

**PUBLIC RELATIONS** *BILL GOODWILL*

## Being National And Local

*How to engage community partners in your issue*

Imagine for a moment that you are the director of marketing for a major corporation with a field sales force of people around the country. When trying to increase product sales, would you overlook your sales force? Would you ignore or circumvent your partners out there pounding the pavement, day in and day out, like Willy Loman, with a shoeshine and a smile?

Of course not. That would be marketing suicide. Yet many non-profits overlook - or do not fully utilize - one of their most important assets: the people who can take a national issue and implement it locally.

Why is important to involve your community partners? Two reasons come to mind. First, that is where real change takes place. And secondly, to be successful in implementing any national issue, you must engage local media, preferably on their turf.

As all politicians know so well, social change takes place in the thousands of hamlets, villages, towns and cities that comprise our national fabric. There is a reason why the most successful non-profits such as Make-A-Wish Foundation, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, American Red Cross and hundreds of others have local chapters. It's because it is at the local level that they can efficiently deliver services which cater to the needs of their stakeholders.

### ROLES

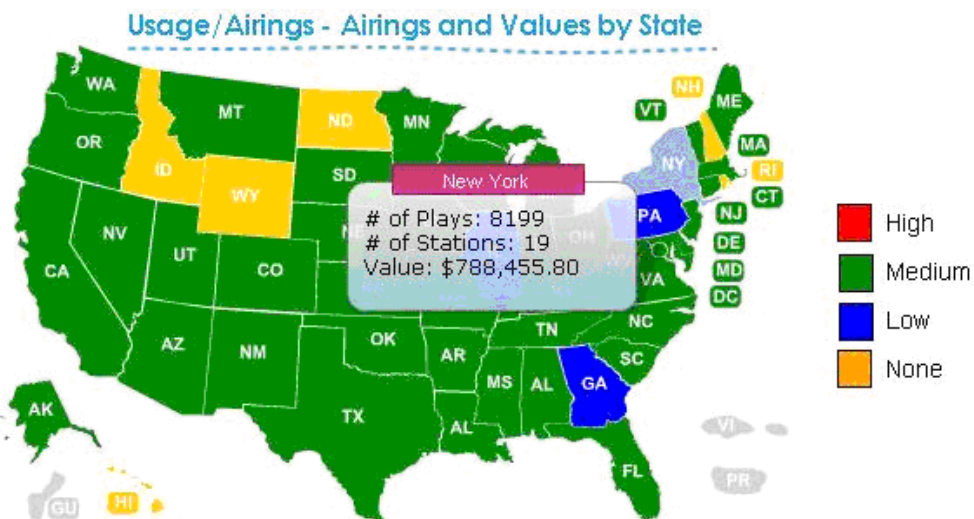
To ensure maximum results, you may want to use a process graph such as the one shown. It helps to organize tasks in the way they will be implemented, assigns specific responsibilities, and ensures that no important entity gets left out of the loop.

At the national level, when implementing an education campaign, there are a variety of functions and activities to plan and execute. These include working with your advertising agency or producer to create compelling, functional messages that will resonate with local media. Then you need to select a distributor which will develop the media plan, handle local tagging, and provide campaign evaluation.

But the key to the entire circle of success are your partners on the ground who can establish and maintain local media contacts, present your materials in a convincing manner, and provide follow-up.

The Internet is the perfect mechanism for sharing information with people anywhere in the world with access to the Web. Here are some things that that will be helpful to your local community partners which should be posted on your national website:

- PSAs, including videos, radio spots, print ads, Web banners and out-of-home creative thumbnails.
- Instructions on how to tag local PSAs and how to obtain the quantities and formats to fulfill local needs.
- A distribution list of local media broken out by state, chapter, or affiliate, including where materials were sent. (lists should indicate which media have or have not used your PSAs previously)
- Facts about your issue which your partners can use when making local presentations.
- Evaluation reports broken out by state, chapter, or affiliate so your community partners can identify where they are, and are not, getting exposure.



### PINPOINTING WEAKNESSES

Perhaps the area where almost everyone at the national level fails is sharing campaign evaluation data with their community partners, and helping them develop corrective strategies. There are two important things national campaign planners should know about taking corrective actions.

- First, before you can correct anything, you have to analyze where you are getting exposure and where you are not.
- Secondly, you need to know the mindset of the media gatekeeper who will make decisions on using your materials.

