

MEDIA FOR ADVOCACY

What to write for whom: example

WHO?	ACTIONS	Form of written communication
Health ministry	<i>adopt a policy</i> to provide the new vaccine in hospitals and health centres	professionally written report(s)
Newspapers, radio, television	<i>promote awareness</i> with informative and interesting features for the public	feature articles or press releases
Parents	<i>be aware/informed</i> about the benefits	leaflets, posters, pamphlets, public meetings
Parents	<i>demand</i> health centres to provide the vaccine for their children	leaflets, posters, pamphlets, public meetings, newsletters
Public	<i>call for</i> the adoption of the new vaccine	leaflets, posters, pamphlets, public meetings
Health professionals	<i>support your cause</i>	pamphlets, newsletters, professional reports/publications
Health scientists	<i>confirm your findings</i>	publications
Teachers	<i>educate</i> students about the benefits	pamphlets, newsletters, posters, leaflets
Local leaders	<i>promote awareness</i> through public meetings	pamphlets, newsletters, posters, leaflets

WHO YOU ARE WRITING FOR

Non-specialist audiences might include:

- 'lay' members of the public;
- your project's stakeholders;
- government officials;
- newspapers or magazines;
- your allies in other organisations or institutions;
- staff in your own organisation.

But why would you want to write for them?

Example

Supposing your key message is that vaccine X is more effective in preventing measles than conventional vaccines. **Who** needs to know about it and what **actions** do you want them to take?

Write down your ideas. Our thoughts on this are shown on the next page.

WHO?	ACTIONS

Actions wanted of different groups

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The answers lie in the **audience** and the **media**.

A powerful campaign message needs to:

- focus exclusively on the **action** you want the audience to take;
- appeal to hearts and minds.

Look at the next section of the menu for more on hearts and minds.

APPEALING TO HEARTS AND MINDS

You should, now, have clarity about the target audience, or range of audiences, that you must address in different parts of your campaign.

But how do you get them to pay attention?

Different audiences have different priorities. They have their own agendas, objectives and values. So they will be impressed by different things. A government committee may be impressed by pages of statistics, but such material is unlikely to win you support at the grassroots.

Like all of us, however, people whose attention we are trying to attract have other things on their mind. There may be many others who are competing for their attention. Why should they read what you have written? What's so special about you? Even if they see what you write, will they read it? And if they read it, will they understand it? And if they understand it, will they do what you want them to do?

Are you certain you know the answers?

To be effective, you need to identify the **key persuasive factors** that will win your target audience over to your point of view. These will help you frame a persuasive message, plan your campaign and choose the most appropriate media for the job.

The key to successful advocacy is in seeing how **your** objectives make sense in **your audience's** terms, how such objectives satisfy **their** (not your) needs. What excites you and your colleagues may not interest your target audience.

The key to addressing a particular audience is to gain some sense of the values that underlie their concerns and priorities. Another name for these values is **paradigms**.

PARADIGMS

We are all persuaded by evidence that fits the **paradigms** governing our own behaviour. Paradigms (another name might be **mindsets**) are the deep values by which we live. They are the patterns through which we see reality and make sense of our lives. They might be:

social	cultural	spiritual	political
economic	institutional	aesthetic	

Paradigms often reveal themselves in what people say if you asked them what they think is 'true'. Imagining what your target audience might think about the 'truth' of your issue is a good way to start discovering their paradigms.

Addressing a paradigm directly

You can address a paradigm directly. For example, if you know that your audience makes decisions primarily on cost, you might construct a campaign, a message and a set of information that demonstrates how cost-effective a particular solution is. If the community is governed by powerful social paradigms - about the social or cultural significance of a crop, for example - you might appeal directly to that paradigm by showing how that value is under threat.

ARTICLES

Articles are pieces of writing for publication in:

- newsletters;
- newspapers;
- magazines;
- journals.

The main distinguishing feature of an article is that it 'speaks' to its reader. Its language should be close to the kind of spoken language that its reader would use - or would like to use. It should flow. This is not always easy to achieve.

Articles need to entertain. Your reader doesn't **need** to read any article you write; you have to 'hook' them quickly, as they browse through the publication. They may have paid for the newspaper or magazine and have a right to demand that we interest (if not also divert) them.

LEAFLETS

Leaflets are for delivering useful, reusable information.

