contained websites. The back of the direct mail example, also shown in chapter seven, says, "For more reasons to vote AGAINST I-147, visit www.nocyanide.org." In addition, PennFuture included a website on its billboard on factory farms. PennFuture also produced a downloadable CD-ROM screensaver and sent it around Pennsylvania. Once the screen saver is on a desktop, it automatically updates with alerts, important dates, and news stories, "so people constantly have refreshed PennFuture content on their screen saver," explained Jeanne Clark. She also pointed out that organizations with student members, volunteers, or interns are likely to have people who can help with that type of technology. Sometimes TV and radio advertisements also announce a website, though they are less effective because people have little time to find a pen and write down the website before the 30 or
60-second ad is over. Yet many mediums used to gain an audience’s attention and communicate a simple message can also direct people to a website, where they can learn more about the issue.

*Make the Website Interactive and Sticky*

One of the characteristics that set the Internet apart from other mass media is its ability to be interactive. Campaigners should, therefore, take advantage of that capability by providing opportunities for website visitors to provide feedback, take action by sending a letter to a decision maker, post questions or concerns, or sign up for additional information and volunteer opportunities. Because the people who visit the site are likely to have at least a moderate interest in the issue or campaign, it is important to make websites “sticky” or to secure as many of those visitors as possible as supporters and volunteers. The website should be set up in a way that encourages visitors to click on an ID field and provide their name and email or other contact information as soon as they enter the site. Campaign organizers are then able to contact those individuals to increase their support and ask them to get more involved.

*Use Pictures or Virtual Tours*

Visuals greatly enhance a campaign message, and websites are a cheap medium for displaying them. Some websites contain photographs of forests, Wilderness, animals and other aspect of the environment to show viewers what is at stake or what destruction has already occurred. Some groups are now including virtual tours on their websites that enable website visitors to explore an area through a number of photographs with captions or short explanations. Another visual communication channel campaigners can use is
one-to-two-minute video clips that can be downloaded from a website. Photographs, virtual tours, and videos make a website more interesting and engaging, and they can improve the effectiveness of the campaign message.

**Electronic Mail**

E-mail is another communication mode made possible by the Internet. E-mail is a fast, cost-effective means of keeping people on an e-mail list abreast of alerts and campaign developments. You can create and increase an e-mail list by having a sign-up sheet when tabling, canvassing, and hosting events, so potential supporters can provide their name and e-mail address in order to receive information. As mentioned earlier, a website should also have a place for visitors to fill in their names and email addresses to receive alerts.

It is also possible to send unsolicited e-mails. For example, the Save the Blackfoot. Vote No on I-147 campaign used an email list to target Montana women, specifically. To obtain the e-mail addresses of female voters in Montana, the campaign coalition sent the names of 40,000 female voters in three Montana counties to a national consulting firm, which found 7,000 e-mail matches to those names. Using those emails, the campaign coordinator sent messages tailored to Montana women and the concerns they expressed in polling data. The cost of obtaining the e-mail list was approximately $1,000.

While e-mail is cheaper than direct mail because it saves on stamps, paper and envelops, it has disadvantages. Because of the high quantity of spam e-mail users receive, unsolicited email is often deleted without being read or filtered by spam control. It is also difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of e-mail or determine whether or not it
was received. Additionally, people change their e-mail addresses much more frequently than their home addresses, so it is difficult to keep an updated e-mail list.

Flash Videos

Flash videos are another method for delivering messages via the Internet that are less common than websites and e-mail but which are gaining popularity. Flash videos are short online films animated and enhanced with voices and sound effects that can be viewed and passed on through e-mail. Like other forwards, flash videos that are funny, intense, or interesting take off rapidly as they are passed along from one reader to a number of his or her contacts and so on. One example of a very successful flash video is the Meatrix, a flash video produced by Free Range Graphics for the Global Resource Action Center for the Environment (GRACE). The flash video plays off the popular movie, the Matrix, to communicate the ills of factory farms. To date, the flash video has had more than six million viewers. Because of the flash video's popularity, many media stations ran stories about it. The flash video also contained a link to a Meatrix website, which included in-depth information about the issue, a take action section, and a place to sign up for alerts and updates.

