

## Marketing Your Issue, Organization or Idea A Worksheet to Help You Get Started

Non-profit organizations are often the backbones of their communities, helping people in need. Grassroots groups engage in important community-building work. Unfortunately many of these groups tend to “preach to the choir” and do not package their ideas or services in ways that will be appreciated, endorsed, supported, or used by the vast majority of people who aren’t already on board. This worksheet will help you think systematically about how to start expanding your base of invested stakeholders.

The **mission** of our group or organization is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

We believe **people should agree with or support us** because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Our **most compelling argument** to convince people of this is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Is this argument effective? Do people who have heard it generally offer to help your cause? Are the numbers of your supporters generally increasing as time goes on? Are you content with just keeping the same supporters engaged without expanding your base?

If you answered no to any of these questions, some more inquiry is in order. Be honest and even ask somebody who is not part of your “inner circle” to take part in the discussion. Sometimes an outsider’s eyes and ears (like Michael Mandel’s, for example) can be incredibly useful in bringing hard – but necessary – truths to light!

**Who is our target audience?** \_\_\_\_\_

This should be the first step in any communication plan. You may (and probably should) have different audiences of prospective constituents and stakeholders. Identifying them and doing a little research into their needs and wants will go a long way toward effectively communicating with them. This is called market research. It’s not just for selling products.

**Are you using a lot of jargon in your communications?**     YES             NO

Most people in your community won’t know what all those acronyms stand for. You need to reach people at a gut level; don’t expect them to take the time to learn the nuances of your cause right away. You probably want to reach out to new people. Speaking in terms they don’t understand is not the way to win people over.

**Are you condescending to your target audience?**     YES             NO

This is one of the most common mistakes that grassroots groups and even large organizations make. People are not stupid just because they’re not already your supporter. People don’t appreciate being talked down to; you attract more flies with honey, so be respectful and patient!

**Are you committed to your cause?**     YES             NO

People can spot insincerity a mile away. Winning people over is much easier if you believe in your cause.

**Are you having fun?**     YES             NO

It’s probably not worth doing otherwise, and you shouldn’t be trying to convince others to join you!

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