



Nutrition and Aging
Resource Center

Marketing & Communications to Boost the Visibility of Your Program

Marketing and communications are essential functions for any organization that wants to reach, attract, and retain customers and allies, as well as build a strong reputation and brand awareness.

However, marketing and communications are not easy tasks. They require a lot of creativity, skills, knowledge, and resources. However, following a few best practices can help you achieve your goals and overcome difficulties.

This brief guide will provide some basic practical information to improve your marketing and communications performance. By the end of this guide, you will better understand the fundamental principles and practices of marketing and communications and have some ready-to-roll activities that you can deploy to create more value for your organization.

What are marketing communications?

It is as essential for nonprofits and community-based organizations (CBOs) to use marketing communications as it is for for-profit businesses seeking to make money. In layperson's terms, marketing communications are the messages and pictures an organization uses to show you what they offer, why you should trust them, and why you should choose them over others. It is how an organization tells its story, makes you interested in its products or services, and describes how it can solve your problems.

How can marketing and communications help me?

Marketing and communications tactics can help your program achieve vital goals and objectives. Marketing and communications help you reach your target audience, communicate your mission and values, and build trust and loyalty with

your stakeholders. Good marketing and communications can help your program accomplish several goals, such as:

- **Attract new supporters** by raising awareness and creating valuable experiences.
- **Increase your impact** on the social issues your center cares about.
- **Recruit volunteers** by highlighting the opportunities and rewards of getting involved.
- **Get recognized by decision-makers** by calling attention to your services.
- **Connect to valuable donors** by showcasing the impact and benefits of their contributions.
- **Engage your constituents** and inspire your community by offering real interactions.

How can we build an effective marketing and communications strategy?

Marketing and communicating about your program can be challenging, as CBOs often have limited resources. Start with a comprehensive plan to make the most of what you have available. Here are the main steps:

STEP 1. Define your goals and objectives. Before marketing your program, you need a clear idea of what you want to achieve and how you will measure your success. Some goals and objectives are to increase the number of people who:

- Know about your program and its cause.
- Support your program financially or with in-kind contributions.
- Participate in your program's services.
- Advocate for your program's cause or policy changes.

You should also set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) indicators for each goal and objective. For example, to increase:

- Monthly volunteers by 10% in one year.
- Participants by 15% in three months.
- Media mentions by 5% in six months.
- Website visitors by 20% in six months.

STEP 2. Identify your target audiences. Your primary target audience is those most likely to be interested in and benefit from your program. You need to know who they are, where they are, what they need, and how they communicate.

You can use market research, surveys, interviews, or focus groups to gather information about your target audience. You can also segment your target audience into groups based on their characteristics, such as location or interests.

Some target audiences for senior nutrition and health promotion programs are older adults, their family members and friends, volunteers, partners, potential donors or sponsors, and advocates or influencers.

STEP 3. Develop your value proposition and message. Your value proposition is the unique benefit that your organization offers to your target audience and the difference that you make in their lives and in the community. Your message is how you communicate your value proposition to your target audience. You need to communicate your value proposition and message clearly and convincingly to your target audience and stakeholders; you can use stories, testimonials, case studies, statistics, or reports. You can also use visual elements such as logos, colors, images, or videos to enhance your message.

STEP 4. Choose your marketing channels and methods. Your marketing channels are the platforms or mediums that you use to reach your target audience – and your marketing methods are the tactics or strategies that you use to deliver your message through your channels. Choose the most appropriate and effective marketing channels and methods for your organization based on your goals, objectives, budget, and resources. You can use a mix of online and offline marketing channels and methods to maximize your reach and impact. Some marketing channels and methods are:

- Online channels: website, social media, email, blog, podcast, webinar.
- Offline channels: flyers, brochures, posters, newsletters, news releases.
- Online methods: content marketing, social media marketing, email marketing.
- Offline methods: direct mail, events, word-of-mouth, public relations.

STEP 5. Consider how older adults' perceptions of media impact your outreach.

Word-of-mouth and familiarity are important factors for getting older adults to trust what we have to say. So too, is information carried in news media. According to the [National Council on Aging](#), "Seniors are more likely to get their news from newspapers, local and national television broadcasts, and radio, as opposed to Millennials and stay-at-home moms who turn to social media sources for news. But

that doesn't mean seniors aren't engaging on digital devices! They spend about \$7 billion online each year."

