

that meeting, the committee decided to amend the plan to remove the dam and reservoir from it. The coalition had succeeded in their goal for this part of the campaign.

Communicating Your Campaign

Now that you know who your targets are, you will need to determine what you are going to say. This is not as easy as it seems. It can be one of the most time-consuming and contentious debates in your planning process, and it should be. You will not win a campaign by merely telling people to "do the right thing" and hoping that they "step up to the plate." You must make your case. Remember, not everyone has the same perspective that you do. One common



Your communication must let people know who is the good guy and who is the bad guy.

activist's mantra is to "start where they are." What this means is that you must start by recognizing the viewpoint and attitude of the people you are working to influence. Learn what is important to them and how they feel about an issue. You cannot "start where you are" and expect them to understand. Be careful not to talk down to people because you think they should just get it; review regularly where they are and start with that.

Working to prevent development over the aquifer may seem to be the obviously correct thing to do, but others may only see the job opportunities or necessities of building new schools to relieve overcrowding. Therefore, you must frame the debate for the campaign, controlling how the issue will be discussed by the general public, the media, and most importantly, the decision-makers. Your communication must let people know who is the good guy and who is the bad guy. You must pose this public policy question in such a way that any reasonable person would side with you.

This is achieved by establishing just a few, carefully selected phrases during the planning process which will guide all of your communication. Political candidates are always told to stay on message, and you must, too! Every piece of campaign communication – be it a speech, a direct-mail piece, or a letter-to-the-editor, must pass the test: "Does this tell our story?" and "Does this drive home and reinforce our message?"

The following "Seven Cs of Effective Campaign Communication" will help you to evaluate your campaign communication. It needs to be:

CLEAR -- simple and easy to understand

CONCISE -- brief and to the point

CONNECTED -- relates directly to the local community and what is happening right there, right now

COMPELLING -- connects on an emotional or gut level (not just an intellectual one) with the targeted public audience, and communicates a sense of urgency

CONTRASTING -- is something only your side can claim, and clearly distinguishes between the two choices (right vs. wrong)

CREDIBLE -- is not only factual, but also "rings true"

CONSISTENT -- is repeated over and over again throughout your group's campaign communication

A. Message/slogan – you need to develop one very clear message of 10 words or fewer that will be used throughout the campaign to summarize your position – this is your message, simple, easy to understand and compelling. This message will be repeated so many times by so many people that you will be dreaming it. Remember, however, that by the time the message begins to penetrate the public consciousness, campaign volunteers will be feeling nauseated when they hear it!



The No Aquifer Big Box coalition placed ads in the local paper and created t-shirts with the slogan "Clean Water or Cheap Underwear?" A visual of a pair of underwear illustrated the point and made it memorable, not to mention amusing.

B. Story – an important element of your communication. You need to create a story to communicate the situation to the public, and the story needs some very basic elements: a villain, a victim, a problem, a hero, and a proposed resolution. For example:

"Wal-Mart Corporation (villain) is planning to build a Supercenter over the recharge zone of the Edwards Aquifer (problem). The runoff will impair the water quality of the aquifer, the sole source of drinking water for thousands of citizens (victims), and damage the habitat of the Barton Springs salamander (victims). The citizens of Central Texas (heroes) must take action now to rescue this important resource, by telling the CEO of Wal-Mart to drop the plans for this store (plot resolution)."

This story conveys the fundamental problem to the public, along with how the problem can be solved, while giving people an idea of how they can take action.

C. Media Outlets – consider which specific media outlets will be most effective in communicating the message and story to your target and public audiences. Consider targeting all types of media outlets, including television stations (network and cable), radio stations, newspapers (dailies, weeklies,

alternative press, campus papers), magazines, constituency group newsletters, and electronic media (Web sites and on-line services). Remember, you must choose the media outlets that will reach your targeted public audiences, primary targets, and secondary targets.

For example: You can reach a big portion of most public audiences by getting coverage on the local evening TV news. However, if you are targeting hunters and anglers, you will also want to target the outdoor column in the local newspaper and the fishing report that airs on the country music radio station on Saturday morning.

You will almost definitely want to get coverage in the local daily newspaper. But your targeting should be more specific than that: Based on your public audience, where do you want to be covered in the newspaper? In the editorials, where it is more likely to influence community leaders? In the weekly health section, to influence parents? On the front page, to get the attention of all targeted audiences? Focus is critical!