"I think one of the most effective media things that I have seen in a long time is called a flash video...If you make it funny and clever enough, people will forward it to their friends and family, not necessarily because of the message, but because they think it is clever, especially if you throw humor in it. And it doesn't matter because you are still spreading the message."—Bryony Schwan, National Campaign Director for WVE
Flash videos are a relatively new technology that requires technical and design expertise, which makes them more expensive than other Internet communications. According to Free Range Graphics, the company that produced the Meatrix, typical flash videos cost between $12,000 and $17,000. While this is a significant expense for a low-budget campaign, flash videos get results that might cost up to $100,000 with other mediums. Like website software, new software for flash video production is likely to make the technology accessible to average citizens without a technical background in the near future.

Since flash videos can reach hundreds of thousands to millions of people, they are very powerful for campaigns seeking a national or global audience. However, they are not appropriate for all campaigns. A communication strategy that reaches thousands of people around the world but only a fraction of its local target audience is not likely to result in a successful campaign. It is vital to choose communication mediums based on what is most likely to reach your target audience rather than what will reach the most people.

Other Ideas

In addition to mass media outlets, there are many opportunities to use less-expensive paid advertisements to reach a smaller, localized audience. For instance, programs for University events and organization newsletters sometimes include ads to cover their production costs. Advertisements can also be placed in phone books. Other creative places to advertise are on the back of public restroom doors or diner placemats. For low-budget campaigns targeting a particular community or small city, these types of paid media can be appropriate and beneficial.
Overview

The cost of paid media varies considerably from location to location. While TV and radio advertisements or billboards in large cities can far exceed a low-budget campaign's capabilities, the same media can be much cheaper in small cities and communities. Instead of immediately dismissing various forms of paid media, investigate techniques for reducing the cost, such as producing ads in-house or seeking sympathetic agencies that might offer discounts. Low-budget campaigns should also take note of the communication revolution and consider using the Internet in some fashion.

All paid media outlets have their advantages and disadvantages, which should be considered in light of the target audience and the campaign's budget. Spending most of a campaign's budget to run an ad many times in one media outlet is a poor strategy, but purchasing small amounts of paid media and supplementing it with less-expensive mediums can be a very effective approach.
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

"While mass media may be effective in disseminating information, interpersonal channels are more influential in motivating people to act on that information"—(Rogers and Storey 837).

Posters, banners, newspaper articles, and television and radio ads only go so far in public communication. While they inform people and gain their support, they often do not motivate people to action. Many communication mediums that are effective in informing the public about a problem or issue do not provide adequate space or time to explain in detail how people can get involved. In addition, people often fail to act upon messages directed at a large group because they assume other people are taking care of the problem. For those reasons, interpersonal communication is an extremely valuable component of a public communication plan. Direct communication with members of the target audience is ideal for explaining an issue in greater detail, answering questions, and asking individuals to take action, whether that includes signing a petition or postcard, writing a letter to a legislator, or becoming more involved in the campaign. Interpersonal communications can be a component of other activities, such as events and demonstrations, or they can operate alone. This chapter covers three popular strategies for talking to people directly about campaign issues.

Tabling

Tabling involves setting up a literature table or information booth in a public area where you can talk to people about the issue and hand out literature, such as fact sheets,
newsletters, and articles. Tabling also provides an opportunity to “collect signatures on petitions, solicit donations, and find new volunteers” (Britell). Setting up a table is not useful unless you can get people to approach it, so you have the opportunity to start a conversation with them. Thus, it is beneficial to set up a table in a setting where there are a lot of people, such as farmer’s markets, colleges and universities, or the mall. Tables are especially effective at community events, such as fairs, political rallies, demonstrations, or in conjunction with your own events because the people who attend may already have an inclination toward your issue.

In addition to choosing a suitable location, you should make your table as attractive as possible to draw people to it. Many groups use 3-panelled, tabletop display boards made with Velcro-receptive fabric to exhibit the name of their organization along with text and blown-up photographs that symbolize the issue. New display boards can cost several hundred dollars, but you can find cheaper, used boards on ebay.com. You can also be more creative and build your own display board out of recycled wood, old shutters, or other materials you have available. You can enhance the table itself with a tablecloth, a banner, or other eye-catching items. Another way to attract people to your table is to give away free items, such as key chains, cup holders, and Frisbees.

