



Creative Marketing Campaigns

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BULLETIN

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Not many tree board members or urban foresters would think of themselves in the business of marketing. However, this is very much at the core of successful urban forestry. Recognizing marketing as an essential tool is a first step toward exciting the imagination and honing the skills that lead to success.

Terminology can quickly take us into a swamp of definitions, but, simply put, marketing is matching up what people want or need (or are made to think they need) with a person or company that wants to supply the product or service — usually for money.

This issue of the bulletin is about an offshoot of marketing called social marketing. Social marketing uses many of the same techniques as its more commercial cousin, but according to the International Social Marketing

Association, the purpose of this kind of marketing isn't cash. Rather it is "to influence behaviors that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good." Surely, that would include urban forestry.

Some of the first social marketing campaigns promoted human health, such as disease prevention and disaster preparedness. But social marketing has been alive and developing in environmental fields since the first fire prevention and litter prevention campaigns. In 1964, Dr. Douglas Gilbert

urged wildlife managers to promote what is now known as social marketing in his pioneering book, *Public Relations in Natural Resources Management*. In 1984, his work was expanded to address the forestry professions, including urban forestry. Today, the field of social marketing has progressed to new levels both in importance and sophistication. This issue of *Tree City USA Bulletin* presents some practical ideas for successful social marketing and some examples from communities where it is being applied in ways worth adopting more widely.



Guidelines for Success

Whether you are planning a community Arbor Day celebration or trying to promote best management practices statewide, you are more likely to succeed if you follow the advice of marketing and public relations experts.

Know Your Goal

“You need to know exactly what you’re trying to accomplish. That is, know exactly what you want the audience to know or do as a result of your campaign,” says Woody Nelson, the Arbor Day Foundation’s vice president for marketing communications. “Too often this is a vague concept rather than a specific, doable goal that can be reflected in a clear statement. Also, think of your goal as a call to action and be direct in asking people to respond, learn, or change their behavior in some way.”

Successful marketing efforts typically involve a single call to action such as join, donate, attend, volunteer, etc. In some cases, it may be necessary to include more than one, but Kari Logan, vice president of the Minneapolis-based CEL Public Relations, suggests, “Limit your key messages to no more than five.” Asking too much of an audience all at once is to invite inaction; their decision will often be no decision at all.

THE **ABCs** OF YOUR MESSAGE

To be effective, a message should be:

Attractive, that is, attention-getting

Brief and concise

Clear, so it is easily understandable

Answer the question, **“What’s in it for me?”** This may be refreshments or giveaways or something broader such as cleaner air, safer streets, or a lasting legacy.

Know Your Audience

Professionals sometimes call groupings of people they want to reach “market segments” or “target audiences.” By whatever name, be clear and be sure to make a list of the groups or kind of people who should receive your messages. For example:

- Property owners
- Teenagers
- Commercial arborists
- Nature lovers
- Local business proprietors
- Newlyweds
- Policymakers
- Teachers



Nature Lovers



Teachers



Homeowners

A key to effective social marketing is identifying the kind of people you want to reach with your message, crafting the message(s) accordingly, and selecting media that will reach your target audience.

Think Partnerships

You are far more likely to be able to reach and effectively communicate with a target audience if you collaborate with someone who is part of it. This adds credibility, opens doors, and provides valuable insights. Partners can often also provide funding, expertise, or the extra hands you may need.

Creative Strategies

Only after the above steps and a review of your budget, including potential sponsorships, are you ready to determine the “how” of your campaign.

1 Start with an attention-getting brand. Some have included

- *Stop the Topping!*
- *The Fit Forest — Elgin Goes for the Green*
- *Arborly Love*
- *Rain Forest Rescue*
- *Trees Pay Us Back*
- *Root, Root, Root for the Brewers*
- *Trees Work*

2 Select media, methods, and the right words to reach your target audience in a cost-effective way. This is when you can get creative and think outside the box. In fact, CEL Public Relations suggests that your target market should be exposed to your key message(s) a minimum of seven times. How you do this is limited only by your budget and imagination. Some methods to consider include:

- *Strategically placed message cards*
- *Paid advertising in one or more media outlets*
- *Presentations to key groups*
- *Stunts, such as oversized tags on trees*
- *Field events*
- *Generated “news,” such as seasonal tips and newly released information*
- *Exhibits*
- *Social media*
- *A website*
- *Useful give-away items*



Oversized tags attached to trees on the lawn of the Minnesota state capitol helped deliver the message to lawmakers that trees have quantifiable benefits. The tags were placed on Arbor Day and attracted the attention of newspapers and four television stations.

Remember, fashion the message to match the audience. A brochure or message card for one segment may need to be different for another. For example, an exhibit should be directed toward adults or children, not both. And remember that with short attention spans, less is more.

Consider involving personalities and testimonials. Social psychologists can point to research that shows people want to associate with popular personalities and winning causes. If you can involve athletes, popular musicians, or others who are admired by your target audience, you will get more attention to your cause. If personal appearances are not possible, quoted endorsements and testimonials can be an easy way to create the linkage.