In order to ensure that your story pitch will be successful, you should target individual reporters and producers as much as possible. If the local evening news is in a targeted media outlet, specify, for example, that your campaign will pitch stories to Jill Smith, producer of the evening news on Channel 2. Producers and reporters receive hundreds of leads a day, so no matter how compelling your story is, it won't get covered if it reaches the desk of the wrong person. The more specifically you target a media outlet, the more effective your media work will be. If you don't have a media directory, check the internet or call the media outlet and ask who is responsible for the type of coverage you are interested in getting. See the Designing Media tactics section of the Sierra Club Grassroots Organizing Training Manual to get more information about types of newspaper coverage and other types of outlets to target.

Once you have targeted your media outlets, review previously published articles and editorials to



determine what these writers and editors deem newsworthy, if they have a particular bias, what kind of style they have, etc.

Remember to follow up, and not to give up. If a story doesn't get published the first time you submit it, try to find out why. Was it bumped by other, more urgent stories? Should it have been sent to someone else? Was the story not compelling enough? Offer to meet with the reporter or publisher and provide them with opportunities for interesting camera footage.

Developing Tactics and Timeline

Now that you've defined your goals, strategy, and campaign communication, we will look at how to develop a set of tactics for achieving your goals and communicating your story. Too many campaign groups try to start their planning process by brainstorming a "to do" list before they have done all the research and analysis necessary to determine the right tactics for accomplishing their goals.

The Domino Effect

Ideally, your grassroots campaign will have a logical and coherent rhythm, such as starting with a well-planned public announcement of your conservation goals, followed up by a set of strategic activities that each build upon one another like dominoes falling in sequence to generate energy and momentum, and culminating in a triumphant climax and celebration. Remember, first create demand. Then hold decision-makers accountable to that demand. And finally, take delivery.

This is the theory of escalating tactics: the effect should be that of gradually turning up the volume on the radio, starting quietly and building to a crescendo that cannot be ignored. Start small and get bigger. Again, remember that your starting point should be "where they are" rather than where you are.

Creating Demand

Creating demand is about more than just providing the public with information about an environmental

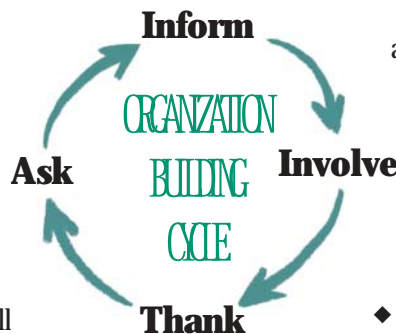


Research and analyze the right tactics for accomplishing your goals before brainstorming a "to do" list.

problem. It is also about communicating a compelling message, explaining how individual citizens can become engaged in working toward a solution, and providing an easy vehicle for their engagement. In other words, it is about informing, involving, asking, and thanking the community – and then starting the cycle all over again.

In creating demand, you should always look for ways you can:

- ◆ inform as many people as possible about what is at stake
- ◆ turn your issue into a story with a hero, villain, victim, and resolution – and tell it over and over again



- ◆ involve people in the issue - have them spend time in the place you are trying to protect, have them collect water samples, show them the creatures that depend on the water and explain their role in the ecosystem, demonstrate the far-reaching effects a dam or development would have on surrounding areas

- ◆ ask them to take the easiest possible action, and then thank them for their participation
- ◆ connect them to other people who can help them to feel empowered and part of a greater whole
- ◆ create as much coverage in the media as possible to encourage public discussion
- ◆ continue to inform, involve, ask, and thank them to solidify a connection, so they will take part in holding the decision-makers accountable, and, ultimately, become the heroes of this story.



There are three general types of tactics you can employ to create demand: direct contact activities, general visibility, and media tactics. Since media tactics are critical for all three phases of the campaign (creating demand, establishing accountability, taking delivery), media is discussed in a separate section at the end of this chapter.

Direct Contact Activities

These activities are aimed at your targeted public audience and are focused on personally engaging people in the campaign as volunteers, donors, and/or active supporters. Keep in mind Cesar Chavez' secret to organizing: "Talk to one person, then another, then another..."

The No Aquifer Big Box coalition created a user-friendly website, www.NoAquiferBigBox.org, which allowed the public to easily contact City Council members, decision-makers in the real estate development company, and Wal-Mart management.