When people approach your table, you should stand up and engage them in conversation, being as helpful and responsive as possible. People are much more likely to take action when they develop a better understanding of the issue through one-on-one conversation and when they are told, personally, how they can help. You should also have plenty of free literature that people can take to read about the issue in greater depth as well as a sign-up sheet for people to write down their contact information to be
notified of updates or to get involved in the campaign. It is best to have multiple staff or volunteers at the table, so people who approach the table will have an opportunity to speak with someone directly.

**Canvassing**

Canvassing, going door to door to speak directly to target audience members about an issue and seek their support, is another form of interpersonal communication. It can be combined with a literature drop, so people can read about important aspects of the issue that may not get covered in conversation. While canvassing can be an effective way to communicate directly to people, it requires many volunteers and a lot of time.

Before canvassing, it is important to educate volunteers about the issue, so they are prepared to answer questions and stay on message. Canvassers should work in pairs for both security and moral support, and they should not enter a house, which wastes time and poses potential security issues (Britell). Using a map, you can divide a city or town into sections and send a group of canvassers to each area. Canvassers should hand out materials, explain a few key components of the issue, ask for support, and record the contact information of people who would like to get involved. While some people quickly send canvassers away, many people appreciate the direct communication when they understand that the canvassers are not selling anything, but rather, working on an issue that affects their lives.

**Handing out Fliers**

If you have sufficient volunteers, handing out fliers in high traffic areas can be a favorable alternative to hanging posters. Fliers are particularly useful for advertising for
an event. While posters are hit or miss, people are likely to read a flier that is handed directly to them, and they also have the opportunity to ask questions or engage in conversation. Because some people may just skim the headline or visually dominant information on the flier before deciding whether or not to continue reading, the main message should stand out from the rest of the text. It is also useful to put a web address on the flier, so people know where to look for additional information.

Overview

Tabling, canvassing, and handing out fliers are just a few samples of the many ways to use interpersonal communication to deliver a campaign message and recruit new volunteers. Once you have gained support and volunteers, you need to organize and motivate people to work toward the campaign goal based on their time and talents. The next chapter will focus on organizing and its very important role in environmental campaigns.

“If you can get a free news story, that’s the best. But you also have to be out on the streets. I honestly believe that is true. You have to have people out there passing out fliers or holding a sign. You have to hit people more than once if you want them on board.” —Jocelyn Siler, a volunteer political and peace activist
Chapter 11

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

"Showing a problem may lead to concern but in itself won't lead to action. Show concerned people that there is a solution and they can become angry. Show them now is the opportunity to force change, to implement a solution, and give them a way to act—and you have the conditions for engagement." —Chris Rose, Environmental Communications Consultant

The purpose of a public communications campaign is not only to inform but also to persuade and encourage an audience to take action toward some goal. For a campaign to be successful in achieving its goal, public communication must progress from delivering information to motivating supporters to action. Leadership and grassroots organizing is necessary to channel public support into actions that influence decision makers and lead to success. While grassroots organizing has no official definition, it generally refers to the process of organizing and empowering average community members to get involved in issues that affect their lives. It is a difficult task. As Gerik Kransky explains, "organizing is one of the hardest things you will ever do in your life because you are continually moving volunteers and random folks who would not normally be involved. You are getting them involved, and you are getting them to take action. There is a lot of hand holding, a lot of herding cats, a lot of phone calls, a lot of long hours." Despite the challenges of grassroots organizing, it is an essential element of a successful campaign. This chapter examines important tasks in organizing volunteers and maintaining enthusiasm and support.
Create Many Opportunities for Action

It would be ideal if every member of the target audience agreed with the campaign message and took action, but that is not likely to happen. Many people will get involved, however, if there are tasks appropriate to their time, skills, and the level of engagement they feel comfortable with. Some people will only take action if it is as simple as signing a petition, while others will devote much of their free time to participate in canvassing, creating banners, tabling, or taking on leadership roles in the campaign. Creating many opportunities involving varying levels of responsibilities, skills, and time, enables more people to participate.

