



Strategic Outreach in Your Community

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Agenda

Introduction: What do we mean by outreach? (1 min)

Context for Outreach: Key Principles (4 min)

Outreach Methods (10 min)

Person to Person; Direct Mail & Email; Media & Social Media

Applying The Key Principles (10 min)

Before outreach; When choosing outreach methods; When creating content (messages); When allocating resources

Devising Your Outreach Strategy (10 min)

Breakout (15 min)

Report-Back, further discussion (15 min)

Introduction

Let's start with a definition of outreach.

At its most fundamental:

Approaching **our neighbors** and
talking to them about what matters.

We may do this in person or via technology.

Some people or companies do it to make money;
the organizations here today do it
to make things better for our communities.

The Context for Outreach: The World We Live In

1. **OVERWHELM.** Lots of competition for everyone's attention.
2. **UNCERTAINTY.** We have little ability to sift through information, difficulty knowing whom to trust.
3. Desire for **CONNECTION**, but lots of **ISOLATION**.
4. Desire to **BE INVOLVED**, but lack of **STRUCTURE/RESOURCES** for involvement.

Key Principles That Follow

Given **OVERWHELM**:

Successful outreach uses **SIMPLE**, compelling, **CONSISTENT** messages that stand out and are memorable.

Given **UNCERTAINTY**:

Successful outreach uses **TRUSTED** messengers.

Key Principles That Follow, cont.

Given **ISOLATION**:

Successful outreach provides **CONNECTION** -- in channels used, opportunities offered and tone/content of messages.

Given the urge to get **INVOLVED**:

Successful outreach provides **CLEAR INFORMATION** about **EASY WAYS** to join others in action.

Key Principles That Follow, cont.

Recap: Effective outreach should be

- Simple
- Delivered by trusted messengers
- Include a clear call to action (CTA) that is easy for the outreach targets to act on.

Outreach Methods

In decreasing order of impact:

- A. Person to Person
- B. Mass information to **narrowly targeted** audience:
Direct Mail and Email
- C. Mass information to **mass or broadly targeted** audience:
Legacy and Social Media

Outreach Methods: Person to Person

- A. Going **door to door** to speak with people in person at their homes
- B. Calling folks on the **phone**
- C. Sending **texts**
- D. Approaching people in person at **events** you've organized, other community events, or in **public settings.**

(Essential for all these approaches: **consent.**)

Outreach Methods: Direct Mail & Email

- Mass information to **narrowly targeted** audience
- Works best when those you message know why they're hearing from you
- Invest at least some time and effort in **managing/tracking your lists**.

Outreach Methods: Media & Social Media

Mass information to **mass or broadly targeted** audience

Messaging generally won't be as narrow and specific
(exception for specific events)

What is “Legacy Media”? How does it compare to Social Media?

“Earned”/Organic vs. Paid

Back To Context and Principles:

OVERWHELM: Use **SIMPLE**, compelling, **CONSISTENT** messages that stand out and are memorable.

UNCERTAINTY: Use **TRUSTED** messengers.

ISOLATION: Provide **CONNECTION** -- in channels used, opportunities offered and tone/content of messages.

Desire to get **INVOLVED:** Provide **CLEAR INFORMATION** about **EASY WAYS** to join others in action.

In Other Words...

Effective outreach should be

- Simple
- Delivered by trusted messengers
- Include a clear call to action (CTA) that is easy for the outreach targets to act on.

Applying The Key Principles

I. Before outreach

You must have

- an attractive, accessible website and
- attractive, accessible print information
- so community members can learn about the organization and the project at their own convenience.

Applying The Key Principles, cont.

II. When choosing outreach methods

A. High investment, high return:

Where possible, use **personal connection**.

- Send representatives to popular community gathering places.
- Educate staff and community members to do outreach.
(Give them tools, including training, scripts, mentoring, printed lit.)
- Consider phone banking for specific purposes.

B. Lower investment, mid-high return: If you have a sizable **email list**, it will usually be **highest ROI** for outreach.

C. Less personal modes (legacy media, social media, direct mail, billboards) have their place, but impact is longer-term.

Applying The Key Principles, cont.

III. When creating content (your messages)

- A. Meet people where they are. Short, snappy sentences with catchy words. Avoid formal, cold style; use words and images that evoke emotion.
- B. Messages delivered personally, where the payoff in **CONNECTION** is clear, can focus on specific “asks” of the audience.
- C. Mass messaging will do better focusing on name recognition (building **TRUST**) and **CLEAR, EASY CALL TO ACTION** (e.g., build that email list!).

Applying The Key Principles, cont.

IV. When allocating resources

Make sure to plan adequately with time and/or money for **FOLLOW-UP** and **RESPONSE** to community members who react to your outreach.

Devising Your Outreach Strategy

- I. Decide on **goals** – short-term and longer.
- II. Assess your **current status**.
 - A. What capacity and resources are already serving your outreach goals?
 - B. Do you have information on how well they are working? If not, can you put in place some simple ways to track them?

Devising Your Outreach Strategy, cont.

- III. Consider the cost (**real costs**, including follow-up) of increasing use of existing channels or adding new ones.
 - A. Recognize that limited budgets and staff capacity mean **making choices**. Better to focus well on one or a few methods than to try to cover all in a scattershot approach.
- IV. Decide on specific action steps, with **planned dates for assessing progress**. What will be reason to shift course?

Breakout Exercise

- I. Which aspects of the **context** resonate most for you, either as an individual (receiving outreach) or as a professional (seeking to implement effective outreach)?

OVERWHELM; UNCERTAINTY in what/whom to trust;
ISOLATION (desire to connect); how to get **INVOLVED**.

- II. Which outreach methods are you currently using?

Person to person (including face-to-face, phone calls, texting);
narrowly targeted mass information via **direct mail and email**;
broadly targeted mass information via **legacy and social media**.

- III. Which outreach methods might help strengthen your results? What would it take to put them in place?

Consider the “hidden” costs of staff time, appropriate follow-up.

Conclusion

Each element of this session could easily fill a session – or several! – on its own.

Feel free to reach out to me (email and phone on every slide) for further discussion. A half-hour conversation is part of my pro bono commitment to Detroit organizations, and I am happy to refer you to other sources of free/low-cost assistance.

I am also available to facilitate a planning discussion for your team about how best to continue or step up your outreach.