

Campaign Skills Handbook

Module 8

Building a Communications Strategy *Tactics, Tools and Techniques for Reaching your Audiences*



Introduction

Communicating to voters and potential supporters through the media is a challenge for every campaign, especially in areas where the media might be controlled by other parties or interests. But working strategically with the media can really pay off for your campaign, allowing you to reach more voters and persuade them with your message.

A strategic communications plan will help ensure that you are maximizing every opportunity to inform, inspire and motivate your supporters through the media. This module covers the tools and skills needed to build this communications plan, which will attract attention to your campaign from both traditional (television, radio and newspaper) and new (Internet, blogs and social media) media. Topics covered include:

1. Developing a Strategic Communications Plan
2. Working with the Media
3. Organizing Effective Media Events
4. The Media Toolkit
5. New Media Communications

Developing a Strategic Communications Plan

A strategic communications plan, or media strategy, is your plan for getting positive coverage of your campaign through the media that your target voters use the most, in order to communicate your message to these voters. Political campaigns benefit greatly from a well-run media outreach program.

There are a number of important distinctions to make as you begin to define your strategic communications plan. A list of terms frequently used in media planning is outlined below:

Media

- Any means of communication designed to deliver information and influence large audiences. This includes newspapers, television, radio, social networking sites, etc.

Print Media

- Media that uses the written word on paper, such as newspapers and magazines.

Broadcast Media

- Media that broadcasts sounds or images, such as radio and television.

Traditional Media

- Means of mass communication introduced and used before the advent of the Internet, including television, radio, newspapers and magazines.

New Media

- A general term used to describe forms of electronic communication made possible through computer and digital technology, including websites, social networking, video and audio streaming, online communities and chat rooms, blogs, etc.

Earned Media

- Media coverage your campaign or political party gets for free when the media cover your events or other efforts.

Paid Media

- Media coverage your campaign or political party has to pay for by purchasing advertising time or space.

The media represents a campaign's best opportunity to be in touch with its intended audience on a large scale. Each of the various aspects of media outlined in the table above will play a role in your strategic communications plan to a different degree depending on the local environment and what you want to achieve.

However, most campaigns have to rely more on earned media than paid media for financial reasons. In this situation, your campaign is in less control of how much coverage it will get as well as how it is represented in the media. One of the main purposes of constructing a media strategy is to ensure that the message that appears in the newspapers, on the news or in a blog is the one that you want your target audience to see and hear.

Your strategy should seek to maximize your media opportunities, but it should also support your campaign's overall goals and work in partnership with all other parts of your campaign, such as voter contact and fundraising. For example, your efforts to connect with voters and grow grassroots support for your campaign are good news stories, so your communications strategy should operate in collaboration with these efforts rather than in isolation.

The steps involved in developing a strategic communications plan are similar to those for other aspects of campaign planning. They are to:

1. Determine your objective(s);
2. define your key audiences;
3. Identify the most important media outlets for your campaign; and,
4. Create a tactical outreach plan of events and activities designed to generate the coverage you want and on the platforms you need in order to reach your key audiences.

Throughout this discussion of communication strategies, it is vital to keep in mind that ***none of these efforts will be effective until you have defined your campaign's core messages for your target audiences.*** Unless you know what you are going to say to your voters and which voters you need to reach, there is no point trying to get media coverage. Media coverage without a clear message risks confusing voters, representing your campaign poorly or even alienating voters. Module 6 of this program offers a number of tools for developing messages for target audiences.

To complete each of the steps for developing an effective communication strategy, think through the questions below. Many of these build on the work done in previous modules on targeting, research and analysis.

1. What is our objective? What do we want to achieve?

Like all aspects of your campaign, putting together a solid media strategy starts with thinking through what it is you want or need to achieve. What is the size of the audience you are trying to persuade? Is it large, manageable or small? Is media the best way to reach them, or is direct voter contact going to be more effective?

What about the image or profile of the political party or any candidates? Do the voters know enough about your party or candidates? Do the voters like your party or candidates? Are there any policy ideas or issues you need to advance to change the terms of the debate around an election? What do you need the voters to know about your campaign and is the media the best way of helping to communicate this information?

Define clearly what it is you need to achieve through your media strategy. Return to your SWOT analysis from Module 3 of this program to review your challenges and opportunities in this campaign.

2. Who is the campaign's target audience?

Defining your media strategy requires an assessment of your targeted voters and the media landscape in the area. Who are the people with whom your campaign is trying to communicate?

To answer this question, return to the voter targeting you conducted earlier in your campaign planning from Module 3 of this program. Your research should have given you information about who your core supporters are, and who the undecided or persuadable voters are, that you need to communicate with in order to achieve your goals. Think through the types of people you need to reach and what their access to information must be like. Use the persona profiles you constructed in Module 6 of this program to help you visualize this.

3. Which media outlets do our target audience(s) rely on for information? What are the most important media outlets to the campaign?

Think about how each group of your campaign's targeted voters get their information. What media outlets do they rely on and use regularly? Consider all forms of media, both traditional and new, and whether infrastructure (for example, regular electricity or Internet service) will affect their access to various outlets.

