



PR Campaign Guidelines

Presented to IEE ENGAGE partners
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1. Introduction

The most effective PR campaigns are the result of careful planning and preparation. When a clear idea of objectives, goals, audience sectors and communications messages are drawn up in advance, it becomes much easier to measure the success and impact of a campaign at a later stage. Creating a strong PR plan will also give you a good point of reference throughout the campaign to frame ongoing communications and check that you're on track.

Overview

The core elements of a PR campaign that we will look at in these guidelines are:

- Objectives
- KPIs
- Target audiences
- Challenges & barriers
- Communications strategy
- Media strategy
- Key messages
- Tactics/activities
- Evaluation & measurement
- Timeline
- Budget

2. Objectives

At the outset of the campaign it is important to outline your objectives to ensure that every aspect of your campaign reflects these. Here are several examples to demonstrate what PR campaign objectives look like:

The Engage campaign's objectives:

- to motivate citizens and stakeholders to reduce their personal energy consumption

Communications objectives:

- to raise awareness of the campaign
- to inspire stakeholders to participate in the campaign
- to make citizens aware of events and drive them to attend
- to educate stakeholders about new ways to save energy



Your local objectives:

- to see a reduction in energy consumption
- to raise awareness about the city's new recycling facility
- to raise awareness of your city authority's green credentials and goals

3. Key performance indicators (KPIs)

Identify what the desired outcomes are that you would like to see as a result of the campaign – the more specific, tangible and numeric, the better. Below are some examples to show what PR campaign KPIs look like:

The Engage campaign's KPI:

- to see a 20% reduction in your city's energy consumption

Your local campaign KPIs:

- 400 citizens and stakeholders to participate in the poster campaign
- a 50% increase in traffic to your website
- 10 news articles in regional newspapers

4. Target audiences

Selecting your target audience

At the planning stage of the PR campaign, identify the groups of citizens/stakeholders that you wish to target. Outline why you are choosing to target each group and what outcomes you are looking to achieve.

Knowing your audience

The key to a truly successful PR campaign is learning to understand your audience. This is particularly important for campaigns that involve influencing people's perceptions or aim to change their behaviours because it is only when you have an understanding of what their current opinions and habits are that you can begin to persuade them to act differently. An effective way of getting to know your audience is to conduct market research before the beginning of the campaign. This can be carried out by conducting a survey amongst citizens or stakeholders, by telephoning them or by using a professional market research company.



Motivators

Consider what the 'drivers' and motivators are for your audiences. Is it saving money on their energy bills, becoming famous locally by featuring on a public poster or in a local news article, being a leader of the local community, copying what their friends do or saving the planet?

5. Challenges & barriers

Pre-campaign preparation

It helps to think of any potential challenges that may arise during your campaign in advance so that you can be prepared to address them. If you have conducted surveys amongst your citizens, you may learn that some of them have perception barriers, such as cynicism towards the concept of climate change; others may say that they simply do not have time to participate.

In this way, when you have a deeper understanding of your audiences' reservations or negative views, you are in a better position to tackle them through tactics, such as education or simply by shifting the timing of a photo shoot so that more people are able to attend.

6. Communications strategy

ENGAGE campaign

The overall Engage campaign strategy has already been decided as follows:

- To engage citizens by social proof through a poster campaign, where they can make their own energy reduction pledge
- To raise awareness amongst citizens by hosting an event
- To enable citizens to calculate their energy consumption with an online tool

Your local campaign

However, you can expand on the basic principles outlined above by thinking of ways that you can adapt them locally:

- Think about where the most effective places are for you to display the posters
- What kind of event is likely to appeal to your target audiences most?
- How are you going to raise awareness of the online tool and motivate people to use it?



7. Media strategy

Forward planning

Consider how you want to communicate information to the press and how often. Do you want to drip feed information to the press by sending out a press release once a month or would it be more effective to meet a few key journalists in person to explain the campaign face-to-face, or both?

