

Marketing 101

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As emergency managers, we are good at a number of things: putting out fires (figuratively, sometimes literally), writing plans, coordinating drills, and navigating through multi-discipline politics for the greater good.

But what about marketing? It seems that suddenly, to us anyway, the notion of marketing was “a thing” that we had to learn about and be on board with. As any good emergency manager would, we reminded ourselves to be “Semper Gumby,” made a strong pot of coffee, and dug our heels in to research.

What We Learned

We found three things:

- (1) that we have actually been doing marketing all along, it’s just that we call it outreach;
- (2) that marketing encompasses more than just outreach (duh!), and

(3) that we need to stretch again, to learn about the new tools and resources available for marketing.

Over the past few years, we’ve successfully launched homeland security/emergency management marketing campaigns for earthquake preparedness, mental health, pandemic flu, and just about everything in-between.

Some Tips to Share

Here are some tips we picked up along the way:

- Know your audience.
- Know your budget.
- Know how to be creative.
- Leverage your network.
- Leverage your network’s network.
- People like humor.
- People like “the pretty.”
- Senior executives like air time.
- Politicians love air time.
- Define, measure, analyze, then report.
- Brag about your marketing prowess.
- Be thankful.

We’ve expanded on a few of these tips below. To pique your interest, we’ve also left expansion of some of the above to you and your imagination. Use of your imagination is also an important part of marketing. (We bet you didn’t know there was an exercise built into this article, did you?)

Let us explain. The following information provides additional insight on the tips noted above.

- **Know your audience.** This is a biggie. Marketing strategies for the general public, such as a “See Something, Say Something” type of campaign, require drastically different tactics than marketing to

an audience of security professionals and emergency managers. The messages, aesthetics and mediums should be tailored to your audience.

For example, if we were going to market emergency preparedness to the general public, we might use humor, brief catchy phrases, and social media. If we were marketing a new resource to our industry peers, we would focus on having a professional (but not stuffy) tone, and we’d present our message through speaking at conferences and submitting articles to trade publications.

Remember to include people with access and functional needs in your audience. People with access and functional needs are part of your target group.

- **Know your budget.** Your program isn’t funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation? We’ll work on that in our next article. Until then, we recommend having a good understanding of what your budgetary constraints will allow you to do. With smaller budgets, you need to really understand your audience more so that your limited budget can be most effective.

Looking to reach millennials? A daily newspaper ad is not the best place for your money, but Snapchat would be a great fit. A clever message combined with decent graphics on social media will take you far on a shoestring budget. [Click here](#) to see a graph showing the most popular social media sites in the United States. PSAs are also a great way to reach a public audience with little to no cost. Make sure to point out to the big corporations that they have an obligation to

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support their communities and run them.

- **Leverage your network.** Do you know people? Great! Let them know all about what you are marketing. Craft tailored messages for them to send out to their contacts – and, wait for it, their contact’s contacts. This can include friends, colleagues, neighbors, associations, community groups, schools, religious organizations, and so on. The networks that you choose to activate should be directly aligned with your target audience.

- **People like humor.** Have you seen the FEMA video about remembering to pack the dead batteries? We have too. People remember things that are funny, and because people are generally awesome, they share things that are funny. During the preparedness phase, this is a great tactic (but this is not a good tactic during the response phase). If being funny makes you feel unprofessional, try being witty. It bridges



Watch FEMA emergency planning video on [YouTube](#).

the gap and makes even the most conservative of us perk up.

- **People like “the pretty.”** Have you ever tried to read something that wasn’t formatted and had 10 different fonts? I’m sure it was painful, and you are a trooper for surviving that. On the other hand, have you been intrigued by something that was neat, colorful and easy to read? We have too! People like “the pretty” – be it format, color, organization or symmetry. It’s easier to notice, understand, and retain things if there is a visual appeal.

- **Define, measure, analyze, then report.** Before you start your marketing campaign, you should have a clear understanding of what success means and a strategy for measuring that metric. This is good for a number of reasons, including:

- (1) it helps you to know what did and didn’t work so that you can make improvements to your next campaign;
- (2) it typically helps with grant reporting or reporting to the bosses, so that you can demonstrate the campaign’s value; and

- (3) it helps you to substantiate the (tasteful, conservative) party that you have planned to celebrate the completion of another one of your successful projects.

- **Brag about your marketing prowess.** Once you’ve successfully done any kind of marketing, make sure that you shout it from the mountain top (again, tastefully, conservatively) so that when you make a plan to market something again, you have substantiation for asking for support.

- **Be thankful.** Remember how you leveraged your network? They do too. Be sure to thank them publicly, if possible, or at the very least copy their bosses on a nicely written email.

Conclusion

Marketing isn’t as difficult as it might seem. With research and a little creativity, you will be surprised at how far you can stretch a message.

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