There are a number of ways you can research this if the answer is not readily apparent. Ask a local advertising agency or the sales departments of the media outlets themselves. Public opinion polls also frequently ask voters where they get their information. You can also ask targeted voters directly as part of a campaign survey canvass about what issues they care about most.

In the Middle East and North Africa, most voters get most of their information from watching television. But it's not always easy to get television coverage for campaign events, so consider what other media outlets your targeted voters rely on for information. Are there special media outlets that reach certain groups of voters, such as minority groups, students, or people living in certain neighborhoods or remote areas? Do groups such as young people or women consume media differently?

Once you know how your target audiences get their information, single out the ones on which your campaign can actually get coverage. These outlets become priorities for your media outreach strategy.

As an example, one campaign might target the large, commercial television stations in the area, because most voters in their target groups watch a lot of television and these companies are likely to give some form of coverage to all parties. Another campaign may recognize that they are unlikely to get television coverage because the station's owners support a different party, or because these stations are unlikely to consider the campaign a priority. In this situation, the campaign might focus on a combination of newspapers, radio, and new media instead.

Make a list of your priority media outlets, and then add secondary outlets. Your secondary outlets are those you can access more easily or less expensively, and typically include new media such as video streaming or social media sites. While your focus will be on your priority outlets, it is important to include secondary outlets in your strategy as well. Many reporters working with larger media sources pay attention to news coverage on a wide variety of outlets, including local blogs, social media sites and stories reported through other media, and may pick up your message this way.

Finally, consider the relationships you have with the media outlets you have identified as a priority. What specific steps can you take to improve your communication with these media and build your professional networks with key journalists and news editors?

4. What strategies and tactics will your campaign use to get your priority media outlets to deliver your message to your targeted voters?

Strategies and tactics are the specific actions your campaign takes to actually gain media coverage, particularly earned media. What are some possible campaign events that your campaign could organize that would advance your message, keep your supporters engaged, and be interesting enough to appeal to the news media?

First, consider the type of media you have prioritized. Newspaper, radio and blogs are less visual and will require events that focus more on storytelling. Most other media are much more visual and will require good backdrops and settings or engaging images for broadcast. On almost every occasion, party leaders or candidates simply sitting at a table talking will not fulfill your objectives of engaging your target voters and keeping them interested. It's too dull.

There are number of ways to come up with ideas for campaign events that are newsworthy:

- a. Write down the stories your campaign is trying to tell voters in order to convey your message. Are there ways to tell these stories through events? For example, if your campaign message focuses on jobs, can you organize events that highlight both the human impact of this problem and your campaign's proposed solutions?
- b. Conceptualize the visual images tied to your message. If it's about education or the future of young people, can you create an event with children and young people at a school that would create a great visual for the media to cover? If it's about the economy, can you create an event with street vendors, factory workers, young people who are out of work, or enlist a successful local enterprise to help paint a picture associated with your message?
- c. Think about how your campaign can look bigger. Are there endorsements, debates, rallies or large public events that would help create the image of large amounts of growing support for your campaign?
- d. Come up with ideal headlines. If you were writing the headlines for the press coverage of your campaign, what would you want them to say about your policies, your relationship with voters, your integrity, your commitment to public service, or your vision for the country? Write down these headlines and then construct communication events that could get you there.

- e. Take advantage of campaign milestones to attract coverage. Milestones are events that receive special attention because they are connected to key occurrences during the campaign or to something that measures your success. For example, filing candidate registration papers with lots of signatures of support or receiving endorsements from important community leaders show that your campaign is competitive and newsworthy.

Typical milestone events include:

- Announcing your candidacy
- Receiving endorsements from opinion leaders, organizations or news outlets
- Reaching fundraising goals
- Meeting party registration deadlines
- Initiating advertising or social media activities
- Launching policies, platforms or manifestos
- Canvassing and other major campaign volunteer activities
- Hosting voter registration drives
- Plot these events on a calendar and use them as occasions to get coverage from both traditional and new media.

Activity 1: Strategic Communications Planning

1. Establish the goal for your communications plan. What is it you need to achieve? If it is helpful, return to your SWOT analysis from Module 3 of this program to review your challenges and opportunities in this campaign and to help you think through what you need to accomplish through your media communications.

2. Think about your target audiences and where they get their information. In the table below, identify each group you will have to communicate with and list the media outlets they rely on for information.

| Targeted Voter Group | Key Media Outlets for This Group |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

3. From the list above, write down your priority media outlets that your campaign will target for coverage. These are the media outlets your target voters use the most. Then, see if you can come up with secondary media outlets. These are outlets you can access more easily or less expensively which might not be at the top of the list for your target audiences, but can help you get your message out in a way that might get picked up by bigger media.

Priority Outlets

Secondary Outlets

4. Think about the visual images that you want to be associated with your campaign and its message. What are the possible campaign events that you could organize that would deliver these images and advance your message? Come up with at least 2 events and describe them below.

