

Communication Strategies for Capturing Attention and Making a Difference

Before you do anything...create strong messages. What you say and how you say it is critical to good communications. Develop standard messages that explain your organization, what you are trying to accomplish, your successes and your challenges.

Written Communication

Write opinion editorials. To reach the public, consider drafting an opinion editorial for your local newspaper as opportunities arise. For example, when the data on the number of uninsured Americans is released annually, tie the national news to your local situation with the uninsured and the health care they receive, and the solutions your organization provides.

Use existing communications tools to make your organization known. To connect with your internal audiences, find out if your affiliates have newsletters, e-newsletters, brochures, and Intranet. If so, make sure you are visible in these outlets. Write a regular column for the health system newsletter or on the Web site, provide updates and articles for the e-news, and make sure your center is mentioned in the brochures throughout all departments.

Create a core speech that uses common messages. After messages about the organization have been developed, use them in a prepared speech or power point that can be used repeatedly (with some updates) at community events, donor meetings, etc.

Create your own brochure. A written document with a fresh look that clearly and simply explains the work you do.

Keep your Web site fresh. Put “stories” or patient testimonials about health care successes, updates about services and helpful tips for families on your Web site. Then steer audiences toward the site by adding the Web site to your card, and other marketing materials, and send e-mail updates about what is new on your site to your audiences. These audiences could include donors, partners, key community members and the local media.

Events

Sponsor a series of town hall meetings. Identify three significant health problems in your community that could be topics at town hall meetings throughout the year. Work with partners to jointly sponsor the events, open them to the community, and purposely invite key stakeholders in the community and the media. Health care coverage, health care access, infant mortality, obesity and chronic illnesses are examples of topics.

Sponsor or co-sponsor fun runs or health fairs. Get involved by providing one service at a health fair, or joining in on developing a new fun run or walk in your community.

Hold news events if you have news. If you have new data to show the number of indigent patients you serve or a rise in obesity in your clinic, then release it via a news release to the media, or consider holding an event and invite local media if you have patients willing to talk, or other graphics of interest to photographers or television cameras.

Public Speaking/Educating

Train staff on common messages. Identify staff who can serve as spokespeople for your organization. Train them on the key messages you develop.

Accept speaking invitations, or ask to speak. Local women's or men's groups, health fairs, PTA and school board meetings, foundations, corporations...look for opportunities to get your message out.