

# Telling your story: How you can *become* the media

## Shifts in communications:

1. Communications has become much more targeted, strategic, and more closely aligned with an organization's core work (i.e., communications and branding should be part of everyone's job now)
2. We are moving from a 'push out' info approach to a 'pull-in' story-telling approach that leads to conversations.

## Created Media

Social media, citizen journalism and affordable communications tools means non-profit organizations can now become their own media channels, their own producers, and tell their stories directly to their core audiences. Getting in the media is still important, but increasingly difficult. So why not become your own media juggernaut?

- Home
- About Us
- Programs
- Green Action
- Employment
- Media
- Contact Us
- Stories & Resources



## The 'Clean Show' Podcast



**Clean Show episode 6: We'll always have Paris** – *The Paris Agreement on Climate Change was either a diplomatic triumph or just a bunch of hot air, depending on who you talk to. In this episode, we talk to Gina Patterson of Clean Foundation, who was at the COP21 conference in Paris. [Have a Listen >](#)*

## A Good Catch – energy efficiency improvements in a house by the sea

*HomeWarming helps a former fisherman save money and feel more comfortable in his mobile home on the edge of the cold Atlantic*

“I was a fisherman all my life, so I don’t mind the storms,” 84-year-old Norman Osborne says from the kitchen of his mobile home in Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia. “When it’s blowing hard, saltwater spray comes right up to the windows. You have to wash them after.”

And that’s something you definitely want to do, because while his house may be small it has a view as big as the ocean. Perched at the water’s edge, his home overlooks the entrance to Halifax harbour; the Devil’s Island lighthouse stands guard over some rocky shoals. A seagull Norman occasionally feeds sits on the deck rail, enjoying the view with us, stealing a glance every so often at the humans sitting inside.

## Step 1: Strategic Planning

1. Most non-profits have limited resources — both in time and money. A strategic plan will help your group focus those resources on the most important tasks and set priorities.
2. A good plan imposes discipline and clear thinking that will help you clarify your objectives and target audiences, sharpen your message and help you better understand the environment in which you will be delivering that message.
3. Strategic planning will help your organization integrate all of its communications work on a particular issue.
4. A good plan will help ensure that everyone in your organization is on the same page when they communicate with the rest of the world.

# Components of a Communications Plan

1. Organizational Goals and Key Objectives
2. Situation Analysis
3. Past communications activities
4. Communication Objectives
5. Target Audiences
6. Desired Actions/Outcomes
7. Key Messages
8. Strategies (strategies before tools)
9. Tactics & Tools
10. Workplan & Timelines

## Networking for Good research

1. People are more likely to do things if they see other people doing them, even if it counters what they know is logical.
2. People are easily persuaded by other people whom they like
3. When it comes to problems, the bigger the numbers, the less people often care
4. People are hardwired to understand our world through emotions and stories, not just facts.

## Networking for Good research – making these findings work for you

1. Make strategic use of photography and images (a strong image looking out to the viewer can be very powerful)
2. Avoid the guilt trip – people often react poorly to being told something is their fault
3. Tell a story



## Planning stage questions:

1. What needs do you have as an organization, and, can creating content help achieve these needs or ease some pressure points?
2. Who has the capacity to create content? What resources can you offer? Can you create a culture where everyone is a marketer?
3. What are the risks, and how can they be mitigated?

## Step 2: Determining your audiences

## Know your audiences from several perspectives:

- \* Demographic (age, gender)
- \* Geographic
- \* Socio-economic (education, income)
- \* Psychographic (values and lifestyles)

## Step 3: Developing your stories – and overall organizational narrative

## Story stage questions:

1. What is your organization poised to accomplish? What are your key successes, what has been your impact? What obstacles have you overcome?
2. What are the differentiating factors of your organization? What makes you unique?
3. Who are the people that differentiate your organization?
4. Who have the best stories? Who are the most credible storytellers? Are there 'beneficiaries' who will tell their stories?

## Objectivity *and* Subjectivity

This might seem contradictory, but balancing objectivity and subjectivity is how brand journalism differs from general journalism. Journalism, in the traditional sense, is about tracking down the story and covering both sides. Ideally, there's no favoritism or bias toward one side or the other.

In brand journalism, the story is told the same way, except the brand needs to be heavily considered. Therefore, painting your own brand in a negative light, mentioning competitive products or services, or publishing in-house dirty laundry is almost always not appropriate. Showing challenges and even admitting mistakes (and how you learned from them) is sometimes a very smart strategy, but brand journalism is not 'gotcha' journalism.

## Three kinds of content:

**Evergreen** – this content stays fresh from season to season. Much of our basic website content will be evergreen content (e.g.. The story of our orgs' creation)

**Perennial** – this content comes back year after year but you do require regular maintenance (e.g.. Top 10 things to consider when choosing a charity)

**Annual colour** – this is short lived content but full of timely 'oomph'. A cool story that suddenly arises, for example. Much of social media content is annual colour.

## Qualities of an effective message:

- \* Clear and simple (please, please avoid jargon & all those TLAs)
- \* Brief
- \* Believable
- \* Compelling
- \* Delivered by the right messenger



## Step 4: Deciding on your channels & 'shows'

## Video

Tell a story, be compelling

Keep it short

Practice technique:

- Use an external mic

- Keep it simple

- Use a tripod or monopod

- Turn off autofocus

- Get b-roll

- Fill the frame

- Don't reframe in the middle of an answer

Have beneficiaries, volunteers create content too

Brand your YouTube (and Vimeo, etc.) channels

Embed video on your websites, in social media releases, etc.

## Photos

Exhibits (sometimes in unlikely places)

Photo essays in magazines, on websites

Photo posters

Integrate effective photography throughout web and mobile

Practice technique:

- Fill the frame

- Focus on the eyes; be careful of autofocus

- Shoot in high resolution

- If you have to use flash, soften it

- Overexpose in backlight situations

- Use large aperture (small f-stop) to blur background

- Fast shutter speed freezes action

- Composition: rule of thirds; lead the eye

## Other channels & tools

- \* Podcasts
- \* Blogs
- \* Annual Report
- \* Stories (create a styleguide)
- \* Newsletters
- \* Website
- \* Infographics
- \* Social Media

*Other ideas?*

## Effective ways to repurpose content:

- \* Put the same story on different channels
- \* Edit for a different audience / Make long stuff short (and vice versa)
- \* Remake a story into a sidebar for another story
- \* Pull out quotes and testimonials
- \* Update an old story
- \* Turn a story into a 'Top 10' list
- \* Turn it into a FAQ or resource page
- \* Add a timely update to your evergreen material
- \* Turn bullets/lists into a slideshow
- \* Create an infographic
- \* Reformat into handouts or collateral (i.e. give-aways)
- \* Create a quiz
- \* Offer it as a guest article or blog post
- \* Transform an article into a back-and-forth interview

## Step 5: Keeping the conversations going

## Dealing with criticism on social media:

- \* The best case scenario is that other supporters come to our defence or get involved in the discussion. This only happens when we've engendered feelings of trust and worth in our supporters
- \* When responding to criticism, we shouldn't be defensive or negative, but honest and responsive.
- \* Except in obvious cases of libel, spam, or unethical/ vulgar/ racist comments, censorship of people's comments should not be considered an option.

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