Event 1

Event 2

5. Brainstorm a list of milestone events for your campaign. For each activity, list the ideal headline you would want the media to use for their coverage of the event.

| Milestone Event | Headline |
|-----------------|----------|
| | |

6. Assign each of your media events a specific day by writing them on the calendar below.

| | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------------|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| Election Day | | | | | | | |
| 1 week out | | | | | | | |
| 2 weeks out | | | | | | | |
| 3 weeks out | | | | | | | |
| 4 weeks out | | | | | | | |
| 5 weeks out | | | | | | | |
| 6 weeks out | | | | | | | |
| 7 weeks out | | | | | | | |

Working with the Media

Developing good working relationships with the media will result in more, and better, coverage of your campaign. By understanding reporters' needs and making sure you are prepared to respond to them, you will provide the media with what they need to cover your story. Below are guidelines for working productively with the media:

1. Develop relationships with key editors, reporters and bloggers
2. Stay in touch
3. Understand what is newsworthy
4. Always be truthful and accurate
5. Don't be afraid to say "I'm not sure" and find out the answer
6. Understand their limits and needs
7. Respond quickly to calls
8. Provide reporters with information in a format they can use
9. Anticipate their need for content and pitch stories
10. Stay on top of the story
11. Address problems and move on

Develop relationships with key editors, reporters, and bloggers

Reporters, bloggers and editors will be more likely to make the decision to cover your campaign if they know you or a member of your team, and if they are convinced that your candidacy is viable and has a real base of support. First impressions make a big impact, so make sure that when you meet with reporters the first time, you convey to them your campaign's message and the kind of support you have.

Stay in touch

Call reporters regularly, not just to pitch stories or campaign events, but also just to stay in touch and discuss current events. Be available for calls from reporters at any time and become a helpful resource to journalists.

Understand what is newsworthy

Certain types of stories and angles are considered newsworthy; understanding these gives you an advantage when suggesting stories to reporters or planning media events. Consider tying your campaign's story to a major national news

story, an anniversary or commemorative date, broader trends in politics or campaigns, the release of a new report or data, or a human interest story. Campaign milestones, such as candidate filing, reaching a voter contact goal, or opening a headquarters, also make good news stories.

Always be truthful and accurate

Always tell the truth. Reporters rely on their sources for accurate information. Once a source proves unreliable, they won't use that person again. Whenever possible provide a citation for a point that can be backed up so that reporters can use it in their story. This helps your credibility and theirs too.

Don't be afraid to say "I'm not sure" and find out the answer

If you get a question and are not completely sure of the answer, it's best to say, "I'm not certain; let me check on that and get back to you." Make sure you research the question and call them back promptly. Reporters will appreciate your honesty.

Understand their limits and needs

Reporters work under tight deadlines and high pressure. Expect, and insist on, fair coverage but don't expect reporters to go out of their way to cover your campaign. Make it easy for them to incorporate information into a story by providing research sources and suggesting other people to interview when you can.

Respond quickly to calls

Most political stories are on daily deadlines, so respond as quickly as possible when a reporter calls you. If you want to have time to consider your responses, it's fine to ask the reporter what they are working on, what questions they have, and what their deadline is. Take a short time to prepare your responses, and then call them back as far advance of their deadline as possible.

Provide reporters with information in a format they can use

You can make a reporter's job easier by providing elements they need to put together their story. A clear, concise press release, along with the other elements in your press kit, will make their job easier. See the section on building a press kit in this module for further guidance.

Anticipate their need for content and pitch stories

Think about what types of stories reporters might like to work on that could focus on your campaign. For example, your campaign could be featured in a story about campaigns doing online outreach to voters, or in a story about efforts to register new voters in your area. Don't be shy about calling reporters you know and 'pitching' or suggesting story ideas to them.

Stay on top of the story

Make yourself a good source of information for your candidate or party, as well as for reporters. Monitor news coverage from a variety of sources. Learn what types of stories different media outlets cover and what types of stories individual reporters like to write. Pay close attention to all types of news, not just political news that could affect your country or voters. Always stay on top of what your campaign's message and activities are, as well as the message and activities of your opponents.

Address problems and move on

If you encounter a situation where you are misquoted or a story comes out about you that is inaccurate, address the situation immediately. Call and arrange for an in-person meeting with the reporter and their editor, and insist on either a retraction or that they print a response from your campaign without edits. With online coverage (including comments posted on stories or posts), be vigilant about responding quickly to unfavorable or biased coverage with your campaign's perspective.

Organizing Effective Media Events

Organizing your own media events is a great way to influence the kind of coverage your campaign gets in the press. A media event is any campaign activity designed to generate press coverage. Media events can be site visits to locations (schools, health centers, factories, parks) to highlight certain issues, campaign activities (rallies, meetings, door-to-door canvassing), speeches, and debates. Media events are more interesting for the press to cover than press conferences because there is an activity to report on and usually a visual image to show.

A media event is any campaign activity designed to generate press coverage.