The Paluxy River families hosted their monthly fish fries every summer, attracting hundreds of members of the public who otherwise would never have heard of their issue.

Other direct contact activities might include:

PHONE BANKS – These can be very time- and labor-intensive but highly effective. The most productive method is to recruit volunteers to make calls to a strategically selected phone list, at a designated time, from a single central location, with a carefully constructed script or talking points. Volunteers might ask you if they may just take a list of names and numbers home with them to work through at their leisure, but this should be discouraged. A phone banking event produces camaraderie among volunteers, and provides a support system for those who happen to reach unfriendly respondents. You should have a targeted list that is likely to yield positive results, but it is nevertheless inevitable that a few of your callers will receive unkind responses. In these cases, it is a great benefit for volunteers to be working together and reminding one another of the reason they are there, and the fact that most of the people on the list probably do want to become informed about this issue affecting them.

In the Marvin Nichols reservoir struggle, one woman went door-to-door to inform her neighbors of the threat to their area and ask them to write letters on the topic.

You should estimate that each volunteer will be able to reach approximately 10 people per hour. The phone calls should be very brief, courteous, and focused on one specific goal. For example: (a) putting up a yard sign, (b) attending a rally or public hearing, (c) making a donation, but not "all of the above."


DOOR-TO-DOOR CANVASSING – For an even more personal approach, you may want to enlist volunteers to walk door-to-door through targeted neighborhoods, or to specific homes, using voter lists (for example households with Independent women 25-45 years old) to distribute literature and/or secure signatures on a petition. The volunteers should have a brief script or talking points to guide their conversation, and leave each person they contact with a compelling flyer or brochure that reinforces the campaign's message. If you do not have the time or people required for this activity, you may want to consider doing a "lit drop," where the volunteers do not ring the doorbells, but rather just leave the literature at each designated house. (If you have the budget for printing door hangers, these are highly recommended.) Note that the United States Postal Service prohibits anyone other than a mail carrier from placing items in a mailbox; also, homeowners get very annoyed when flyers fall down to an inaccessible spot between a screen and the surface of the door, so be sure your volunteers know to roll flyers and wedge them between doorknob and frame, or to place them under the doormat.

In the Marvin Nichols reservoir struggle, one woman went door-to-door to inform her neighbors of the threat to their area and ask them to write letters

on the topic. She went back later to pick them up and came home with several hundred letters. This is particularly impressive, given that it was in a rural area where just getting from one house to the next takes a significant investment of time. This example also demonstrates how effective the personal touch can be.

TAKE HOME TIP What will get media to notice our cause?

To secure press coverage, use your creativity to maximize the visual impact of an event. Keep copy short.



NEIGHBORHOOD COFFEES OR HOUSE PARTIES – Some grassroots organizing campaigns arrange get-togethers in supporters’ homes, where the host invites neighbors over to talk about the issue at hand, and how they might be able to assist by volunteering their time and/or making a financial contribution. These gatherings require some planning but can be very effective in recruiting new activists to the cause.

LEAFLETTING – This entails sending volunteers out to distribute campaign literature or secure petition signatures in public locations where the persuadable targets of your campaign are likely to be. Do some research to identify upcoming community events that make sense for your campaign. For instance, you can do leafletting at a county fair, a 10K race, the trailhead of a local recreation area, bait shops, gun shows, mass transit stops, high school football games, and so on.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION – This includes postcards, e-mail messages, postings on relevant Web pages, articles in constituency group newsletters, etc.

These forms of communication are not as personal as the ones listed above, and therefore, generally not as effective in engaging participation, but they are significantly less labor- and time-intensive.

Visibility Activities

The other way that a campaign works to create demand is through visibility activities, which are directed toward all of your targets – those within the community, decision-makers, and media outlets. Their purpose is to demonstrate widespread support for your position, generate community “buzz” and set your campaign up for the accountability phase. Whereas the direct contact activities listed above are like spraying a garden hose full-force at a particular target, visibility activities are like a lawn sprinkler, covering more ground but with much less intensity.

Visibility activities might include the following:

RALLIES, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND MARCHES – These can be great morale boosters for volunteers. However, in order to secure press coverage, these events also need to include something newsworthy. Be sure to use your creativity to maximize the visual impact of the event. (For instance if you are trying to clean up a local river, you might want to organize a flotilla, with a large fleet of supporters sailing down the endangered waterway, waving flags and chanting your message.) In addition, it is important that you work hard to ensure a strong turnout for such events. If the media does attend but only a handful of supporters are there, that could end up being the story, which would be an embarrassing flop. Conversely, if you get a nice crowd, it can serve to attract attention, inform people, and generate supporters even if reporters don’t show up.

