

ADVOCACY COMMUNICATION

8/4/2011

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Introduction

Q. How have we used mass media and communication in advocacy work in the past?

Communication

Communication plays a key role in **translating an advocacy strategy into action**

The success of advocacy depends on **communicating a message to the policy-makers and**

To the public to build support for a policy position
and bring about change

Advocacy audience analysis

Target audience

Determine and understand the your target audience in advance

- Who are the **decision makers** and what are **their characteristics**?
- Who are the **individuals and organisations who can bring pressure** to bear on the decision-makers and what are their characteristics?

Direct media

- forms of media that transmit the message directly to the audience in a face-to-face fashion
- audience can and are expected to participate in the communication (e.g. forum theatre)
- Often more exciting and very effective at getting people to be more involved in the communication process.
- Can elicit emotions and momentum for action

Direct media cont'd

- usually cheap, more targeted and easy to control
- limited in reach and are **logistically more difficult to organize** as they require a physical presence every time
- Examples are forum theatre, drama, dialogues and all forms of face-to face meetings

Traditional mass media

These include TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, posters and flyers.

To successfully use traditional mass media, you need to:

Create good media relations:

- Familiarise yourself with the local media to have an appreciation of the editorial policies;
- Identify who is likely to carry your messages fairly;
- Know the reporters and editors, get their contacts on your media list and create rapport.

Mass media activities

Persist:

- Do not give up when your story is rejected;
- Learn why it never made it and make amends.

Appoint spokesperson (s):

- Choose a spokesperson who is comfortable with the media and who is knowledgeable on the issue.
- Make sure the message communicated by the spokesperson is succinct (to the point).

Mass media activities

The problem with traditional media is that they can be:

- Inaccessible due to competition for space and time;
- Costly in terms of buying advertising space or featuring an article or documentary
- Sponsorship is also hard to get
- Limited in reach. For instance, there are still many homes in Africa for instance without TV radio or sets. Many ordinary people do not read newspapers regularly

New media

Though still limited in reach and application, new media (Internet and wireless devices) is emerging as an important tool for communication.

The power of new media lies in its ability to reach far and wide quickly and cheaply.

New media

The TV is over six decades old but it remains a luxury item for a few in Africa.

Yet in a decade, the cell phone has reached many who do not have TVs.

Inventors and manufacturers are no longer focusing on the few, but on offering choice to the masses.

New media

A few examples:

- Farmers and small traders can now exchange information on prices, stocks, etc using text messaging
- Spreading information, organising rallies and other events is now easier, cheaper and faster, thanks to text messaging;

New media

- A few years ago most people/organisations could not afford the programming and maintenance requirements of a good website.
- Today, any individual can set up a website (a blog) free of charge in about 3 minutes and maintain it easily without the help of an expert programmer.

Conclusion

Advocacy messages are more effective if they are:

- ***Simple and clear:*** Long-winded messages are not very effective with the public, which is fed with a massive dose of information, a lot of it exciting to their sensibilities;
- ***Topical:*** Issues that are current and interesting attract the attention of the public, policy-makers and the editors. As an advocate, you can make an issue topical by framing it in a relevant way and organising events to have it in the spotlight.

Conclusion cont'd

- ***Humane:*** Humanise the problem by including stories of real people to achieve a greater impact on the public and policy-makers. Mere statistics are never adequate;
- ***Well targeted:*** Make sure your message reaches your intended audience. This will depend on language, availability of funds, the media used, the reach of the media amongst the target audience.

Exercise

Using the issue chosen earlier:

- Try and identify who your target audience is likely to be (the decision makers and the people whose support you need to succeed);
- How will you reach the audience (which media);
- Why would you use that media?
- Give examples of messages you would develop for the audiences in “slogan” form.

Fit this into the advocacy strategy.