Media events are the most powerful way to tell your campaign's story and bring your message to life because you control the message, the speakers, and the visual picture. A good media event meets the following criteria:

- It's newsworthy
- It reinforces the campaign's message
- There is a clear, interesting visual for television and photographs
- Campaign supporters are numerous and enthusiastic
- The candidate's comments are concise and on message
- The time and place are convenient for the press to attend
- Media, those who attend and those who can't make it, receive a succinct press release and photograph immediately following the event

Below is a checklist of activities for planning, executing and following up on a media event:

1. Planning the event:

- ☐ Think through: What news are you making? What headline do you want?
- ☐ Consider how you will tell your story visually (for example through a location, actions, people, or signs).
- ☐ Select a location that is convenient to reporters, with parking if needed.
- ☐ Select a time that is convenient for reporters, usually late morning or early afternoon.
- ☐ Make sure you have permission to hold the event if it's at a special location.
- ☐ Prepare your media advisory (explained below) and press release during the planning phase. This will help you clarify your message and ensure that the event you organize will generate the story you seek.
- ☐ Select and invite any additional guest speakers. Brief each speaker with a

memo describing the message and agenda of the event, and provide them with suggested talking points.

- ☐ Think about what materials and equipment your event will require. Will you need a banner? A podium? A sound system? Special lighting? Signs? A generator?

2. Before the event:

- ☐ Send a media advisory to all reporters and news outlets.
- ☐ Invite campaign supporters.
- ☐ Secure permits if needed.
- ☐ Arrange for special equipment such as sound, lighting, podium, etc.
- ☐ Write out and practice the candidate's press statement.
- ☐ Finalize and make copies of the press release, and prepare copies of the press kit.
- ☐ Confirm other speakers or special guests.
- ☐ Call reporters to pitch the event and ask if they plan to attend.
- ☐ Designate one person as "stage manager," responsible for working with the candidate and any other speakers at the event to ensure a smooth flow.
- ☐ Hang banners and do anything else you need to set up the location at least an hour before the event starts.

3. During the event:

- ☐ Thank media, supporters and guests for attending.
- ☐ Greet all reporters at a registration table; ask them to present credentials and sign in.
- ☐ Make sure all event speakers understand the order of speakers and who the stage manager is.
- ☐ Distribute press releases to reporters.
- ☐ Make sure all reporters and camera operators have access to electricity and anything else they need.
- ☐ Take plenty of photos during the event from different angles and perspectives.
- ☐ Post and tweet live from the event to the campaign's social media networks.

4. After the event:

- ☐ Immediately send the press release and photo to all news outlets including bloggers.
- ☐ Post coverage of the event on social media networks and send it to key supporters.
- ☐ Thank reporters who covered the event.

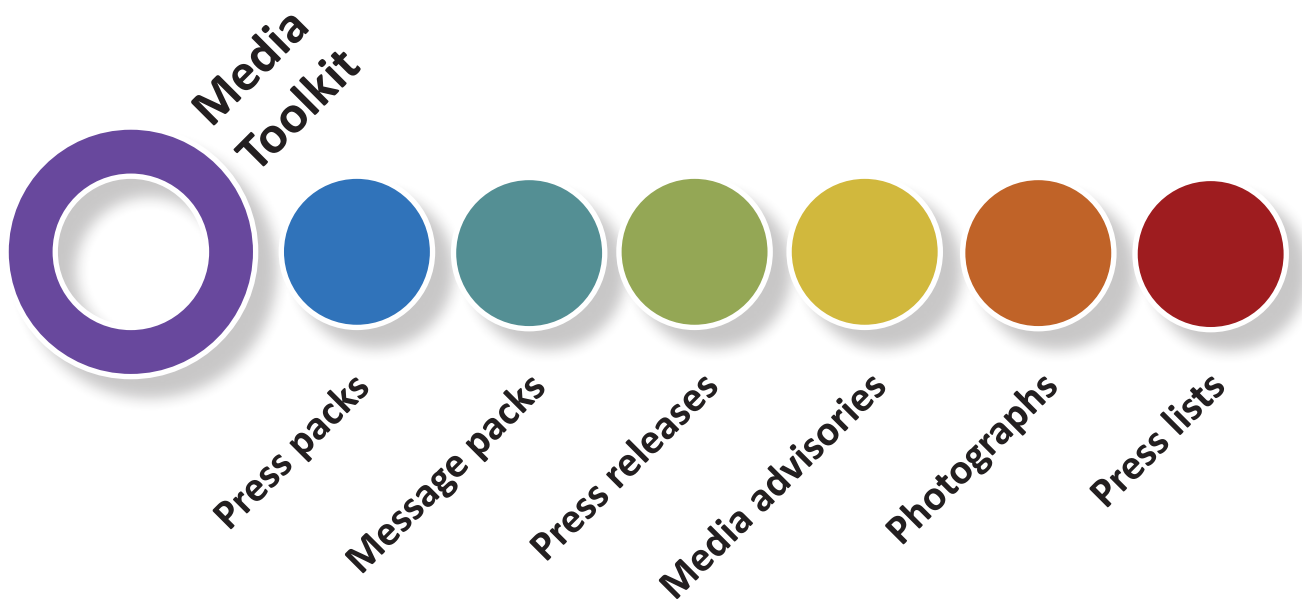
Activity 2: Planning a Media Event

Fill in the grid below to visualize and plan one of the media events you identified in Activity 1.