They are normally created from a single sheet of paper, folded in half or in three. Most leaflets start life as sheets of A4 paper, but you could create one from A3 (twice the size of A4), folded as appropriate. The size and shape of the leaflet is a major factor in its success. A leaflet that people can't fit easily into a pocket or a bag will be thrown away.

Leaflets may also not be suitable for audiences who don't read much. Of course, you could create a leaflet that uses mainly - or only - pictures.

DESIGNING A LEAFLET

Laying out a leaflet can be a daunting task. It is also a crucial one, as it can make the difference between your precious content information being read or ignored.

A good way to approach layout is to try and think about your leaflet in terms of its different components. These should include any or all of the following:

- a main headline in large, bold text, that links directly with the leaflet's main message;
- your organisation or campaign logo and/or motto, so you can develop an image that people associate with your work;

- the name of your organisation or campaign, so everyone knows who the leaflet is from;
- the main body content - either in pictures, words, or both.

The best way to produce a leaflet is on a computer. A good wordprocessing or desktop publishing programme will produce excellent results with a little practice

your distribution strategy needs to be carefully thought through. Where can your leaflets be placed to ensure maximum access to your target audience?

NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters keep people in touch with what your organisation is doing. They communicate both to the members of the organisation and, often, to interested outsiders.

In a newsletter, you'll find news about the organisation and about issues that are important, urgent or interesting.

Newsletters are not as easy to produce as you might imagine. You can produce them quite cheaply, but many organisations have difficulty:

- meeting deadlines;
- gathering enough material to fill a newsletter;
- publishing the newsletter regularly;
- maintaining interest in a regular publication.

Newsletters must appear regularly. This means allocating resources to producing them: people, time, budgets, equipment. The team producing the newsletter would benefit from experience in writing, editing and page layout. You could grow these skills from within your own organisation; you could ask (or pay) for help. The editorial team must also have the skills to drag material (usually called 'copy') out of busy people.

Deciding to produce a newsletter is a big commitment. It's a strategic decision

WRITING A NEWSLETTER

The editorial group doesn't have to write everything itself. Nor should it. Always aim to involve as many writers as possible.

The biggest problem here is motivating people to make contributions. You probably won't be able to pay people for writing, so how can you stimulate them to offer you copy? How can you keep up the impetus to attract material regularly?

Articles for newsletters normally fall into three categories.

News stories

Feature articles

Editorials

We'll distinguish between them on the next page. For more detailed help on writing articles, go to the section on **Articles**.

- **News stories** tell you what happened. They explain who was involved, where and when the events took place and what the outcome was. News stories don't comment on the story; they just give the important facts. They are written in an interesting, direct style. The first paragraph should tell the whole story: **what** happened, **why**, **when** and **where**, and **who** was involved.
- **Feature articles** discuss issues. They may start from a news story and investigate its background: what happened before, how things have changed, the reasons and context of the events.
- **Editorials** comment on the news. They offer the official line on events: what the editorial team - and, by implication, the organisation - thinks about the news. An editorial establishes and develops the ideological position of the organisation. They may also suggest solutions, ways forward, strategies.

You can include other kinds of material, as well as articles.

- **Information updates.** Ask why and how readers will find them interesting and useful. Updates can often sound as if they come from 'on high' or from the centre and have little relevance to field workers or branch administrators.
- **Regular sections.** These might include a letters column, listings, classified advertisements, 'how to' articles...
- **Entertainment items.** Crossword, games, cartoons, holiday stories...
- **'In next month's issue'.** Always useful to encourage readership and stimulate interest in forthcoming issues.

DESIGNING A NEWSLETTER

Designing the newsletter means planning the way it looks.

Newsletters normally maintain a constant design. They have a 'look' that helps to establish the tone and identity of the newsletter.

You must decide some fundamental design issues such as **how many pages** you will create and **the size of the pages**. The size will probably remain constant from issue to issue; different issues may have different numbers of pages. Try not to start with a large issue and follow it with ever smaller ones.

PAMPHLETS

Pamphlets are usually booklets that argue a case. They are the means by which we explain the rationale behind a campaign, the values that lie behind it.

You should be able to read a pamphlet in less than 30 minutes. It will usually contain one document - you might call it an essay - which develops a single, usually controversial, theme. Unlike a larger book, it will probably not contain chapters, though it will probably be broken into sections.