"We need to give people very specific jobs that they can feel comfortable doing, and then not ask them to do twenty other things. This is the major failing of campaigns: we often don't figure out a whole hierarchy of tasks—from tasks that take 20 hours a week to tasks that take twenty minutes a week."—Mary O'Brien, Preparing for a Campaign

Make Action Simple

In many cases, the likelihood that decision makers will perform the requested action increases with the number of people pressuring them. While campaigns may be able to recruit a number of volunteers, the majority of the target audience will not take action that requires more than a few minutes of their time. A reliable technique for increasing action, therefore, is to make action as simple as possible. Increasingly, environmental campaign websites have an action section, where visitors can fill in several fields to send a pre-written letter to a decision maker with the click of a button. Another option is to set up a table at events or high-traffic public areas and ask people to
sign a pre-printed postcard or a petition that will be sent to decision makers. People are generally willing to assist a campaign they support if it is as easy as signing their name.

It is also important to make action easy for people willing to devote more time to campaign efforts. Some supporters will take an extra step and agree to write their own letters to a legislator or a letter to the editor, but many of those people will fail to perform that action unless a campaign organizer prepares them and follows up. Preparation can include providing volunteers with talking points, asking them if they have any questions, and following up until they write and send their letters. An alternative is to send volunteers sample letters, which they can modify or send unchanged in their names. Any form of action by the target audience is useful because it demonstrates to decision makers the support behind the campaign, and it increases the level of supporters’ involvement.

Train and Empower Volunteers

It is very important to train supporters who become engaged in the campaign in order to use their time and talents efficiently and to develop their sense of empowerment. People are more likely to follow through on some action if they feel knowledgeable about the issue and the task. While it is vital to teach volunteers how to perform tasks like canvassing, tabling, or leafleting, it is also necessary to teach them why they are doing it—why it is crucial to the campaign. As volunteers develop their knowledge of the issue and an understanding of campaign strategies, give them additional responsibilities that build their confidence and power. Using volunteers’ strengths and talents will benefit the campaign and keep volunteers invested and interested.
Create a Positive and Fun Atmosphere

People like to feel that what they are doing is making a positive impact and that they are part of a group. Nurturing those components of a campaign will maintain the enthusiasm of current volunteers and recruit additional support. Acknowledging small victories and the volunteers who made them possible keeps people working toward the overall goal, which otherwise might seem remote. No campaign is perfect; there will always be mistakes and strategies that fail to achieve their objectives. When that occurs, it is especially important to keep volunteers focused on the strides a campaign has made toward its goal rather than on failures.

Nourishing camaraderie and group work can help sustain a positive outlook and make a campaign fun and exciting. For example, some campaigns use letter writing parties to bring volunteers together for a few hours to write letters to decision makers. According to the Campaign for America’s Wilderness’s outreach guide for advocates, “It is always easier to write a letter with friends and positive energy” (21). Hosting annual and/or holiday parties for volunteers is another way to encourage friendship and add an element of excitement to a campaign. If people find campaign work fun and exciting, they are likely to encourage their friends and family to get involved, thus increasing the campaign’s power.
Thank People

Environmental campaigns rarely have a large budget to work with; their power resides in people, volunteers and activists. Because people are a campaign’s greatest resource, individual volunteers should be honored and thanked for their work at every opportunity. Thanking people shows them that their time and hard work is valued, and it encourages them to continue volunteering.

"Pay attention to nurturing that sense of connectedness and valuing the contributions that everyone makes. Send lots of thank you notes and say it publicly...It’s not just the big heroes that make these things successful; it’s the little things that lots of people do."—Norma Grier, Executive Director of the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides

Overview

Leadership and organizing are key components of an environmental campaign. Proper organizing leads to appropriate action, which is what a campaign depends on. In Organize to Win: A Grassroots Activist’s Guide, Jim Britell explains the importance of action, saying, “Campaigns succeed or fail based on how much ‘action’ occurs. Action consists of phone calls to decision makers, written materials…and personal contacts with and comments expressed by people at meetings. Everything else: alerts, videos, TV coverage, advertising, posters, email, etc. are more precursors and facilitators to action; not action in themselves.” Since most people are too timid to take action on their own, effective organizing that matches volunteers with appropriate tasks, trains and encourages volunteers, and directs everyone involved toward victory is an indispensable element of a campaign.
CONCLUSION