| | |
|---|--|
| Headline | Identify the news item of your story and frame it in a headline. <i>What's the headline of this story?</i> |
| Lead | Write a succinct paragraph in journalistic style to frame the story. What's new? Why would the news media cover this story? |
| Photo or Visual Image | Visualize the photo or image you want to represent the event. <i>What will people do at the media event that is visually interesting?</i> |
| Candidate or Party Leader Quote | Know what your sound bite is going to be and ensure everyone delivers it. <i>How do we state our message in 15 seconds or less?</i> |
| Supporting Facts | Provide local angles, facts and figures from objective sources. <i>What information do we have to support the claims we're making and provide interesting angles?</i> |
| Validator Quote | Pick speakers who reinforce your position. <i>What issue experts or constituency leaders will talk to the press for us?</i> |
| Question and Answers or Likely Responses | Prepare for media questions and opponents' attacks. <i>What will the reporters ask? What will our opponents say?</i> |

The Media Toolkit

No matter what type of campaign you are running, being prepared to work with the media will save you time and help you get more favorable coverage. Take some time early in the campaign to put together your media toolkit, which is an assembly of all the basic documents and pieces of information that you will need whenever you engage with the media throughout the campaign. Here are the elements that make up a complete media toolkit:



Press Packs

There are a few items your campaign can prepare and put together as press packs that will be useful for all media outlets. Press packs include core information about the campaign, political party and/or candidates, which members of the press can refer to throughout the election no matter what the issue or event is that they are covering. Common elements of a press pack include:

- A biography of the candidate or party leader, whoever is leading the campaign in the area
- A one-page statement that lays out the basic message of why the candidate or party is running and what they plan to do if elected
- A photo of the candidate or party leader
- A campaign brochure or leaflet

Together, these items make up a press pack that can be sent to bloggers, reporters and editors when the campaign launches. Press packs should also be available at

all of the campaign's events where the media is invited. They are also great to leave behind when meeting with party leaders, prominent potential supporters and other community leaders. If the campaign has a website, post links to the documents in the press pack so that journalists can access this information at any time.

Message Packs

The campaign's message, explored in detail in Module 6, will be the basis for all of your communications. Having your message already written in different formats will give you a convenient reference point for drafting press releases, speeches and statements throughout the campaign and ensure the language and tone you use is consistent.

Unlike the press pack, which the campaign distributes to reporters and potential supporters, **the message pack is a private, internal set of documents designed only for the campaign team's use.** Your message pack should include:

- The campaign's basic message written out → one to four sentences long
- The campaign or candidate's basic stump speech → one-minute version
- The campaign or candidate's basic stump speech → five-minute version
- Campaign talking points or prepared "Questions and Answers," which are the answers that everyone on the campaign should give to typical questions you expect to be asked by the media

Refer to your message pack when drafting speeches, preparing for interviews, writing press releases and designing campaign literature and online communications.

Press Release

A press release is a short document that communicates news from the campaign quickly to many news outlets. A press release always answers the following questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why?

A press release answers the following questions:

Who is the subject of the story? **What** is happening? **Where** is it happening?
When is it happening? **Why** is this so important?

A press release follows the same format as a news story and describes a news event. The first sentence, or lead, encapsulates the entire story followed by short simple sentences that give more information and context.

The standard elements of a press release include:

- Contact information for a campaign spokesperson
- A catchy headline
- A lead sentence that briefly summarizes the story
- A short paragraph with more details about the story
- A short paragraph including a quote or two
- A short paragraph explaining the context or importance of the event
- A final paragraph with basic information about the campaign

A press release should usually fit onto one page. If you have additional information for reporters, such as research data or background information, consider creating a separate fact sheet to accompany the press release.

See the sample press release below for a campaign that is opening its headquarters:

Sample Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

(DATE)

Contact:

Mona Chanine (PHONE NUMBER)

Ahmed Abdullah (PHONE NUMBER)

AHMED ABDULLAH CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES HEADQUARTERS IN XXX NEIGHBORHOOD

Ramallah—Ahmed Abdullah, who is running for parliament in the upcoming election, opened a campaign headquarters in the XXX neighborhood today.

About two hundred supporters attended the opening, which Abdullah says indicates that his campaign has a great deal of support.

“Since I grew up in XXX, I know these people. I care about them. When I am elected, I will fight for them,” he said. “This headquarters will help us connect with voters and tell them about what’s at stake for the future of education and economic development, which are my priorities.”

The headquarters, located on XXX Street, will serve as a base for campaign activities including community meetings, festivals, and door-to-door canvassing. So far, the Abdullah campaign is the only one to open a headquarters in this part of the district.