Pamphlets are usually small - about the size of the **User's guide** accompanying this CDROM - and made up of a number of pages bound or stapled together.

We can distinguish pamphlets from leaflets by saying that pamphlets usually contain more pages, more text, more argument. More importantly, a pamphlet is more likely to be arguing a case; a leaflet may do so, and may also be a source of useful information.

In this section we look at pamphlets in terms of:

- Why you might choose to produce a pamphlet
- Planning a pamphlet
- Writing the pamphlet
- Designing the pamphlet
- Producing the pamphlet
- Distributing the pamphlet

PLANNING A PAMPHLET

Planning a pamphlet is essentially the same as planning a report. Its structure is a pyramid: a single message supported by a small number of key points.

Your aim in producing the pamphlet is to **agitate**. You want to stir up your reader's ideas. You want them to agree fervently or disagree vehemently, so that you can argue back - perhaps in the papers or on television.

So your message must be clear and controversial. It must be supported by a small number of key points that are themselves controversial - either because they are truths that nobody wants to acknowledge, or because you have evidence that contradicts received wisdom. The power of your pamphlet will depend on the quality of the **reasoning** that underpins its ideas.

DESIGNING A PAMPHLET

Your pamphlet will include a lot of text. So you must make it as clear and readable in the design as you can.

- **Don't reduce your font size.** People may be reading your pamphlet while travelling, in crowded meeting rooms or in a bookshop.
- **Use space on the page.** Don't be tempted to cram too much text onto a page. Space the lines of text comfortably. Use ragged righthand margins. Put plenty of space around headings.

PRODUCING A PAMPHLET

Most computers will help you produce a very capable pamphlet. If your pamphlet contains a number of pages bound or stapled, you may need to work out some functions for producing columns and give some thought to which pages go on which sheets.

You can print your pamphlet in a number of ways, depending on the resources and time available to you. Photocopying and stapling on your own site will probably be one of the cheapest methods. A professional printer will need detailed instructions if the work is not to go wrong. They will probably want to put their name and address on the pamphlet and will almost certainly charge quite a lot of money.

PRESS RELEASES

Press releases send newsworthy information to media editors.

The aim of a press release is to give the editor something to work with or from. You should not aim to write the story or article for them.

Sometimes organisations use press releases to inform other kinds of reader: subscribers, members, the public, other activists. When presented as a press release, the material can assume more power than a letter. On the other hand, a press release sent to an important official, minister or leader may not work as well as a personalised letter.

Press releases must be accurate - but they must also sell the material.

It's easier to sell one idea than many, so - as with any other kind of effective writing - focus on one idea.

WHY WRITE A PRESS RELEASE?

A press release tells the reader that you have news for them. If you want to publicise your campaign or an issue through the media, a press release is what you need to write.

Remember that press releases are useful, not only for national or local broadcasting organisations and newspapers, or large-circulation magazines, but also for in-house publications: newsletters and bulletins within organisations or communities.

Remember that a press release is not intended as final copy: it's for an editor to turn your press release into the style and format that their publication needs. Think of a press release rather as raw material: structured, but not yet cooked.

PLANNING A PRESS RELEASE

Anything that happens is potentially newsworthy. It all depends on who's giving the news. But if your press release is constructed around an *event*, it will work particularly well. The event could:

- have just happened;
- be about to happen;
- be threatening to happen;
- have been created to justify the press release - a technique frequently used in commerce as a means of obtaining free advertising in newspapers.

Once you know what event you are highlighting, other information will tend to fall into place.

Giving the press release a structure

A press release should inform more than it entertains. Don't tease or attempt to dress the material in a journalistic style.

- **Make the headline work for you.** Keep the headline short: 6-10 words. Make the headline tell the gist of the story, without going into detail or being clever. Use minimal punctuation, active verbs and concrete nouns. Avoid jargon and abbreviations.
- **Put it all into the first paragraph.** Cover all the '5Ws': what, who, when, where, why. Keep this paragraph short and don't swamp it with detail.

WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

Clarity is all. You don't need to write especially simple language: you can be quite detailed and technical if you want to be. Incorporate some facts and figures so that the editor or another writer can use them. Make sure that your sentences are well constructed so that they could, if necessary, be lifted straight into another article.