STEP 6. Create content that delivers consistency among channels. Content is any form of communication that you use to inform, educate, entertain, or persuade your audience. It can be text, images, videos, podcasts, webinars, ebooks, etc. Ensure your content aligns with your brand voice and tone and supports your marketing goals and objectives. Content marketing is a way of creating and sharing online material that does not directly promote an organization or brand but instead aims to generate interest in its products or services. For example, your program might publish a blog post with useful tips, create a podcast with interesting stories, or produce a video with helpful advice.

STEP 7. Determine your success metrics to measure results objectively. These are the key performance indicators (KPIs) that you use to track and evaluate the effectiveness of your marketing communication strategy. They can be quantitative (such as the number of participants served and website traffic) or qualitative (such as participant satisfaction, brand awareness, and audience loyalty).

STEP 8. Determine your branding. Branding is the process of creating a distinctive identity and image for your service that stands out in the minds of your customers. It includes elements such as a name, logo, color scheme, slogan, and tagline that make an organization easily recognizable to the public. Branding is important for CBOs because it helps you establish a unique and memorable image that reflects your mission, vision, and values. Branding can help you build trust and credibility with your audience, differentiate yourself from other organizations in the same field, and create a loyal and engaged community of supporters. Branding can also help CBOs attract more funding, partnerships, and media attention.

STEP 9. Execute your plan. This is the action phase where you implement your marketing communication strategy according to your timeline and budget. You should also monitor and adjust your plan as needed based on feedback and data analysis.

Where does public relations fit into the marketing mix?

Integrated marketing involves coordinating and aligning public relations efforts with other marketing and communications to create a consistent and coherent message across all channels and platforms. Public relations can be divided into different areas or specializations depending on the goals and audiences of the communication. Some common types of PR that your program can employ are:

- **Media relations:** This involves building and maintaining a good relationship with journalists, editors, bloggers, and other media outlets. The goal is to secure positive and consistent media coverage for the organization.
- **Community relations:** This involves engaging and supporting the local community where your organization operates. The goal is to build trust, goodwill, and social responsibility among the community members.
- **Social responsibility:** This involves demonstrating the ethical and sustainable practices of the organization. The goal is to enhance your reputation and credibility among the public and stakeholders.
- **Crisis management:** This involves preparing for and responding to any negative or damaging situations that may affect the program. The goal is to protect and restore the reputation and image of the organization among the public and stakeholders.
- **Social media:** This involves creating and managing the online presence and reputation of the organization on various social media platforms. The goal is to engage and interact with the target audience, generate awareness, and drive traffic.
- **Employee relations:** This involves communicating with and motivating the internal staff of the program. The goal is to foster a positive and productive work culture, enhance employee loyalty, and reduce turnover.

If I can only do a few things, what is most important?

Building knowledge and awareness about your program can be challenging but also rewarding. There are many ways to do it, depending on your goals, budget, person power, and audience. Here are some core ideas that you can choose from to get started:

- **Create a clear, powerful tagline that sums up your purpose and passion.** A tagline is a short, easily remembered phrase that an organization uses in print and electronic materials so that people will recognize it or its services. It is also called a slogan or a catchphrase. The idea behind the concept is to create a memorable phrase that will capture the tone and premise of a brand. For example, FedEx's tagline is "When it absolutely, positively has to be there

overnight.” Having a tagline will help you communicate your mission and vision to potential supporters.

- **Develop and maintain contact lists to keep people apprised of your activities.** Use a program like Excel or a free customer relationship manager (CRM) like [Hubspot](#) so that you can keep track of communications with people on your lists. Be sure to include local business and civic leaders, elected officials, top health care providers in your area, bloggers who cover older adult issues, and reporters for local newspapers, newsletters, and radio and TV stations. Invest the time to make phone calls and conduct research so that you have accurate email addresses and phone numbers for those you want to stay in touch with.
- **Use your lists to share your organization’s results and objectives with the public.** Frequently disseminate news and announcements. Show people how you have impacted the community and what you plan to do next. You can use data, stories, testimonials, and images to illustrate your achievements and goals.
- **Create a flyer and/or brochure** to distribute at community hubs and events. Secure placement of your materials by contacting and requesting support from public libraries, community and recreation centers, offices of health care providers, social service centers, houses of worship, grocery stores, and other local retailers.
- **Encourage word-of-mouth referrals and testimonials** from your satisfied participants, volunteers, partners, and beneficiaries.
- **Create an ambassador program** where you recruit and train volunteers to spread the word about your organization. They can help you reach new audiences, generate referrals, and raise support.
- **Be present at community events** where you can showcase your work and interact with people. You can also host your own events, such as open houses, culture days, workshops, or webinars. These are opportunities to educate, engage, and entertain your community.