“Ahmed Abdullah really will fight for us and for more jobs. That’s why his headquarters is here,” said Ibrahim Nasrallah, a 76-year-old neighborhood resident and Abdullah campaign supporter who attended the event with his entire extended family.

Abdullah is one of eight candidates who have announced their intention to run for parliament in this district. The election is expected to take place sometime next summer, according to the schedule set by the Ministry of the Interior.

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Media Advisory

A media advisory is a very short message to the news media, usually informing them of an upcoming event or the candidate's schedule. An advisory should highlight what the event is and clearly list details such as time, location, and speakers.

Include any additional information that may be useful to the media in your advisories, such as how long the event will last, where to park, and whether there will be a sound system that they can use to record audio. Contact information for a campaign spokesperson should also be listed prominently in case they need to contact you with questions.

Photographs

A photograph gives voters a great deal of information about the candidate. The old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words rings particularly true in politics. Voters will look at a picture to decipher what kind of person a candidate or political party leader is, what kind of job they would do or whether they are trustworthy. Because visual communications are much more powerful than verbal communications, the photos your campaign uses are very important.

Consider what you want your campaign photos to say. Should the photo of the candidate emphasize that he or she is serious, respectful and formal? Or, should the photo convey that the candidate is warm, approachable and caring? Should the campaign use only a basic headshot of just the candidate? Or, could the campaign use shots of the candidate with their family at work or interacting with voters? What kinds of poses, activities, or backgrounds for a photo could reinforce the campaign's message?

Campaigns use photographs for brochures, leaflets, posters, and banners. Because of the extent to which these photos are reproduced, it's worth finding a photographer who can take high-quality images of the candidate.

Once you have taken and selected the photos you will use for the campaign, use them in the following ways:

- Make them the focal point of your campaign literature and voter contact materials
- Make them the basis of your campaign website and social media accounts
- Deliver prints and email electronic copies of the photo to the news media so they will use the photo of you that you, not they, have selected

Press Lists

A press list includes all of the contact information of the reporters, editors and bloggers you hope will cover the campaign. This includes mobile and office phone numbers, email addresses, Skype or VOIP addresses, fax numbers and physical or mailing addresses. Having this information on hand will make the job of media outreach much simpler and allow you to “blast” communications from your campaign to members of the press quickly and easily.

You or your party’s press office may have some of this information already, but it’s often the case that the press list will be different for each campaign as new outlets may emerge or local media needs to be added. Do your research to ensure you have contact details for all of the outlets you have listed as priority or secondary at the very least.

Once you have the information assembled, think of the different ways you will use it according to your communications strategy (who you have identified as priority and secondary media outlets) and how key media outlets prefer to be contacted. Options for organizing contact details include:

- *Create a master list.* Organize contact information for individual reporters and editors by media outlet (specific newspaper, TV station), grouped by type of media (radio, TV, online, print).
- *Create phone lists.* Create a written list of phone numbers for key reporters and TV stations for the campaign headquarters, the candidate and the campaign manager. Program these numbers into the mobile phones of the candidate, press secretary and campaign manager.
- *Create SMS groups.* Consider creating an SMS group on the press secretary or campaign manager’s mobile phone or digital device so the campaign can communicate major news updates rapidly to the press.
- *Create email lists.* Compile email addresses for reporters, bloggers and assignment editors. Consider setting up an email group in order to communicate rapidly by blind copying the group on press releases and press statements when there is breaking news.
- *Create Skype, VoIP or IM lists.* Instant messaging and Skype or other VOIP systems can be good ways of staying in touch with journalists and editors informally.

- Don't forget the fax.* Some media outlets (particularly traditional media) still prefer to receive press releases via fax. Keep a list of those contacts and their fax numbers by your fax machine.

Activity 3: Write a Press Release

Write the press release for the media event you planned in Activity 2. Make sure your press release covers the Who, What, When, Where, and Why of your event, and includes a candidate quote that is concise and on message.

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New Media Communications

New media platforms, such as social networks and video hosting sites, are an inexpensive and efficient way to get your message to a large number of supporters and potential supporters who are online and use new media. However, they also take considerable time and effort to manage consistently and effectively.

New media can be an effective way to maximize a number of campaign objectives, including:

- Spreading the message and information about campaign activities
- Recruiting volunteers or helpers
- Finding large groups of people who are open to your message
- Reaching out to potential donors
- Motivating base voters or existing supporters
- Creating momentum around events

The costs for setting up your campaign's presence on these platforms are relatively low, and the platforms have the potential to reach a wide audience and distribute your message quickly to supporters. Most of these media are interactive and offer new opportunities to listen to and engage with the public.

However, there are disadvantages and challenges to using new media as well. These include:

- It is harder to control your message and the behavior of activists online
- Supporters you recruit through social networking do not go into your database, so you don't have their contact information to further build the relationship
- There is no exact template on where to find supporters and potential supporters online

New media is any newer technology that people use to consume information or interact with each other.