YARD SIGNS – If you decide to make signs to advertise your campaign, you should keep it very simple, with no more than 7-10 words in bold, easy-to-read print. The most convincing ones are yard signs, since these communicate to people throughout the neighborhood that someone they know is committed enough to publicize his support. Posters plastered on telephone polls and other public locations are not nearly as persuasive and are often illegal.

OTHER VISIBILITY MATERIALS – These include campaign buttons, T-shirts, bumper stickers, signs/placards, and anything else that communicates the campaign slogan. Although volunteers may clamor for such paraphernalia, your group may not be able to afford it. If you do make such an investment, keep it to a minimum, as these do not provide quite as much bang for the buck. Eye-catching t-shirts can be helpful if worn by gregarious volunteers who are always ready to converse with strangers about the issue, but in many cases the money might be better spent. Of course, if you get an in-kind contribution, by all means take it and use it to publicize your campaign slogan.

Making Leaders Accountable

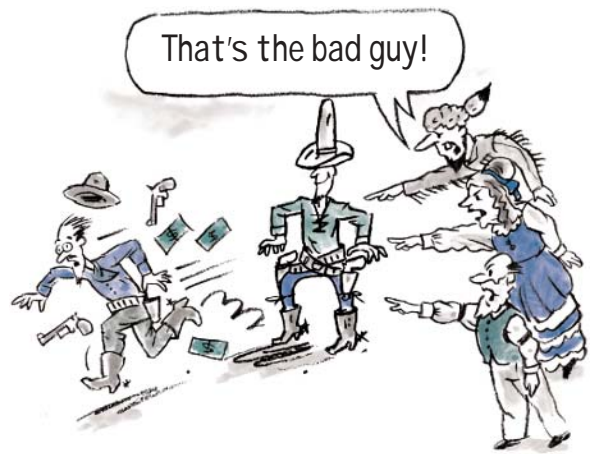
Accountability entails both thanking leaders who do the right thing, and criticizing leaders who do the wrong thing. Accountability activities focus on a particular decision-maker and highlight past actions – votes, co-sponsorships, or public statements about the environment and water issues in particular – and are designed to influence a future action.

Once you have developed tactics for creating public demand, you will need to shift your focus to the decision-makers and how to compel them to respond to that demand. This entails engaging both the public and the media in:

- ◆ solidifying, mobilizing, and thanking current supporters
- ◆ aggressively pressuring undecided officials to "do the right thing"
- ◆ publicly criticizing those who come out against your issue, and thanking those who did the right thing

At this point in the campaign, you have already set forth your story. Now it is time to find out who will be the good guys and who will be the bad guys.

The point of your accountability work is to make it painful for the decision-makers to oppose you, and pleasurable to join you. Of course, we're not talking about inflicting physical pain (or pleasure for that matter). We're talking about evaluating each of your targeted decision-makers and demonstrating how it would be in their best interests to support your



Now it is time to find out who will be the good guys and who will be the bad guys.

position (to ensure their community standing, profits, reputation for fairness, or whatever else may be important to them.)

In your accountability work you will, once again, be employing the organization-building-cycle: asking, thanking, informing, and involving the targeted decision-makers. Here's how it works:

First, you ask the decision-maker to support your position. For instance, if the immediate conservation goal is to stop a channelization project in your local watershed, ask your member of Congress to write a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers opposing the project, or to come to a citizens' meeting to speak about it. If there is already a public hearing scheduled, ask your Congresswoman to come to that meeting. If there is not, schedule a citizens' meeting, so that she will be asked to support your position.

If the Congresswoman opposes the project, write a letter to the editor praising her (thanks) – and then send her office a copy. Have someone attend the next town meeting to get up, tell everyone what she did, and thank her.

Next, let the Congresswoman know you are going to inform the community about whether the decision-maker responded to its environmental demands. (Note that you are now informing both your target and the community – informing the community is the first step in the cycle with the community, since the ask-thank-inform-involve cycle can begin anywhere on the circle.)

