



Seeds for Change Consulting, LLC

Seeds for Change Consulting, LLC is a full service fundraising and communications company based in Austin, Texas with associates across the country. More specifically, we provide grant writing, fund development, event planning, writing and graphic design, media relations, and strategic planning for staff and boards of directors.

Please contact us if you'd like to talk about how we might help your company or non-profit organization more strongly communicate and reach its goals.

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Communications Training

What is “messaging” and why is it important?

Messaging refers to the language used to describe your organization's mission, vision and programs. It is important that your language be *consistent* because it:

1. Describes your organization clearly and memorably; people are more apt to understand and remember your organization if they can process what you are telling them
2. Helps you communicate more confidently the needs of your organization—fundraising, community giving, good-will, volunteer recruitment or event publicity.

What is “branding?”

Branding often refers to the *language* that you use but also the *look and feel* of the organization, such as colors and graphics. Branding is also used as a verb to describe the act of selling or marketing an organization.

What are most common components of a communications campaign?

External communications:

1. Information/Media Kit is also provided to supporters, leaders and media. Components usually include any print materials, talking points or key facts, testimonials, stories or other endorsements and media clips. Always make digital copies available as well. Load onto website.
2. Talking points, key facts, FAQs and/or elevator speech (30 seconds or less)
3. Press releases and media advisories notifying media of upcoming news, announcements/findings or events
4. Social media strategies such as blogs, Tweets, Facebook pages and other internet sound bites
5. Paid media which includes radio and TV spots, outdoor advertising, flyers and mailers

Internal communications:

1. Public relations plan which includes the overall strategies and specific activities, along with milestones, for communicating a particular project, i.e., announcing capital campaign.
2. Crisis communications plan that prepares the organization for negative publicity, tragedy, legal troubles or other bad news. Structure talking points and FAQs that organization's officers can refer to should something come up quickly. Anticipate scenarios.

Four simple principles when dealing with media:

1. Aggressively pitch only stories you know are *newsworthy*. Leave other announcements to press release or advisory distribution only; no follow up
2. If receiving media inquiry, answer inquiries promptly (within 4 hours if not sooner) and via approved representative
3. Be accurate—if you don't know answer, say you'll get back to them, and then do
4. Be honest and straightforward; don't try to spin something upside down

Tips when talking to the press

1. Understand context of reporter's story—ask them what story they are working on and what is deadline
2. Give him/her a story—provide newsworthy information either in response to their question or when pitching idea
3. Consolidate information for the sake of time—stick to talking points leaving out extraneous information
4. Be consistent—tell all reporters same thing; don't change your story (stay on message!)

5. Stay relaxed and confident—reporters are humans too, albeit cynical at times; show your personality
 - Look at interviewer
 - Sit or stand up straight
 - Ladies, look your best—lipstick on and hair combed; might powder nose and forehead; avoid flashy jewelry
 - Smile naturally
 - Gesture but avoid flinging your arms and hands
6. Follow up—ask if they got what they needed? (Do NOT ask to read or view story before it runs/airs)

Pointers with regard to social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, blogs, etc.)

Similar to other media:

- Do NOT post or say anything you do not want published
- Only post if you plan to update regularly
- Avoid controversy; don't take bait
- Be positive
- Network, network, network