Evaluate Your Efforts

This is a part of the campaign most often overlooked. In the case of sponsorships, it may be a requirement, but otherwise it is still important. Evaluating the results of your efforts provides an opportunity to measure progress from one year to another and to take stock of what worked and what did not.

An evaluation may include measures of the media used, such as the number

of brochures distributed and where, or the number of listeners reached by paid radio ads serving various demographics. Better still is a measure of actual impact. This is more difficult and not always possible, such as trying to guess the number of wildfires prevented by a Smokey Bear event. But sometimes it can be measured. Examples might include the number of visitors that showed up for Arbor Day, new business

for arborists, or an increase in recycled lawn materials.

In addition to the measureable qualities of the campaign, feedback from members of the target audience can provide indications about new information being successfully transmitted. These include unsolicited comments, letters to the editor, and other means of public expression.

Four Winning Campaigns

Kentucky Roots: A Comprehensive Campaign

It is most common in urban forestry for local volunteers and forestry professionals to plan and conduct their marketing campaigns. The Northern Kentucky Urban and Community Forestry Council took a different approach and hired a professional marketing firm, CEL Public Relations of Minneapolis, Minnesota. This option can add experience, fresh ideas, talent for creating strategies, and mass media connections. The results in this case embody all of the elements described on pages 2 and 3 that are necessary for success.

An attention-getting brand was created for this marketing campaign and then consistently associated with all messages and media.



THE GOAL, TARGET AUDIENCE, AND MESSAGE

The purpose of this campaign, assisted by a U.S. Forest Service grant, was to inspire community tree care in a three-county area. The target audiences were residents with trees and those who might want to plant trees on their property. Council members identified the key messages they believed were most needed in the region and CEL came up with graphics that presented clear, short messages about:

Plant and water trees
We are losing trees! So plant more, and be sure to water for at least 3 years after planting.

Keep mulch off the tree trunk
Did you know that piling mulch against the trunk of a tree can cause disease, rot and could kill it?

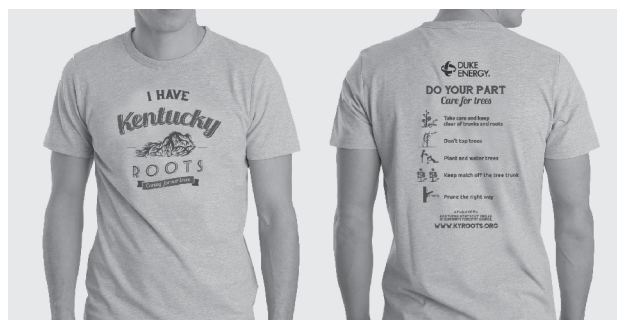
Plant the right size tree in the right place
Look up before you plant! Avoid pruning and power outages. Don't plant tall trees under power lines.

Take care and keep clear of trunks and roots
Did you know it's harmful to place and store things under a tree because it hurts the roots?

Prune the right way
Did you know that leaving stubs when pruning a tree can invite diseases?

WIDE RANGE OF MEDIA

Rather than depending on just one or two means of communicating the campaign messages, CEL and the Council used a variety of communication channels. These included message cards, bus posters, yard signs, TV and newspaper news coverage, and community events. The strategy was to expose residents to the messages at least seven times.



Through the generosity of Duke Energy, 200 T-shirts were produced. They were used in a number of ways, including being distributed to attendees at King's Florence Speedway.

PARTNERSHIPS

The wide range of media used — to say nothing of the synergy that powered this effort — was made possible through partnering with five important organizations: The Bank of Kentucky, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension, Literacy Network, Duke Energy, and King's Florence Speedway. The partners contributed additional funding, new ideas, and impactful access to important market segments.



A local race track is not a traditional urban forestry partner, but the owners of King's Florence Speedway embraced the campaign and brought it to the attention of an important local audience by setting up a trackside display and shooting campaign T-shirts out of a cannon into the audience on Fan Appreciation Day.

MEASURABLE AND NON-MEASURABLE IMPACTS

The desired results of this campaign were to expand and improve the urban forest in northern Kentucky. The campaign was part of an ongoing educational effort and, like all campaigns, the work is never done. People age, new residents move

in, message life is limited, and new challenges arise. Creative campaigns are like tree planting and care — all deserve annual attention and continuity.

Evaluation methods are neither easy nor low-cost. Surveys and

sampling are the most common means of determining whether messages reached their target audiences and had any effect on knowledge or behavior. In the case of Kentucky Roots, the span of coverage was measured, with impressive results:

- 15 ads on bus exteriors with 2 million estimated impressions

- 86 interior bus posters displayed for five months with an average commute time of 51 minutes

- Counter displays with free message cards in 32 Bank of Kentucky locations and King's Florence Speedway

- 20,000 Facebook friends added

- 1 million readers per week reached with print and online newspaper articles

- 9,000 adults in the target area reached through paid radio ads, with 2.2 million listeners total

- 50,000 speedway track visitors reached with audio and visual messages

- One top radio show interview in the market area

Attracting Visitors

Morton Arboretum

Breakfast with the Easter Bunny may not seem like something very pertinent to trees and urban forestry, but this is just one of the many ways that the staff at Morton Arboretum captures the attention of diverse audiences. Trivia Night is another example, bringing friends together at a table to answer such questions as:

How much carbon dioxide can the average tree absorb in one year?