If your Congresswoman refuses to support your cause, continue to pressure her, but more intensely. Write letters to the editor. Arrange phonebanks to ask any potentially interested citizens to call and protest. Attend the town meeting, but also consider a silent vigil outside the district office. Invite (involve) her to join you on an outing to the area. Take the media with you whether or not she comes.

Involve the community in thanking – or criticizing – the decision. Circulate a petition at the shopping center, either thanking or criticizing the Congresswoman. Call the local radio talk show to urge listeners to write the district office, contact campaign contributors, local officials, and community leaders. Ask them to call the congresswoman to thank or criticize her.

Begin the cycle again. If a vote is coming up on funding for the channelization project, ask the Congresswoman to vote against the funds. Inform everyone who got involved in the last cycle of accountability that the Congresswoman has a chance to help protect the local watershed. Build an even stronger public involvement component to hold her accountable.

Here is a brief description of the various tactics you might employ in your accountability work:

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION – This includes mobilizing supporters to send constituent letters, postcards, e-mails, and/or faxes to the decision-makers. Each and every type of communication should reiterate the campaign message. It should establish the record by clearly stating the action by the decision-maker on which this accountability tactic is based. The key to successfully employing this particular tactic is volume. A couple of letters trickling in over a few months will not make an impact; only an all-out barrage of endorsements for your campaign's position will get their attention.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – Another method of communication with the decision-makers involves having supporters provide testimony at public meetings. The policy makers may have already scheduled a hearing, or you may need to exert some pressure on them to do so. Either way, once you have

a forum, you should prepare your side's testimony very carefully.

Here are a few tips:

- ◆ Try to recruit a wide array of respected community leaders to speak, reaching beyond your group to show a broad coalition of support (such as teachers, nurses, scientists, ministers, etc.)

- ◆ Draft talking points or write out full speeches, making sure that each one communicates the campaign's message but addresses different salient points that are appropriate to that particular speaker's unique perspective.

- ◆ Do your homework. Find out ahead of time as much as you can about who will be attending the hearing, incorporating issues into the testimony that you think will resonate particularly well with those individuals.

- ◆ Research and respect the guidelines that have been established for the forum (for example, don't bring a 10-page speech when testimony will be limited to three minutes per person).

- ◆ Anticipate the opposition and construct your statements to defuse their arguments.

- ◆ Arrive at the meeting well prepared, appropriately attired, and be courteous and professional.

- ◆ Finally, and most importantly, make sure your supporters are visible. Have folks with signs, buttons, and/or stickers which display your central campaign message. (If you know your group will be attending public hearings, this is a case in which it might well be worthwhile to invest in buttons and stickers. But remember also that most home computers and printers these days can generate colorful paper buttons that could be pinned to clothing; these are extremely inexpensive.)

BIRD-DOGGING – This involves following your opposition around from one event to another (town meetings, press conferences, and rallies), to ask them pointed questions, getting them on the record with the media present, and then using their responses in future accountability work. To increase your odds of



garnering media attention for your bird-dogging activities, you should consider various visual aids, such as having volunteers wear gas masks to dramatize an air-quality problem, or dress up as hogs to illustrate someone's misguided support of animal factories. Or you might create a continuing character that will serve as your campaign's mascot, such as "Tommy the Toxic Waste Drum" to represent the villain's pollution. Have fun with your bird-dogging, but make sure you: (a) always have your facts straight; and (b) stay within the boundaries of good taste, common sense, and most importantly, the law.

Taking Delivery

Your tactics for taking delivery will depend on what you are trying to accomplish and will vary widely from arena to arena. Taking delivery – the actual achievement of the goal – is an area in which specific knowledge of the arena and the decision-makers is critical. A courtroom has very different dynamics than the planning commission or a congressional election. The reason for this difference is that demand and accountability flow from general human nature and psychology; they are about creating power. Taking delivery involves using power in specific circumstances and using it intelligently to win a victory. It is about understanding the venue in which you are working, targeting key decision-makers, building good relationships with them, and executing your strategy.

Assessing Your Media Resources

In determining how much media coverage your campaign can realistically garner, you must first assess your available resources, including money, staff time, volunteer time, your activists' previous press

experience and skills, your current relationships with local media outlets, etc.

Considering your resources, put together an earned media program that is ambitious but achievable. For instance, if your organization has very limited experience interacting with the press and has never received much coverage in the local outlets, it would be rather foolish to develop a plan that calls for weekly press conferences. On the other hand, if you have substantial media experience and savvy, it would be equally foolish not to capitalize fully on your potential.