You can issue press releases through the normal channels: post, courier and of course now electronically.

Make sure you know exactly who to contact in any publication. A specialist editor or journalist may be a better target than an editor.

Often, press releases carry an **embargo**. This is a statement prohibiting use of the press release until a certain date. This can be useful - and sometimes essential - as part of your campaigning strategy.

POSTERS

Posters are fairly cheap and easy to produce. Use them to give people information about meetings, organisations, events and issues.

Most posters are designed to be read quickly. They need to make their mark immediately. Others - intended for offices, libraries or other places where people have a little time to stand and read - at a bus stop or railway station perhaps - can contain lots of information.

Most posters mix writing, graphics and illustrations. You could consider using only one of these elements for added effect.

WHY USE A POSTER?

Posters have two main uses:

- to mobilise people into action;
- to popularise an idea.

Use posters to get people to **do** or **believe** something.

Remember that posters are usually taken in fast. They must be publicly accessible and must communicate in one step. When used well, posters can convey a message extremely powerfully.

Strengths

- There is no need for words which is useful for communities of limited literacy.
- Posters can reach thousands of people if well placed.
- Posters leave a lasting visual impression, especially if displayed in many places.
- Posters can give a recognisable image to your advocacy work.

Weaknesses

- Posters are not usually suitable for conveying background or an explanation.
- Their success is largely dependent on design rather than text.
- There are logistical (and sometimes legal) problems of distribution. Be careful about where the poster is placed. Your organisation may be liable for prosecution even if you were not aware that one of your enthusiastic supporters was responsible for sticking the poster on the local chief's doo

PLANNING THE POSTER

Planning a poster - and a poster campaign - starts with these questions.

- What is the aim of the poster?
- Who is our target audience?
- What is our message?
- Where will the poster be put up?

- What headline or slogan will make people take notice?
- What pictures could we use?
- What are the deadlines for design, print and distribution?
- How do we distribute and put up the poster?

Key elements of your poster

Think of a poster, initially, as having three key elements:

- a message or headline;
- supporting information;
- pictures.

Begin with the **message or headline**. Look first at all the information you are trying to convey - and then find the very simplest way of saying it.

good idea is to restrict yourself to one:

- **command;**
- **question;** or
- **piece of information.**

Here are some examples of each.

- **Commands:** 'Use less water!', 'Grow organic!', 'March on parliament!'
- **Questions:** 'What is safe sex?', 'Do drought resistant crops work?'
- **Single pieces of information:** 'Our land under threat!', 'Dripping taps cost lives!', 'Cruelty to children must stop!'

Each of these headlines creates an impact on its own, and although they may need a little more explanation, they do not need a great deal of focus and concentration for readers to make sense of them.

Now make a list of all the information you want to have on the poster and work out the shortest, neatest possible way to present it.

Make sure you include everything that people need to know. Obviously disastrous omissions are **dates, times and venues** of meetings, demonstrations or events. A less obvious problem - which is probably just as common - is the poster calling people to a meeting without explaining the topic.

You may need to think about the hierarchy of information on the poster. What do people need to see **first**? In terms of making the poster work, this may not necessarily be the most important idea in your mind. For example, you may need to make a slogan more dominant than the details of a meeting, even though the aim of the poster is to publicise the event.

Finally, think about the pictures that you could use to help hammer the message home. People will almost certainly look at a picture before any words.

You must make sure that a picture conveys not only the meaning of your message, but also its **tone** or **spirit**. Remove the picture from the message. Does it suggest the message you want to convey? Many pictures fail on this simple point. A poster advertising simple health treatments will not be improved by a picture of a person who isn't noticeably happy.

You could use:

- photographs;
- drawings;
- maps;
- paintings;
- stencils;
- logos;
- cartoons;
- decorative designs;
- text design.

DESIGNING THE POSTER

Effective posters combine words and visual elements to deliver a simple message.

The key elements of design are:

- the size of text (Can they be seen from a distance?);
- the size of the picture;
- the position of text and picture on the page;
- the use of empty space on the page;

- the use of colour (For effect, and to denote the organisation);
- the combination of colours (Do they cancel each other out? Does the combination make the text hard to see?);
- the shape of the poster (A horizontal rectangle may have more impact than the more common vertical rectangle);
- the use of a logo to identify who put the poster up.