Practical Strategies to Engage the Community in Your Organization’s Mission

11th Annual NPI Summit
Monday, April 29, 2019
Campbell’s Resort, Chelan WA
The Premise

“Community engagement is critical to the success of every non-profit. Without the support of the community in which it operates, a nonprofit has little chance for long-term vitality & sustainability.”

Reflection: To what degree have you, your staff and board discussed and fully endorsed this premise?

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What would a staff (or Board) meeting of yours look like if this was the single agenda topic?

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Starting Principles

- A good mission statement makes the job easier

The Attributes of Good and Bad Mission Statements

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<th>The Good and the Bad</th>
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<td><strong>A Good Statement...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses language your constituents use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is emotionally stirring.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicates the &quot;why.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is concise.</td>
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<td>Is a single, powerful sentence.</td>
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<td>Sounds good spoken out loud.</td>
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<td>Is memorable.</td>
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<td>Surprises.</td>
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<td>Is actionable.</td>
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<td>Is specific.</td>
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Principles (cont’d)

- Some strategies are budget dependant
- The cost of being wrong is less than the cost of doing nothing
- Think “story-telling”
- Stay true to your values
- Have a written plan
- Be intentional
The Engagement Continuum

- **Level 1**: one-way communications, informing and telling (i.e., newsletters, web sites, traditional and social media, fact sheets)

- **Level 2**: two-way communications, more “asking & listening,” building relationships (i.e., surveys, focus groups, advisory boards, 1:1 meetings, community meetings, workshops)

Reflection: Where are you on the continuum? Which is easier? Which develops deeper engagement? Where are there opportunities for your non-profit? ________________________________
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3 Steps to a Written Community Engagement Strategy

- Step 1: Your Audience
- Step 2: Your Message
- Step 3: Your Mediums
Step 1: Your Audience

- Identify your audiences (plural) that most directly support your mission
  - Is “everyone” your target audience?

- Prioritize/rank your audience by importance
  - Your ideal constituent may vary depending on their roles (i.e., donor, board member, volunteer or advocate)

Reflection: Describe in rank order your three most important audiences:

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Step 2: Your Message (create a storytelling strategy)

- Level 1: The “who, what, where, why and how of your non-profit”
  - Factual based, one-way, little emotional response

- Level 2: Real situations affecting real people
  - Real people telling their own story
  - Uses impactful images & video
  - Lead with a program “benefit,” not program description
  - Creates emotional reaction

Reflection: Does your non-profit do more Level 1 or Level 2 storytelling?

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Step 3: Your Mediums (tools to deliver your stories)

- **People:**
  - Your board
  - Volunteers
  - Staff
  - Community leaders
  - Donors
  - Program beneficiaries
  - Other non-profits
  - Business partners and sponsors

Reflections: 1. To what extent does your non-profit intentionally utilize “people” to tell your stories? 2. Which group of people are your most effective storytellers? Which group is under-utilized and why? __________

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_____________________________________________________________
Delivery Tools (cont’d)

- Website – Simple 4-part test
  - Compelling imagery
  - Mobile Friendly
  - Problem/Solution/Impact
  - Easy for audience to get involved

- Traditional Media – Look for Free Ways to Access
  - Newspapers, radio, television

- Social Media – Be Active
  - Facebook, Instagram
Delivery Tools (cont’d)

- Video
- Newsletters, Annual Reports, special occasion notes
- E-newsletters
- Events:
- Signage:
- Apparel:

Reflections: 1. Which delivery tool presents “low hanging fruit” for your non-profit and which you could improve upon in short order? 2. Which delivery tool presents the greatest opportunity to your non-profit to improve your messaging to your audiences?

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Examples of Doing It Right
https://vimeo.com/332545573
Reflections:
1. MEND has written engagement goals. Does your non-profit?
2. MEND’s goal is to reach “everyone in the upper Valley” in some fashion. Does your non-profit have targeted audiences?
3. MEND uses different strategies for people with different levels of involvement. Does your non-profit?
4. “We work hard to report back on how we spend their money.” Does your non-profit do the same?
5. 1:1 relationships are important. Our board and staff are “always on.” Can the same be said about your non-profit?
Reflections:
1. How many times did Dorry use the word “intentional” in the video?
2. Did you notice .... “strong social media” and “funds raised” are seemingly less important to Dorry than the stories their 80 volunteers can tell? Does your non-profit have a similar perspective?
3. The Y intentionally starts with the benefit/the story when describing their programs. Does your non-profit do the same?

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Reflections:
1. Curt speaks combines “mission and vision” when he describes the Land Trust’s engagement efforts. Is that more effective than just talking about mission?
2. Curt uses the term “community based” mission and vision. Does that resonate with your non-profit?
3. Curt seems to consider Level 1 engagements as a given in today’s world. Do you?
4. Curt uses words such as “personal touch” and “go the extra mile.” Does that sound like actions in your non-profit?

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Common themes from all 3 videos:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Personal Tips

- Service clubs are always looking for speakers
- Traditional media is looking for content
  - KOHO 101.1FM
  - KPQ 560 AM
  - Wenatchee World opinion pages
  - Weekly newspapers
  - LocalTel’s NCW Life
Personal Tips

- Use Your Building to Story-Tell
Personal Tips

- Visit your newspaper’s editorial page writer or board at least every ~1 year.

- The Executive Director must be a visible, vocal, and effective public champion for your non-profit.

- Network with other smart people.

- Borrow what works for others.

- Personal tips from the audience?
In Conclusion ..... 

I assume you are a self-motivated person strongly committed to the your non-profit’s mission and vision. You believe the success of your non-profit makes your community – and, in turn, the world – a better place. We remember and do what we write down. Write down five (5) action items you will do to make your non-profit more remarkable.

1. _____________________________________
2. _____________________________________
3. _____________________________________
4. _____________________________________
5. _____________________________________
THANK YOU

Acknowledgments:

- https://www.classy.org/blog/
- https://nonprofithub.org

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