



ASSOCIATION PR

USING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TO SOLVE YOUR
ORGANIZATION'S BUSINESS CHALLENGES



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CREATE

A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Today's associations face a multitude of unique challenges. Organizations need to engage members, drive growth, and navigate advocacy in an unpredictable landscape all while working with limited resources. More and more, associations are seeking solutions to their business obstacles through strategic communications.

The good news? All of these solutions are flexible, so you can implement them in a way that pushes your organization forward without draining your resources. Thought leadership may entail a large scale event or a few op-eds. A video can be shot with a full camera crew or an iPhone. Regardless of size and scale, these tactics make an impact.

The key to a successful plan is having a targeted approach.

At Curley, we work with association clients to build a communications plan with integrated tactics to fit your voice, your needs, your audience, and your budget. We've outlined a few tactics in the following pages to help you think strategically about communications solutions in an unpredictable and oversaturated space.

ENGAGE CURRENT MEMBERS

It is vital that associations find creative ways to cut through the clutter. Strengthen member retention by clearly communicating benefits to members and providing them with content they want to click on rather than skim over. The first step to increasing member engagement is understanding who your members are and what they need. Here are three tips to setting the groundwork for a solid member engagement campaign.

1. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS ASK


Sometimes, it really is that simple. Send your members a survey and ask them what they want to hear. Do they prefer weekly or monthly communications? Do they check their Twitter feed more than their inbox?

2. BREAK IT DOWN

Segment your audience so you can provide customized communications that meet their needs. Sending relevant content will strengthen your relationship with members and help them see value in your organization.

3. TRACK, OPTIMIZE, REPEAT

Data is everywhere, and you should be using it. Look at your member demographics to better understand who you're talking to. Track communications campaign metrics to see what is working and which are wasting time.



DRIVE MEMBERSHIP THROUGH THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Your members and prospects expect you to be a leader in your space. By establishing your organization as the go-to expert for industry issues, you will build a platform that grants infinite opportunities for membership growth. While “thought leadership” may be a scary term for many, it is a scalable solution. Find a thought leadership plan that is right for your organization and spokespeople.

STEPS TO LAUNCHING A THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PLATFORM



1. DETERMINE YOUR GOALS:

Ask yourself what success looks like and set realistic, measurable goals to make sure you are hitting your targets.



2. SHAPE YOUR STORY:

Think about the message you want to tell and create a messaging guide to ensure you maintain consistency.



3. IDENTIFY SPOKESPEOPLE:

Consider expertise, communications skills, and availability. Don't forget that your members are thought leaders too. Third party voices strengthen your message.



4. FIND YOUR TARGET AUDIENCES:

Are your members on Twitter? LinkedIn? Build an audience-driven strategy, so you can reach your audience where they are.



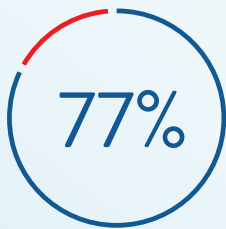
5. BUILD YOUR PLAN:

Timing is everything. Be sure to structure your plan around relevant opportunities and industry events while leaving room to leverage last-minute news hooks.

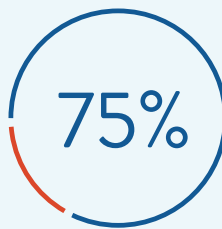


BUILD YOUR COMMUNITY WITH DIGITAL TACTICS

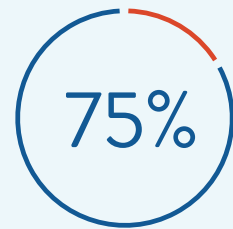
Associations used to think of digital tactics as a way to attract younger members. Now, digital dominates the content landscape. If you don't have a solid social strategy, you're already lagging behind.



**of the U.S. population has a
social media profile**



**of advocacy organizations
use Twitter**



**of journalists recommend
social media for promotion**



CONNECT. INTERACT. ENGAGE.

Social media is, by nature, a space to engage, and your social strategy should reflect that. Retweet and share. Comment and like. Ask your audience questions and bring in third party voices. Most importantly, remember that social media is often where the conversation starts. Set up social monitoring so that you can be the first to respond.



LIGHTS. CAMERA. ACTION.

Your audience's feed is filled with content. Your job is to make them stop and take a second look as they scroll through at the speed of light. When it comes to engagement, video is king. In fact, 70% of surveyed associations have already integrated video into their content strategy. Don't be scared off by expensive equipment, videos can be shot with an iPhone and edited into quick clips that engage, inspire, and inform on a low budget.

MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF A CRISIS

Our approach to crisis communications is simple: no surprises. The more you prepare your association for a crisis, the less of an impact the crisis will have on your reputation, relationships and business.

Before launching into the tactics, make sure you go back to the basics.

ASSOCIATION CRISIS PREPARATION CHECKLIST



Draw The Line: There are different types

of crises. While some can be contained to a small group of employees, others may require a larger communications plan. Establish clear definitions and appropriate plans for each before the crisis hits.



Assess & Assemble: Perform a S.W.O.T.

analysis of your association beforehand to identify potential threats. Assemble any necessary information, holding statements or other comms assets so you're ready to hit "publish" when it happens.



Build Your Trust Bank: Don't let your

first email to stakeholders be a negative one. Establish regular positive communications so that when you have to send that not-so-fun email, it doesn't hurt quite as much.



Note Your Friends & Foes: Create a

stakeholder database of those you may want to leverage as third party advocates as well as those who may pose a threat. The better your stakeholder infrastructure, the more quickly you will be able to react.