A: 28 pounds **B: 48 pounds** C: 70 pounds

The answer is B, and the idea is to provide one more reason to thank a tree. Other creative ways used to bring people to the arboretum and teach about trees include:

- Classes for separate groups of all ages
- Thursday Family Nights
- A comprehensive website updated regularly
- Teacher workshops and items on loan for classroom use
- Seasonal events ranging from cider and ale tasting in the fall to a spring exhibit displaying the work of nature artists



A public relations team at Morton Arboretum is at the core of making this institution's educational and scientific programs widely known and easily accessible. Creative events at the arboretum attract not only visitors but also media coverage.

Arbor Daze — Euless, Texas



The shade tree giveaway is a popular attraction at Arbor Daze in Euless, Texas. Not only does this event eventually increase the city's forest canopy, it draws visitors and provides the opportunity for education about the value of trees.

It takes some creative marketing to attract residents to any Arbor Day celebration. In Euless, Texas, community leaders have found the secret to success. Euless has been recognized as a Tree City USA for three decades, and the city's award-winning celebration, Arbor Daze, has been a way to provide more than 150,000 native oak trees through the years and focus attention on the need for planting and tree care. The event attracts about 8,000 visitors annually. Several things contribute to the success of this event:

- A highly visible location for the event
- Assistance from about 200 volunteers
- Family-oriented stage entertainment and exhibitors arranged through a professional organization, FestivalNet
- The popularity of the free trees and tree "cookies" (slices of tree limbs) for children
- Commercial sponsors for a tree giveaway and for sections of the venue such as "Forestry Village" and "Kidz Zone"
- Cooperation between various city departments to publicize and conduct the event, including sending inserts about the event in water bills



Casey Trees

The mission of Casey Trees is clear: Re-tree Washington, D.C., and connect people to the organization and to trees. Social media is an integral part of achieving the success of this mission. Here are four of the ways this exemplary nonprofit organization is using the important tools of social media.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The use of Twitter and Facebook allows residents to ask questions 24/7. They don't have to call or wait for the office to open. They can also attach photos or videos to show something like a tree they want identified or a disease they want diagnosed. Casey's digital strategist is assigned to field the questions and route them to the best person to provide a response. Jared Powell, former director of communications, says, "Excellent customer service frequently turns into program participation and donations."



Customer Service

EDUCATION

Although Casey is best known for planting trees, education is also an important objective — and the two are closely related. Frequent workshops are conducted, but since not everyone can attend, information such as best practices or invasive insect alerts is placed online.



Education

ACQUISITION AND RE-ENGAGEMENT

Acquiring and keeping social media participants is an ongoing challenge. One method used by Casey is free e-cards, such as the Valentine card pictured here. When people send or receive e-cards and provide their email addresses, they are sent information about Casey's programs, community impact, and ways to get involved for the next four weeks. For individuals who unsubscribe from Casey's e-communications, Casey uses Facebook's lead ads; if the person has a Facebook page, a sponsored ad appears on his or her wall promoting a weekly e-newsletter. This often leads to sign-ups and restoration of regular contact.



FUNDRAISING

Digital fundraising supplements Casey's direct mail campaign. Powell says, "Digital space provides the opportunity for us to better highlight the impact of our work, prompt people to make a donation, thank our funders, and brand the organization as a quality cause-marketing partner. We populate our posts with photos, videos, gifs, data visualizations, and more."

Taken together, these methods of communication catch attention and provide an opportunity for people to contribute and/or share the information through their own digital channels. Fundraising also provides the ability to display and sell branded merchandise that helps show the benefits of Casey's tree-planting programs.



Catchy items for sale, like this tank top, help raise funds and provide opportunities to deliver the organization's message.

Using a Wide Variety of Social Media Opportunities

A message that accompanies many of Casey's communications is "Casey Trees wants to know you. Connect with Casey Trees on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Flickr. You can also learn more about our work in our weekly Leaflet and ongoing blog."

Best Source of Ideas

Each fall, professionals, tree board members, volunteers, and anyone else with a stake in urban forestry gather at the Partners in Community Forestry Conference. Invariably, social marketing is a recurring topic at the conference in one form or another. Nowhere is there a better opportunity to network and engage in continuing education, learn new methods, and gain ideas that are working in positions like yours but in other parts of the country.

The conference is particularly important for:

- Urban foresters
- Tree board members in communities of all sizes
- Nonprofit organization leaders
- Volunteer tree planters and stewards
- Municipal, utility, and commercial arborists
- State and federal urban forestry leaders
- Consultants
- Educators and students
- Natural resource managers
- Elected officials and advocates for better communities

For current information about conference dates, location, and programs or to register, please visit arborday.org/pcf or call 888-448-7337.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For links to organizations featured in this issue and other related information, please visit arborday.org/bulletins and click on "Supplemental Resources Library."



Social marketing is another valuable way to help ensure trees and stewardship for the future.

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