Static evaluation reports are useful for those who have the time to drill down into the sometimes inane details of campaign results. However, by providing your partners with an interactive map, such as the one shown above, it is possible to immediately spot your successes and weaknesses, both nationally and locally.

With an interactive evaluation map such as this, you can let your cursor linger over the map to bring up campaign usage data for a particular part of the country, i.e. state, chapter, city or any other geographic subset. The map can even be programmed to permit local partners to drill down and see the stations where they are or are not getting used in each market.

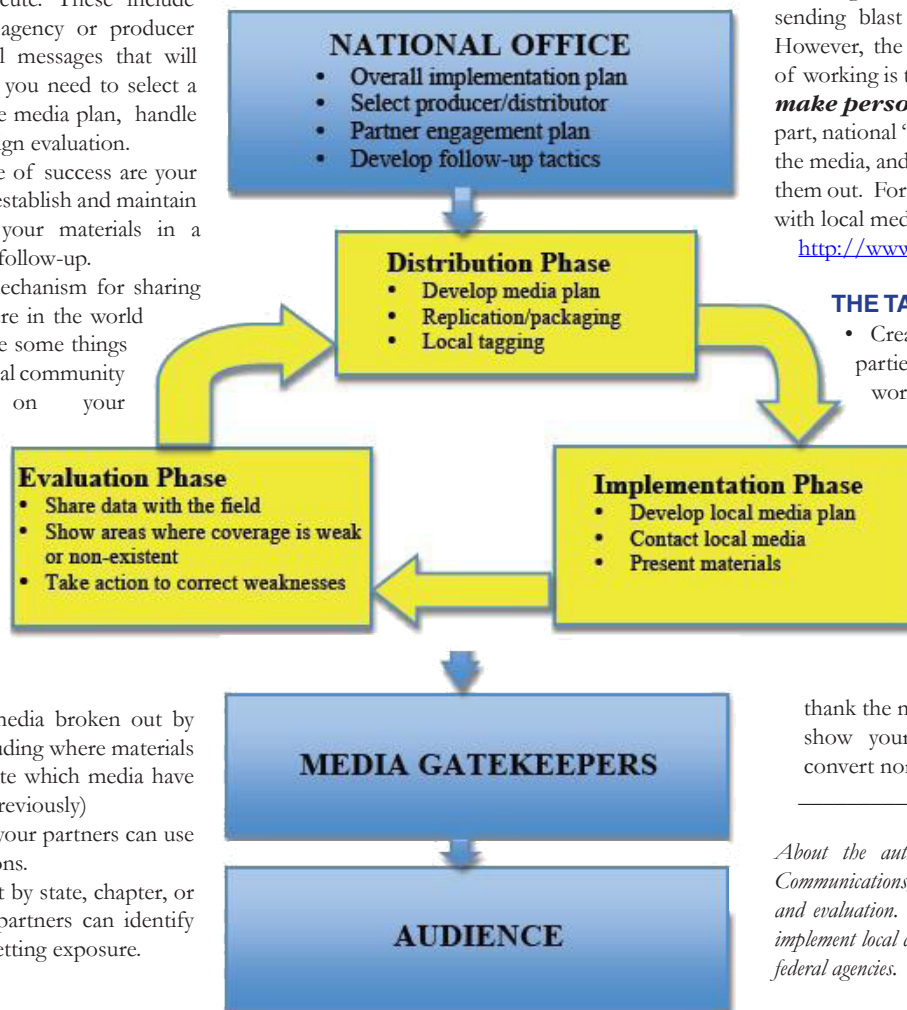
### TAKING CORRECTIVE ACTION

There are a variety of tactics that can be used to encourage use of your campaign materials, including sending blast faxes, emails, making pitch calls, etc. However, the technique that has the greatest chance of working is to **have your community partners make personal calls to the media**. For the most part, national "pitch calls" are regarded as a nuisance by the media, and they will simply use voice mail to screen them out. For an article on how to place your messages with local media, go to:

<http://www.psaresearch.com/psaprimer.html>

### THE TAKE-AWAY

- Create a comprehensive plan to show how all parties required for a successful program will work together
  - Share everything with your community partners; tell them what you expect them to do; give them the resources to get it done
  - Study the areas of the country where you are getting adequate exposure and where exposure is weak
  - Take action on evaluation results; thank the media which have supported your cause; show your community partners how they can convert non-users to users



*About the author: Bill Goodwill is CEO of Goodwill Communications, a firm specializing in PSA distribution and evaluation. He has nearly 40 years of experience helping implement local campaigns for 160 non-profit organizations and federal agencies.*