- **Get the media's attention.** Use traditional media outlets such as local newspapers, radio, television, magazines, and newsletters to reach a large and diverse audience of older adults and their families. Traditional media outlets can help inform the public about the types, benefits, and eligibility for programs, as well as share stories and testimonials from participants and providers. The key to getting media coverage is to offer a story that they can't resist. Understand that the media is looking for news – anything that is new, different, and creative. When communicating with media, write clearly and get directly to your point. Think about how your pitch helps them and their audiences, not just your own goals. Journalists are looking for not only great stories but ones they can tell quickly. Make their lives easier by serving it up on a silver platter with everything they need to tell your story. And remember, you will need to take time to build a good relationship with your local paper or radio/TV station. Try to maintain consistent engagement with them so that they don't omit you because they don't know about you.
- **Actively use social media** to promote your organization and connect with your supporters. It's free and easy – the only investment is your time. You can share content that is relevant, informative, inspiring, and fun. By being active on social media, you can disseminate information and develop and maintain relationships with community members and other key stakeholders, such as other CBOs, health care organizations, policymakers, and researchers. Social media can help your program share information, solicit feedback, engage in dialogue, and mobilize support for programs and strategies.
- **Establish a home online: Build or enhance a website.** Websites allow people to get one-stop information about your organization on their PC or in the palm of their hands. If you are starting from scratch, you can choose a website builder that suits your needs, budget, and skill level, such as Wix, Squarespace, Bluehost, or GoDaddy. If you already have a site, make sure to update it regularly. Consider publishing blog articles of interest to your target audience. And at a minimum, it is valuable to establish an online presence with a page on Facebook or LinkedIn where you can post news and updates.
- **Raise awareness and recruit volunteers with in-kind advertising on Google Search.** Have you ever seen those ads at the top of search results? Those are

pay-per-click (PPC) ads. PPC advertising offers marketers an excellent opportunity to reach searchers directly. Google Ad Grants is a program that awards eligible nonprofits with \$10,000 in monthly ad credits to create and host search advertising campaigns on Google.com. The program helps nonprofits share their causes, raise awareness, attract donors, and recruit volunteers. The program is only open to select 501 (c) (3) nonprofits. Before requesting a Google for Nonprofits account, find out if your organization qualifies, what you'll need for verification, and what to expect.

[Google Grant Application Eligibility - Google for Nonprofits.](#)

- **Form or join community coalitions with other organizations** that share similar goals and values. Community coalitions can help your program leverage resources, coordinate efforts, increase visibility, and advocate for policy and social changes that benefit the community. Collaborate with other CBOs, local businesses, media outlets, influencers, or celebrities that share your goals and values and can help you expand your reach and credibility. Be consistent and get involved in the community issues and initiatives that matter to your program.
- **Partner with local authorities and organizations that have access to and trust of the older adult** population. This can include community centers, religious groups, health care providers, and non-governmental organizations. Partnering with them can help raise awareness, generate referrals, and coordinate efforts to deliver services to older adults. Consider partnering with corporations interested in demonstrating to older adults they are giving back to the community.

Where can I learn more about marketing and communications tactics?

Take advantage of “how to” online resources that will advance your marketing and communications skills. One excellent source of information is the [Community Toolbox](#), a public service of the University of Kansas, developed and managed by the KU Center for Community Health and Development and its partners. Guidance on this website will help you learn how to use persuasion and promotion to generate

interest in community issues and services. Check out [Chapter 6. Communications to Promote Interest](#) for easy-to-follow step-by-step instructions on:

- Preparing Press Releases
- Arranging News and Feature Stories
- Preparing Guest Columns and Editorials
- Preparing Public Service Announcements
- Using Paid Advertising
- Creating Newsletters
- Creating Posters and Flyers
- Developing Creative Promotions
- Creating Brochures
- Creating Fact Sheets on Local Issues
- Creating a Website
- Using Email Lists
- Using Direct Mail
- Handling Crises in Communication

Integrated marketing and communications is a dynamic field that requires constant learning, experimentation, and adaptation. However, the best practices highlighted in this guide can help programs achieve their goals and create value for their participants. By following these best practices, you can improve your marketing and communications effectiveness and efficiency and build long-term relationships. Remember that integrated marketing and communications is not a one-time activity but an ongoing process that requires constant improvement and innovation. We hope that this guide has provided you with some useful insights and tips to help you succeed in your endeavors.

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