

Determine the Effectiveness of PR Efforts

Positive results mean everything when budgets are slim. Increased revenue, decreased spending, an influx of volunteers, a boost in advocacy or any combination of those things can help a PR professional state his or her case for funding outreach initiatives.

“Think about how you’ll prove that people acted because of your communication,” says CEO of Sinickas Communications, Inc. Angela Sinickas. Since launching her company in 2000, Sinickas has helped businesses and nonprofits use data to improve communication outcomes.

She emphasizes the importance of calculating ROI. “Start by identifying the benefit derived from a recent communication. For example, measure the greater dollars of donations that occurred in markets with heavy PR coverage versus markets with none. This is your **GAIN**,” she explains. “Then subtract associated **COSTS** (expenses such as PR agency fees, news distribution services, staff time, etc.) to find **NET GAIN**.”

At a glance, the equation looks like this: **(NET GAIN / COSTS) × 100 percent**.

“Calculating ROI is easy. The hard part is determining how much credit you can take for that gain,” Sinickas says. “That’s why you need a reliable way to track behavior.”

Here Sinickas shares valuable tips to focus strategy and track how communications drive behaviors:

1. **Stop focusing on impressions.** “If your main goal is to ‘build awareness,’ stop right there,” Sinickas insists. Impressions can be misleading and only sometimes convert to action. Instead, Sinickas suggests nonprofits measure how much particular behaviors have changed as a result of PR coverage. “Whether it’s a donation, a filled-out form or a download, that’s a better indicator of performance,” she adds.
2. **Administer a simple survey.** Ask your audience exactly what influenced them to take a specific action and whether your PR message played a role in their decision. A short survey should be used to determine how much of an impact your communication had on a supporter’s decision to behave. Present simple percentages or range fields to gather numbers that make it easy to state the case, such as, “Half of all new donors surveyed said that (insert communication) was 100 percent the reason they decided to donate.”
3. **Utilize unique links, numbers and addresses.** “Using the same URL on multiple communications makes it impossible to track which one (e-mail, social media, etc.) was most effective,” Sinickas says. “Instead, put parameters on the URL. Create slightly different versions of the URL, all of which lead to the same landing page.” This allows nonprofits to see how many clicks came from each communication containing a different link. The same tactic can be used with different phone numbers that reach the same switchboard or differently marked mailer response cards that go to a PO box.”

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PUBLIC SPEAKING

Four Ways to Improve Your Delivery

To develop a well-received speech:

1. Build your speech around a central theme.
2. Make your speech fit the occasion. The audience makeup and purpose of the occasion should determine the tone and mood of your remarks.
3. Provide your audience with mental images. Use real-life experiences to provide meaningful examples that underscore key messages.
4. As you summarize, make it brief and poignant. An attention-grabbing conclusion will result in a more fulfilling experience for your audience.

Brochures Remain Strong Communication Tools

In this technology-driven world, it’s nice to know some hard-copy mediums still pack a punch. One example? A well-written, well-designed brochure.

Brochures are one of the best ways your organization can spread the news about a new program, an upcoming event or its cause. Here are tips to produce an attractive, budget-friendly brochure:

- **Shop for printing discounts.** Many online print venues offer full-color printing at two-color prices from files in the appropriate format. Use your favorite search engine to look for “brochure printing” or “printing discounts” to locate vendors. Read criteria to see what types of graphics files and programs work for them. Look at their quantity, price lists and FAQs. Ask for customer e-mails or samples. Ask for a PDF proof of your work. Seek bids from hometown printers, too — especially if quality control is a major issue.
- **Find a talented student.** Graphic design students are always looking to build their portfolios and enhance their résumés. Call a university or community college to connect with a student willing to donate graphic design services. Give the student a credit line on the final piece.
- **Use just one color.** A well-designed brochure can be just as effective in one color as full color. For example, your spring volunteer brochure could be in green ink on bright yellow paper. Think of paper and ink combinations that work well together. Check your local quick print store’s standard ink and paper colors. Ask to see samples of creative print jobs they’ve done.
- **Choose standard sizes.** Standard sizes that fit business envelopes and display racks also cost less to print and mail than nonstandard sizes. Instead of clever die cuts or folds, rely on creative design and copy.
- **Save on envelope costs.** Make your brochure a self-mailer. Leave one panel free for addresses and postage and use a paper stock that will hold up to postal handling.