Examples are listed below:

Social Networking sites →
Facebook, LinkedIn

Blogs and Micro-blogs →
Twitter, Blogger, Tumblr, WordPress

Video Hosting →
YouTube, Blip.tv

Instant Messaging →
Pidgin, Skype

SMS and Text Messaging →
Blackberry groups, SMS sites

Photo and Image Sharing →
Flickr, Instagram, Smilebox

Social Bookmarking →
Digg, Reddit, Pinterest

- Voters can be outside target areas
- These platforms were built for socializing, not campaigning
- They require consistent and regular management and maintenance
- Nothing is private and mistakes have a long shelf life

It takes time and attention to build and maintain authentic relationships with online groups and interested individuals. Also, keep in mind that like all technology, new media is constantly changing and evolving. You will need to keep re-evaluating the way you use these platforms to make sure that you are maximizing your reach and meaningfully engaging your audience.

It is also important to remember that outreach to online communities is not a replacement for direct voter contact and face-to-face organizing. A campaign's objective in using electronic communications should be to mobilize online communities to engage in offline actions, such as volunteering with your campaign, donating money, voting for you and encouraging their family and friends to vote for you.

The following section offers guidelines for planning and using new media for your campaign.

Using New Media for Campaigns

Digital advocacy is the term used to describe efforts to organize people using new media to take social or political action.

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New media refers to any technology which people use to consume information or interact with each other. These platforms are accessed through digital devices such as mobile phones, tablets and computers.

New media tools have become an essential component of many movements and campaigns. Some of the most-used digital advocacy tools include websites, blogs, social networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter), email, video streaming and image sharing sites, instant messaging and text messaging. Hundreds of social media applications exist that could be used for digital advocacy, but rather than trying to create a presence on all of them, it is best to spend your time and resources where your supporters already spend their time.

Anyone can use new media. The perception is that social media reaches young people primarily, but its growth is explosive and far-reaching. Remember that new media includes things like email, text message and instant messaging. People of all ages around the world are increasingly using some form of new media.

1. Getting Started - Conduct a Brief Strategic Review

The first thing to do when deciding whether or how to use new media is to clarify your campaign's main goals and how digital advocacy helps you achieve them. What do you want to achieve? Do any digital media platforms help you reach your goals? If so, which ones?

Often, you will want to use new media to find and persuade targeted voters and mobilize supporters. Clarify what you want to achieve and whether this is possible using digital advocacy. Otherwise, you risk getting caught up in work that doesn't make a contribution to your campaign's success.

Ask yourself:

- Where do my supporters or potential supporters gather online? Where do they go for information and news? Where do they go for entertainment and socializing?
- Is my campaign's digital advocacy about reaching as many people as possible or about controlling my message?
- Do I need the people with whom I am communicating to take action on behalf of my campaign? What do I want them to do?
- What kind of information do I want to share? Will it be written word, video or still images? Which platform would carry this information best?
- What can the local infrastructure support? How strong and reliable are internet connections and electricity?
- Are my target groups more likely to access information on computers or handheld devices such as mobile phones? How should this affect the platforms I use and the type of content my campaign puts out?

Research and evaluate where your supporters and potential supporters are most likely to be online. Because digital media can reach very broad audiences, you want to do whatever you can to ensure the medium you are using is also used by your target audiences.

Determine how you will measure success at the start of the project. Begin by envisioning "the big picture" outcomes of how you'd like your social media efforts to turn out. Then, develop specific success metrics that will help you evaluate each platform you

plan to use. Fortunately, it is easy to track such data through many free analytic and social marketing tools that are often built into the platform itself.

For example, if you are using a Facebook page in your campaign, the “insights” panel lets you track how many people have seen your content, how many people have shared your content, and the demographic breakdown of the people who follow your page. It also shows you the most popular content based on who likes it, shares it or comments on it. These metrics let you know if you are reaching your target audience and what kind of content they like the most so you can give them more of it.

If you are using Twitter, services such as Twitalyzer or Klout measure your influence on Twitter, the users you are most likely to influence and the topics you are perceived to have expertise on. You can adjust your content accordingly to ensure you are influencing your target audience with the topics you want them to learn about.

Most blast email programs track analytics on open rates and click through rates. Using these, you can see which emails are opened the most often and then adjust your subject lines and content accordingly. You can also see which appeals to donate or volunteer are clicked on more often and adjust your content accordingly. Consider breaking up your email list into two or three groups and using different subject lines or content to see which ones people respond to better.

Google Analytics is free to use for any website and provides you with data on your site’s visitors and how they use the site. You can use analytics to be sure your visitors are coming from the geographic or demographic areas you are targeting and watch their pathways through your site.

2. Evaluate the Time and Resources You Have

An effective online presence requires daily maintenance and management. Once you start, you have to continue to communicate in order for the outreach to be useful to your campaign. Be realistic about whether you have the time and human resources to fully engage in digital advocacy.

If time and other resources are limited, choose one or two platforms for digital advocacy and limit your presence to these. Use the platforms you have chosen to direct people towards your primary means of communication, such as community meetings, hospitality tents or your website.