Finding newsworthy story angles is essential for grabbing the attention of busy journalists. Are any local celebrities signing up to your campaign? Are there any important calendar dates that could serve as news hooks, such as Energy Week?

8. Key messages

Desired headlines

What are the newspaper headlines you would like to see written about your campaign? What would you like to see your citizens blogging about the campaign? What would you like to hear a leader of one of your stakeholder groups say about your campaign on local radio?

Pre-campaign planning

At the planning stage of your PR campaign, we recommend drawing up a list of key messages, which will help you evaluate the success of the campaign at a later stage. These could be messages such as, for example:

- Anybody can take part in the campaign
- Participating citizens are free to choose their own way to save energy
- Saving energy will enhance my lifestyle

It is very important to tailor key messages so that they appeal to each target audience. For example:

- Installing energy saving light bulbs will save money - might resonate more with a private business stakeholder
- Pledging to save energy will help us meet our department's carbon emissions targets – might resonate with a public sector worker

9. Tactics/activities

For your campaign to have the desired outcome, the PR activities and tactics themselves always need to reflect the campaign's overall objectives and strategy.

Here are a handful of ideas that tend to make good PR. Think of ways that you could apply them to your poster photography, event, press releases or other aspects of your campaign:



Celebrity involvement

- A good way of generating press coverage. Do you know any local celebrities and can you persuade them to participate in the poster campaign?

Good example: Helsinki's celebrity bike tour

Stunts

- Can you think of an eye-catching stunt that will grab the public's attention and inspire them to attend your event?

Good example: Heidelberg's ice block stunt

Biggest, smallest, longest, shortest

- Extremes make good stories. Could you tie this idea in with a stunt for your event and invite a press photographer along?

Example idea: Create the world's largest milkshake by asking lots of citizens to take turns riding a bicycle to power an electric blender?

One-offs

- Journalists like writing about occurrences that will only happen once

Real life stories

- Are any of your poster participants prepared to talk about their energy-saving experiences? Journalists like case studies of personal testimonies as their readers will be interested in reading about people similar to them.

Out of the ordinary

- Journalists like anything unusual, rare and unique. How can you reflect this in your poster photography or your event?

The first

- If it is interesting enough, the first time that an activity is carried out it makes news.

The only

- Is yours the only city in your country to be participating in this European initiative? Regional newspaper journalists will like this angle.



Sequence

- If you are holding a sequence of events, the continuous nature of the campaign will give journalists a story to follow.

10. Evaluation & measurement

There are standard ways that a PR campaign can be evaluated, which include volume metrics and value measures. Measuring by value can often be a more effective indicator of a campaign's success:

Evaluating by volume

Number of pieces of press coverage achieved:

- split by media type – broadcast, regional, national

Number of people reached by the campaign:

- by calculating total circulation of press coverage achieved
- counting how many attended events
- how many signed up to poster campaign
- how many made pledges

Number of hits to website:

- number of pdfs downloaded etc

Evaluating by value

- number of the campaign's key communications messages communicated in press articles
- number of times that a keyword or phrase is mentioned, ie poster campaign or Energy Week event
- measuring how positive the journalist has been in each article against a score (e.g. 1 very positive – 2 positive – 3 neutral – 4 negative – 5 very negative)
- the size of the piece of coverage
- how many of your campaign visuals/photos were included
- calculating the advertising value equivalent (AVE) of what your editorial article would have cost if the space had been paid for.
- comparing the amount of coverage that your campaign has achieved compared to other similar PR campaigns

However, for communications campaigns that involve behaviour change, the above indicators often do not provide sufficient information. For this reason, Futerra has developed a separate evaluation tool, which is being used to analyse the Heidelberg PR campaign.



11. Timeline

It is standard practise to plan the timeline ahead, to include your press release schedule, event dates, photo shoot dates etc.

12. Budget

Calculating a realistic PR budget in advance is important, especially as activities like one-off stunts can incur unfamiliar costs.