Earned media

Often referred to as "free publicity," it is really earned publicity. News coverage does not happen spontaneously. It comes to those campaigns that



“Free publicity” is actually earned publicity.

work hard to attract, maintain, and control the attention of the press. It is critical to develop and execute an aggressive and strategic earned media program. It can make or break your grassroots organizing effort.

Designing a Media Strategy

Strategically, the media can be used to:

- ◆ Influence decision-makers
- ◆ Generate activism
- ◆ Flush out and verify the record
- ◆ Force a position to be taken or revealed
- ◆ Reveal motives
- ◆ Hold an official or corporation accountable for the good or bad record they have compiled

Ask yourself: How will we use media in this particular campaign? What is the strategic goal? What type of coverage, and which particular outlets, will we need to achieve that goal? There are many different types of coverage and many different media outlets that might cover your campaign. The goal is to match the media tactic to your need. *Your media strategy will be defined by the target you are trying to influence. With the knowledge of which decision-makers and public audiences you are targeting, and an understanding of which type of media coverage tends to influence them, you can develop an effective, efficient, and winning media strategy.* For each targeted decision-maker and for each targeted public audience, you should list the type of coverage that would help to influence them, and the specific outlets you need to target to reach them.

You should not view your media program as a separate operation within the campaign, but rather as a fully integrated component of the overall effort. The media is a powerful tool that you will be employing to communicate your message to your

targets in order to achieve your ultimate strategic goals. In other words, it is a means to an end, not an end unto itself.

Designing Media Tactics

Invite the local press to cover all of your organizing, visibility, and accountability activities, in order to broaden each event's potential impact. However, you cannot always count on the media to show up; in fact, they will frequently fail to show up, or promise to come but then get diverted to a more exciting event at the last minute. That's why, in addition to the activities you've already planned, you will also need to invest some energy in designing tactics targeted exclusively to the media. (See the Appendix beginning on page 89 of the Grassroots Organizing Training Manual for detailed instructions on these tactics.)

A critical step to success is to prepare your organization to be ready to respond to inquiries as the result of media exposure. Prepare a fact sheet or information about the issues and what you need volunteers to do. Media coverage can be a wasted opportunity if the organization isn't prepared.

MEDIA TACTICS

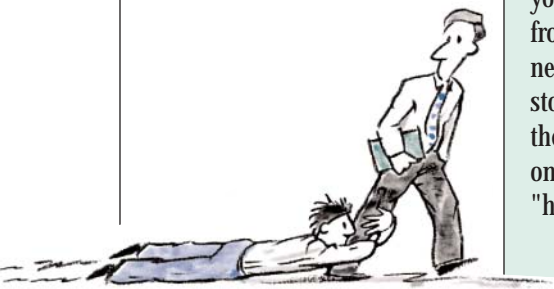
PROS

CONS


PITCHING NEWS STORIES

"Selling" your story to reporters – engaging their interest, feeding them enough information to make them want to cover the story – is one of the best ways to reach a broad spectrum of your community and to infuse your campaign with a sense of legitimacy. If your campaign shows up on the front page of the local newspaper or is one of the lead stories on the evening TV news, then your targets will see it as one of the things that is "happening" in the community.

You should not use this tool, however, unless you have something that is truly "newsworthy." If you are trying to reach a specific audience, there are often more efficient ways than general news coverage. If, for example, you are trying to reach hunters and anglers, you will likely reach more of them in a column in the Outdoors section of the newspaper or through the local fishing TV show, than with a news story in the metro section of the paper.



Selling the story.