3. Become Familiar with the Intricacies of Each Platform

As you are creating accounts, familiarize yourself with the typical behavior of users and the requirements for effective use. Learn the customs of the platform. For example, Twitter uses hash tags and hat tips; Pinterest users must credit original sources for anything they add to their pin boards and must keep any comments they post positive; and, Facebook and You Tube rely on users to “like” a page or to post comments in order to make a page more prominent.

Because different social media platforms have specific audiences and distinct formats for posting, each should be used for distinct purposes. The following chart shows what current research indicates about the audiences, reach and strategic considerations campaigns should consider when choosing among widely-used online platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Google+. However, it is important to keep in mind that these things change over time and sometimes the change is significant. A short piece of online research about what demographic groups are using which platform will help keep your new media efforts as targeted as possible.

| Platform | Character Limit | Audience | Reach | Strategic Considerations |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Twitter | 140 | Opinion leaders | Over 100 million active users worldwide | <p>Focused on news and rapid flow of information</p> <p>Fewer people use Twitter, but the audience is considered more influential</p> <p>Easy to share information with a wide variety of people you may not know</p> |

| | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--|--|---|
| Facebook | 240, plus photos and notes | Broad audience Average age is 13-34, but older audience is growing Women use Facebook much more than men | More than 800 million active users worldwide | Social focus Information is more likely to be shared with people you already know or who already know you |
| Google + | 12,000 | University aged males Social media leaders | 90 million users but growing worldwide by 625,000 new users per day Potential to reach 400 million users by the end of 2012 | Growing network Easily integrates with other Google options such as email Heavily used by those who have already adopted it |

4. Develop Systems for Managing Your Digital Advocacy Efforts

To start your new media campaign, create a short list or calendar of topics that your campaign will post about online, a schedule for when the campaign will make requests of its supporters (ask them to do something), and a list of key dates for desired outcomes. The plan must be flexible enough to allow your campaign to react to current events and emerging topics that the social community cares about. Your ratio of non-self-interested material (not about your campaign) to self-interested material (about your campaign) should be roughly 3 to 1. Build time into your plan to respond to individuals who ask questions or post comments to the campaign on these platforms. For example, do not just send a tweet and walk away – retweet reactions you like, respond to any questions that arise, and mention any users who took action.

Be explicit about who is authorized to post material and whether there is any review process. If there is a review process, detail who can sign off on content. Remember

that with many of these platforms, speed and timeliness are important. Do not make the review process overly-arduous or unrealistic.

As part of your planning process, spend some time listening to and monitoring the activity of other users on the platforms you have chosen just as you would do if you were walking into a room and speaking to people in person. Develop a sense of the types of conversations that are going on and the way in which other users engage with one another.

As you begin to interact with others, develop a tone of voice that is authentically your own. In using new media, authenticity takes priority over all else. You don't want to come across as promotional, robotic or bureaucratic. Share your point of view in a way that is open, positive and enthusiastic. Resist the urge to solely promote your cause and engage on issues about which the online community is concerned. Be sure to credit others when repeating information. When you are ready to ask something of the community, do so in a clear and direct manner.

Social media lessons from successful campaigns

1. Start early
2. Make it easy for your supporters to find your message or information, forward it to friends and contacts, and act on your requests or calls to action
3. Channel online enthusiasm into specific, targeted activities that further the campaign's goals
4. Integrate online advocacy into every element of the campaign

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Integrate and streamline social media efforts while retaining an authentic presence on each platform. In other words, don't "spam" your users with the exact same content, but do consider opportunities to share key information across platforms easily. For example, you might post an article to your website and automatically tweet that new content is there.

You'll also want to integrate any online efforts with your offline efforts (printed materials, public relations, media outreach) to maximize success. Make sure you include social media reference points on printed materials and promote content from printed materials online. Make sure all materials – on and offline – are on message.

Assign the task of managing the campaign's social media presence to one person who should work closely with the volunteer coordinator and the person in charge of all media and communications.

5. Monitor your Efforts and Tweak as Needed

On a weekly or monthly basis, stop and evaluate your progress to see whether you are moving toward your goals and whether the platforms you are using are making the best possible contributions to your digital advocacy efforts.

As you gain competence in new media, review other media tools that support your cause and consider adding them to your campaign. If at any point you stop using an online tool, take the content down or redirect supporters to an area where there is active engagement.

Activity 4: Using New Media

Use the questions below to think through how your campaign can use new media.

1. What new media tools are most used by your campaign's supporters?

2. What new media tools are most used by your targeted voters (the voters you need to persuade)?

3. What new media tools are most used by opinion leaders in your community?

4. Which new media tools will your campaign use? Why have you chosen these?

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5. For the media event you planned earlier in this module, pick one social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), and answer the following questions:

How will you use that social media platform to help meet the goals of the event (e.g., publicize the event, get supporters to attend, and communicate the event's message to supporters)?

What will you ask your supporters to do via the social networking platform (e.g., ask supporters to help with planning or set up, engage supporters in coming up with ideas for signs for the event, post photos showing community members at the event)?

Draft 3 messages regarding the event you could use on the platform.