

PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

A well-crafted communications strategy amplifies your grassroots efforts by engaging your supporters and adding light to your issues. The good news is that we live in a digital age where information spreads easily on the Internet through multiple mediums. The bad news is that everyone is competing for publicity. However, if you put together an effective communications strategy you will save yourself stress and your efforts have a good chance of sparking the attention of local media, constituents and legislators!

How to execute an effect communications strategy

- Engage local media – Newspapers, TV news stations, radio
- Engage supporters via email
- Be active online

Reach out to media at appropriate times with a press release:

- When your bill is assigned a number
- When you hold a legislative event
- When you go to the Capitol to lobby for your bill

What is a press release?

A press release is an official statement issued to media with information about a particular issue. A press release gives the media a heads up on news throughout their area.

How to write a press release

1.) *Appropriate formatting* – Press releases have a [certain format](#), AP Style.

2.) *Ask – Why would anyone care?*

Your press release is one of hundreds that come in per day. When you write your release, keep in mind no one cares about your issue. It's up to you to MAKE them care. A question to ask yourself when writing your release – Why should anybody care about this? Also, make sure to put the most important information at the beginning of the release to keep the reader engaged.

3.) *Keep it to one page* – Press releases aren't written to give the media all the details about your issue. It's just bait to lure them in. Keep your thoughts short, concise and to the point. Your goal is to get covered!

4.) *Strong headline* - Imagine you are a newspaper editor or television producer. It's 4 p.m. and you have been working since 6 a.m. You open up your inbox and see a flood of emails and press releases. You start scrolling down – which release would you open? Answer – A release with a short and striking headline.

Same press release, different headline options, which one do you think got picked up by media?

1. The Sing me to Heaven Foundation introduces H.F. 2022
2. H.F. 2022 introduced to help Iowa families
3. Bill moves forward to help Iowa families who have lost a child

If you guessed 3, you are correct! The headline is concise, summarizes the press release, and the editor knows it will spark the interest of readers!

Resources on writing a press release:

- ***See – Sample Press Release***
- [7 tips for writing a killer press release](#)
- [Press release format guidelines](#)

Engage your supporters via email

Your supporters should get all the information about your grassroots efforts first! They will be your biggest fans and will **help push your bill passed the finish line.**

1. Put together email lists for the following
 - All supporters of DME licensure (ALL)
 - State association members who support DME licensure
 - Advocacy group supporters who support DME licensure
 - Legislators who support DME licensure
 - Opinion leaders who support DME licensure
2. Schedule when you are going to email your supporters. Our suggestions...
 - Before your bill drops
 - When your bill drops
 - When there are upcoming events they should attend
 - During the big push – encouraging them to reach out to their legislators to support the bill
3. Write your email
 - Identify the purpose of your email
 - Select which email lists should receive your email
 - Write content to fit the interests of your audience(s). For example, the way you talk to state association members about DME licensure may be vastly different than the way you talk to the leader of a senior group who isn't very familiar with DME
 - Make sure your subject line is strong (especially important with legislators)
 - Keep your email concise
 - Include a strong call to action at the end – What do you want the individual to do after they read your email?
 - Always include contact information so people can reach out to you if they have questions or comments

BE ACTIVE ONLINE

Does your state association have an identity online? If not, this may be a perfect time to do so!
Things you must have today:

- Website
- Facebook page
- Twitter page (optional)

WEBSITE – HOME BASE

Your website is home base for all information related to your grassroots efforts to pass DME licensure. Things to post on your website-

- Information about the importance of DME licensure for
 - DME providers
 - Seniors
 - People with disabilities
 - Community
- The state licensure bill language
- Upcoming legislative events you will be a part of or lead (i.e. – Capitol visit days)
- Latest news about your grassroots efforts to pass DME licensure

FACEBOOK PAGE

Facebook is one of the most recognized and used social media sites online. If you don't have a Facebook page, now is the time to create one.

- Update your page 1-2 times per week to keep your audience engaged.
- Post updates on your grassroots initiatives
- Post photos of events you are a part of
- Post photos with your supporters when you meet with them
- Share articles that your association is mentioned in
- Post event dates

TWITTER PAGE

Twitter is gaining a LOT of traction in the home care industry and is a great tool to grab the insights and attention of insightful leaders in your state.

- Follow those that support your grassroots initiatives
- Tweet regularly – 4x's per week
- Include content from your website in your tweets
- Tweet at influential leaders
- Ask people who support your association to re-tweet your content

ENGAGE LOCAL MEDIA

- Newspapers
- Television news stations
- Radio stations

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What is a press release?

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How to write a press release

5.) *Appropriate formatting* – Press releases have a [certain format](#), AP- Style.

6.) *“Remember that no one cares” – PR Daily*

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this? Also, make sure to put the most important information at the beginning of the release to keep the reader engaged.

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Resources on writing a press release:

- Sample press release on legislative initiative
- [7 tips for writing a killer press release](#)
- [Press release format guidelines](#)

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