Be On The Lookout: Set up social and

traditional media monitoring to be ready to respond quickly. This also allows you to establish a sentiment baseline so when a crisis hits you can track how effective your tactics were.



Pick Your Team: Select the relevant

employees needed to manage a crisis. While the team may vary depending on the type of crisis, it's vital that you have a strong writer selected on each team to handle any tricky messaging needs.

NAVIGATE ADVOCACY IN AN UNPREDICTABLE CLIMATE

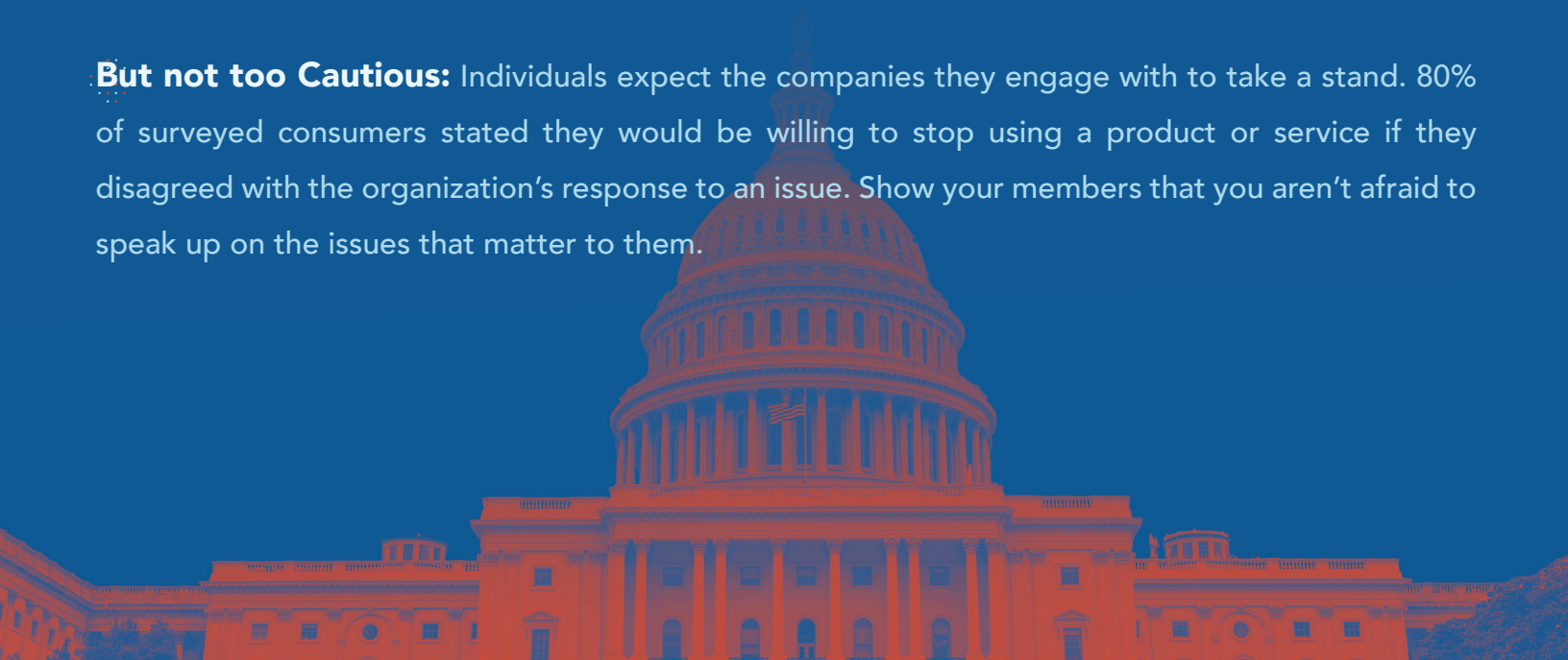
With distrust of media at an all-time high, a divided Congress, and an unpredictable political landscape, moving the needle in D.C. seems harder than ever before. Associations need to look toward creative problem-solving to navigate the tricky climate and cut through the D.C. noise.

Expand Your Base: Reach out to potential third party voices to help you make an impact. Be strategic and clear with your ask. Do you want someone to tweet out your hashtag or author an op-ed? Find out what makes the most sense given the organization's platform, voice, and bandwidth.

Turn Up the Surround Sound: At Curley, we believe in the "Surround Sound" approach. From social posts to articles to emails, we are all constantly surrounded with content. Each and every one of these is an opportunity to make sure your message is heard.

Be Cautious... Words are powerful, and with screenshots and search bars, everything you publish is carved into stone. Create a messaging bible to guide your communications. Write up talking points and train your spokespeople on what they should and should not say.

But not too Cautious: Individuals expect the companies they engage with to take a stand. 80% of surveyed consumers stated they would be willing to stop using a product or service if they disagreed with the organization's response to an issue. Show your members that you aren't afraid to speak up on the issues that matter to them.



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ABOUT CURLEY

Curley's intensive, client-focused approach sets us apart from other communications firms. We aren't just another vendor—we seamlessly integrate with your internal team in a thoughtful, honest and strategic manner. Ultimately, Curley Company can guide your PR campaigns to greater success and inspire your team to even greater heights. We've helped all types of associations with a wide array of communications challenges and initiatives. And, we'd love to help you, too.

PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH US

Email us for a complimentary consultation on how communications can solve some of your association's business challenges.

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