

10 Communication Tips - Building Support for Your Non-Profit Organization

1. Ask for Help
 - a. Use volunteers to make contacts for speaking engagements
 - b. Outline the scope of the issue and help shape the response
 - c. Share your message with supporters so that they are in the loop.

2. Shape a Powerful Message
 - a. Your message drives home the point - make it clear, concise and powerful!
 - b. Draft your message and test it with your friends and key staff.

3. Identify the Decision-Makers
 - a. Match your advocates with key decision-makers and have your support connect one-on-one to share your message.
 - b. Your supporters should be visible in the community - make sure they identify themselves as your organization supporters whenever the occasion arises.

4. Engage Your Staff or Group
 - a. Get staff or member input on community members who likely would be supporters of your organization.
 - b. Share your talking points, letters to the editor and key messages with staff internally before you distribute them outside. Ask them to share the key messages with their neighbors and friends.

5. Arm the Troops
 - a. Give your supporters the key statistics. Put a human face on the stories and make the message relevant to your community.
 - b. Provide template letters to the editor and template talking points for any statements going out on behalf of your organization.

6. Turn On the Volume!
 - a. Contact the media. Send a press release. Make a personal call. Invite reporters to come and visit your organization. Arrange for reporters to interview several articulate supporters.
 - b. Be prepared to tell your story to the media - know your messages and the supporting statistics. Prepare a Q&A with what you expect the reporter to ask - include the tough questions and your answers. Practice your interview before the reporter arrives.
 - c. Stay positive. Focus on you and your public - your message is about you and how you serve your community.

7. Follow Up

- a. After supporters have written letters, attended meetings, etc., thank them and ask if they have any feedback or suggestions.
- b. After you have done an interview, had a meeting or made presentations, circle back with a phone call or a thank you in the mail.

8. Grow Your Support Base

- a. Encourage your staff or group to continually identify organization supporters.
- b. Stay in touch with supporters, and not just when you need something.

9. Communicate Regularly

- a. Make sure the media and the public are aware of what services you provide to the community.
- b. Distribute press releases announcing every success and promoting every event.
- c. Speak to other organizations and civic groups to share the vision and promise of your organization.

10. Plan and Coordinate

- a. Make sure that you know who is speaking up in support of your organization.
- b. Always deliver clear and consistent messages.
- c. Your supporters and the key decision-makers should know that you are available and eager to talk with them.