MEDIA TACTICS	PROS	CONS
<p>PITCHING FEATURE STORIES -- Much time and space that was once dedicated to news coverage is now filled with feature stories.</p>	<p>If the media want local characters, pitch them the story of your group's conservation chair, who has been fighting for 30 years to protect a nearby wilderness area. If they want human interest, share with them the story of the 12-year-old asthmatic son of one of your clean-air campaign volunteers, and how he can't ride his bike or play baseball on dirty air days. This kind of coverage can tell your campaign's story very powerfully, and is likely to be covered because of the ever-increasing feature coverage from many media outlets.</p>	<p>On the downside, however, features coverage is usually very "soft" in nature, so it is less likely to include any issue angles. This makes it most effective during the creating-demand segment of your campaign, but less useful when you are ensuring accountability and taking delivery. By their nature, ensuring accountability and taking delivery require harder-hitting stories that don't work as well as features.</p>
<p>PRESS CONFERENCES</p>  <p>Now that we have your attention...</p>	<p>If you have something really newsworthy to report, these can be very effective at getting broad coverage.</p>	<p>If you are working in a large media market, however, most reporters are too busy to leave their desks to see just a bunch of talking heads in front of a podium, and will need to be enticed with some great visuals for the cameras (for example, something on fire, or large props). Also be careful not to overuse this tactic; press conferences require a great deal of time, planning, and labor.</p>
<p>ACCESS TV -- This is public interest television provided free of charge or at very low cost; members of the public host their own programs.</p>	<p>Inexpensive, relatively easy way to get television coverage.</p>	<p>Shows can run at strange times; audiences tend to be small and disparate. Research well to ensure that time spent on Access TV is productive and will reach a target audience.</p>

MEDIA TACTICS

PROS

CONS

LETTERS-TO-THE-EDITOR
or LTEs

These are among the most widely read portions of a newspaper and should be used in almost every grassroots campaign. Having several letters printed about your campaign will make it clear that you are working on an issue of great concern to the community and help create demand. LTEs are much easier to place than news or features coverage and are a great way to raise the visibility early on in your campaign and get more volunteers involved.

There is no guarantee that your letters will be printed.

OP-EDS



A good op-ed does take some time.

These give you the opportunity to tell your campaign story in a much longer format than a letter-to-the-editor, in a section of the newspaper that is also well read. In contrast to news coverage, feature coverage, and editorials, you control the content of the op-ed, although the newspaper may edit it.

Unfortunately, writing a good op-ed does take some time, without any guarantee that it will get printed. Op-eds don't carry the authority that an editorial does, but they are seen as more authoritative than a LTE.

EDITORIALS

Having your local newspaper editorialize in favor of your campaign is one of the most powerful media hits available. Decision-makers always read the editorials and are definitely influenced by their content.

Positive editorials are not always easy to place. You are competing with every other local issue for very limited space. You also have very little control over the details of the editorial. You can provide the editorial board with the facts, but the board will decide how to use them. Editorial boards pride themselves on their objectivity and independence, and they don't want to be seen as being influenced by interest groups.

MEDIA TACTICS	PROS	CONS
<p>COLUMN COVERAGE -- Most newspapers have their own columnists and also publish syndicated columns.</p>	<p>Columnists are generally seen as authoritative. Columns are a good way to raise the visibility of your campaign with a broad audience.</p>	<p>Their opinion carries less weight than an editorial, but more weight than an op-ed or LTE. However, as with editorials, getting a columnist to cover your campaign can be difficult, and you don't have a lot of control over the content.</p>
<p>RADIO ACTUALITY -- This is a pre-recorded, brief statement or interview for radio stations to use during their news broadcasts.</p>	<p>This is broad-spectrum coverage that may not closely target your audience but can get a large number of people to hear your message. Research stations to choose a program and time that will best target your audience.</p>	<p>An actuality requires having the technology to tape the statement (a high-quality tape recorder and microphone) and to transmit the statement over the phone (a device called a phone patch which connects to your phone to transmit the recording without losing sound quality). Many public relations agencies have this technology.</p>
<p>RADIO TALK SHOWS</p>	<p>You don't need to write a report or plan a news conference; you just need to pick up the phone and dial (and re-dial and re-dial, depending on how popular the show is). If you have a well planned talk radio strategy, with volunteers covering all of the major local shows over a period of a couple of weeks, you can significantly raise the presence of your campaign in the community.</p>	<p>On the downside, however, talk radio tends to err towards the extremes, so if your campaign is at all controversial, you can expect some backlash. You can avoid some of this by knowing which shows to go on and avoiding the knee-jerk anti-environmentalists in the crowd. You also can't target a particular demographic audience because the radio audience is very broad.</p>
<p>PRESS TOURS</p>	<p>You might want to consider inviting members of the press on a little "field trip:" have them come see and take pictures of the endangered wetland, forest, lake, etc., and bring along an expert who can provide them with important information about its fragile ecosystems.</p>	<p>Press tours take some effort to organize and coordinate.</p>