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has."
—Margaret Mead

Low-budget does not equal less effective in terms of campaigning. Without an abundance of money to spend on high-profile paid media, low-budget campaigns are forced to be more resourceful and creative in implementing public communication strategies. That does not mean they cannot be successful in reaching and gaining the support of a target audience to achieve the campaign goal. Through strategic planning and effective communication based on the principles explained in this guide, low-budget environmental groups can greatly increase the likelihood that their campaigns will achieve the desired outcome. As Mary O'Brien points out in Preparing for a Campaign, "We have an obligation to win, because our campaigns are for health and democracy and nature, not for ourselves alone. So we need to do everything possible to win, including careful strategy, accuracy in all information, ambitious fundraising, strong participation by people with all kinds of skills, never coasting."

One of the most beneficial things campaigners can do is to learn from past campaigns and people who have worked on similar campaigns. Learning from the achievements and mistakes of others is one of the keys to success. This guide sought to use the lessons of experienced environmental campaigners to assist individuals and groups with less experience. But environmental groups planning a campaign should do additional research to find out if other groups have implemented campaigns in similar
situations or targeted similar audiences. There is no reason to reinvent the wheel if it is not necessary.

In addition to the supplementary resources listed throughout this guide, the following sources offer valuable information for anyone interested in campaigning for the environment.

**Additional Resources**


Amnesty International, a worldwide movement of people who campaign for internationally recognized human rights, has a campaigning manual that discusses many of the topics covered in this guide in addition to fundraising, government lobbying and evaluation. It can be viewed online or downloaded from the following website: <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/campaigning-manual-eng>.
Interviewee Profiles

Bryony Schwan, Missoula, MT
- National Campaign Coordinator for Women’s Voices for the Earth
- Lead staff person for the national Coming Clean Campaign

Chris Rose, United Kingdom
- Environmental/communications consultant
- Author of *How to Win Campaigns: 100 Steps to Success*
- Former campaigner for Greenpeace, WWF International, Friends of the Earth

Gerik Kransky, Missoula, MT
- Campaign Coordinator for Save the Blackfoot. Vote No on I-147 campaign

Howard (Twilly) Cannon, Missoula, MT
- Former Senior Member of Greenpeace’s National Campaign Team
- Co-founder of the Ruckus Society

Jeanne Clark, Pittsburgh, PA
- Director of Communications at Citizen’s for Pennsylvania’s Future (PennFuture)
- Director of the Environmental Communications Center for Western Pennsylvania

Jeanette Russell, Missoula, MT
- Grassroots Coordinator for the National Forest Protection Alliance

Jocelyn Siler, Missoula, MT
- Director of the English Composition program at the University of Montana
- Citizen activist/campaign volunteer for political and issue campaigns

Joseph Vaile, Ashland, OR
- Campaign Coordinator for KS Wild

Kelly Rigg, The Netherlands
- Co-founder of the Varda Group, an environmental consulting group
- Former Wildlife Campaign Director for Greenpeace

Lisa Dix, Washington, D.C.
- Director of American Lands Alliance’s National Forest Campaign

Liz Banse, Seattle, WA
- Seattle Associate Director at Resource Media, a non-profit that specializes in strategic communications and media outreach

Matt Koehler, Missoula MT
- Director of Native Forest Network

Megan Hill, Arlington, VA
- Senior Director of RARE Pride Campaigns

Michael Brune, San Francisco, CA
- Executive Director of Rainforest Action Network (RAN)
- Former Campaigns Director for RAN

Mike Matz, Durango, CO
- Executive Director of the Campaign for America’s Wilderness

Norma Grier, Eurene, OR
- Executive Director of Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides

Randy Rasmussen, NM
- Natural Trails and Water Coalition’s western off-road vehicle Campaign Coordinator

Tylynn Gordon, Missoula, MT
- Staff member at M & R Strategic Services, an agency that offers a variety of communication services such as issue campaigns and marketing

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