MEDIA TACTICS	PROS	CONS
<p>PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs) – Both radio and television stations dedicate a small percentage of air time to these.</p>	<p>PSAs allow you to reach a fairly broad audience with a basic campaign message as long as it can be phrased as a true public service announcement. They increase the visibility of your organization and campaign, and are fairly easy to place.</p>	<p>The air time for PSAs is free, but only available for messages that are truly "public service." You will need the money to produce them, and this is not an insignificant expense, particularly for TV. PSAs are almost always aired at times with small audiences, mostly during the overnight hours so you will reach a small, diffuse audience</p>

Remember: Keep your conservation goals in the forefront of your mind. Each and every one of your media events must be targeted to specific media outlets. These events should be strategically focused on communicating your campaign message and story to your campaign targets and/or targeted public

audiences. Even if you are using an outlet with a very broad audience (the local evening TV news) your goal is to reach only a designated portion of that audience – your strategic targets (women 25-40 years old) – and your story must be tailored accordingly.

The Tactics Criteria Check-List

Before committing to any particular activity, always ask yourself the following questions:

- Which specific goal do we hope to achieve through this activity?
- Who is our target for this tactic – among the identified decision-makers, audience, and/or media outlets?
- How will this tactic communicate our campaign’s message?
- Will this activity alienate any of our strategic targets or hurt our organization’s overall credibility?
- Do we have the time, money, and people necessary to execute this tactic, is this really "newsworthy"?
- How will our coalition partners be contributing to this effort (in terms of money, people, and connections)?
- Will this be fun? Will it sufficiently engage and inspire our base of supporters?
- Is this tactic simple, achievable, and effective?
- How will this activity set us up for our next one, in terms of strengthening our organization, creating demand and/or accountability, and building momentum?

If you cannot satisfactorily answer all of these questions for a given activity, don’t do it. It is very easy for a group to get carried away with a clever idea without fully weighing its ultimate strategic value. This can end up not only being wasteful; sometimes the ploy can actually backfire and cost the campaign much-needed credibility and support. We therefore encourage you to be creative and have fun with your tactics, but also caution you to keep your strategy, message, and targets firmly in mind at all times.

Now that you've developed what you are going to do (tactics), you'll need to have a plan for how to do it.

Dealing with the Media

A reporter's job is to fill time (on radio and TV) or space (in newspapers, magazines, and online). Your job is to make sure they fill it with your story, and that your story meets their needs. No reporter or editor wants to spend precious time covering a story, only to find out that there was little news value for their effort.

Making a Story Newsworthy

Here are the basic components of a "newsworthy" story:

- ◆ New – current, timely, and fresh
- ◆ Local – tie into what is going on in that particular community
- ◆ Human Interest – put a human face on your story, each story should have a victim, a villain, a problem, a hero, and a plot resolution
- ◆ Appeals to What Reporters Love – Stories that are filled with conflict, controversy, contradictions, and colorful quotes and images

Doing the Legwork

It is important to remember that reporters are busy professionals. The more you can assist them in doing the footwork, the more likely they are to use your stories. At the beginning of the campaign, you should distribute press kits with information about the issue at stake, what you are trying to accomplish, a list of your coalition partners, etc. A few days later, the designated spokesperson for the campaign should follow up and see if the reporter has any questions.

Press Kit Contents:

- ◆ Issue Info
- ◆ Goals
- ◆ List of Coalition Members



He should then maintain contact throughout the campaign, not only to pitch specific stories, but also to provide research, offer quotes for other articles, and distribute any additional information.

Occasionally, give someone a "scoop" that none of the other outlets will have. The goal is to become a respected, responsible news source. Developing and sustaining good working relationships will be a vital component to generating positive press attention for your campaign's activities.

Talking with the Press

Here are six rules to follow when talking with reporters and other representatives of the media:

- ◆ Nothing is ever "off the record" – If you want something to be off the record, do not tell a reporter.
- ◆ Stick to the message – It is a reporter's job to frame a story in a way that is newsworthy and interesting. A reporter may ask you questions that appear intrusive, leading, biased, or inflammatory.



Plan media events for the morning.

If that happens, use your answer time to move the conversation back to what you want to talk about and stick to your message. It is difficult to master those kinds of transitions, so it is worthwhile for you to practice with a colleague when an important interview is anticipated.

- ◆ Always meet deadlines – If you want press coverage of an event, plan it to accommodate the deadlines of the media outlets that you expect to cover the story; generally, media events should be planned in the morning.
- ◆ Be prepared – Anticipate questions reporters might ask, and have fact sheets available that respond to those issues.