

Syndicated News Proposal

Introduction

The strategic plan for most organizations puts a major emphasis on communications.

However, traditional methods of communication are proving to be unreliable. Your clients, members and other high priority audiences are faced with information overload, the daily stresses of life and a chronic shortage of time. Reading your emails, newsletters, web pages or publications represents a great challenge for them.

Information packaged in technical formats that require time or special knowledge to access also represents a barrier. These include PDF files and software that take time to download especially when using a dial-up modem. Rather than wait, many people give up. Some may resent having to spend extra time on technology to access information.

Some organizations have success in using the media to distribute their news and information. But media coverage can be inconsistent and is often missed by the people you report to, giving them the false impression that no communication is taking place. Media coverage can also be inaccurate or misleading.

More innovative strategies are required to increase the penetration level of communications. This proposal outlines one such strategy that has the potential to be your flagship communications vehicle.

Any new communications platform must...

- Be easy, fast and preferably, enjoyable for audiences to access.
- Be consistent so that audiences know exactly when and where to go for the latest information.
- Save time for audiences compared to existing methods.

- Be measurable so your organization can determine if the communications is working and to what extent.
- Utilize a format that audiences are already familiar with so that no education on new methods or technology is needed.
- Be cost effective, reaching several key audiences at the same time.
- Be innovative and leading edge but still easily accessible to the vast majority of audience members.
- Complement and support other communications efforts.
- Provide a single entry point for key communications.
- Be flexible to accommodate time sensitive, "mission critical" information.
- Be media friendly to maximize exposure for the same investment.
- Include a cost-recovery or revenue generation business model.
- Support your organization's communications objectives.
- Serve as a partnership tool.

Success Indicators

The success of any new system would be determined by:

- Feedback from audience members that shows they are using the communications.
- Use of communications materials by media.
- Pick-up from partners.

Introducing Your Syndicated Newscast

It is proposed that your organization launch its own weekly newscast that would capture key content, delivering it to audiences, including media, in a format that is familiar (ie: a traditional radio style newscast). Galbraith Communications proposes to carry out all of the work related to the newscast, including its promotion, with direction from your organization.

The newscast will be packaged in such a way as to meet all of the requirements for success as outlined Section A of this proposal. Its multi-purpose format will use both the Internet and media to deliver information to the right audiences.

Components of your newscast:

- Headline service that packages timely and relevant content for listeners.
- Short news stories narrated by the newscaster with interspersed interview clips.
- Three minutes in duration with option for spots (ad mentions).
- Updated at the same time every week (example, 7am each Monday).
- 30 day audio archive.
- Accompanying text transcript with web links and searchable database.
- Accompanying RSS feeds.
- Accompanying media sign-up and database.
- Easily copied audio player code for use on other sites.

Key features and benefits

Easy to Access: The newscast is heard instantly by going to your home page and clicking the newscast link. Users require no special equipment or knowledge of technology to listen.

Dial-up Friendly: The audio stream will be set at 16 KBPS, high enough to provide quality but low enough to be accessed on slow dial-up modems in remote areas.

Time Saving: Since the newscast will appear in a separate window, users can continue to surf your web site or the Internet in general while listening. They can also, if they choose, physically leave their computer and keep on listening. This is the strength of the audio format. Unlike text and video, both of which require the user to sit in front of a computer for long periods of time, the audio newscast allows the user to leave his or her computer and multi-task.

Familiarity: The newscast format is familiar to your audience members, many of whom are big consumers of news from TV and radio.

Consistency: The newscast will be released at the same time every week creating consistency, which in turn, builds a loyal following of listeners. The objective here is to create a community of followers who will "tune in" on a regular basis.

Support for your web site: The weekly format of the newscast will motivate people to keep going to your web site, building traffic.

Strengthen partnerships while also reaching a larger audience: A simple web code will be given to your partners (you decide who receives the code) so they can place the newscast on their web sites. In this way, the newscast becomes syndicated and leverages the power of multiple web sites to reach a much wider audience than your site alone could do. Once the code is pasted into a web page, it is automatically updated. The code is 100% maintenance free and gives partners fresh content for their web sites. (Partners can also choose to just link to the newscast system).

Searchable content: A text transcript will be provided for each broadcast so that people who are hard of hearing or deaf can also access the newscasts. Furthermore, the text transcripts will be stored in a searchable database so that users can quickly find information that was previously broadcast.

Follow-up information: The text transcripts will include links to web pages that contain more detailed information related to the stories in the newscast. The newscast will be largely a headline service that allows listeners to then follow up on more detailed information if they choose.

Wide range of content: The newscast will feature any content that your organization and its partners deem to be important. This will include news about upcoming events, research projects and interviews with staff and Board members. (The program can become an effective vehicle for the President and other directors). Breaking news will also be part of the content.

Brand your organization: It's hard for your audiences to get to know the personality of your executives. But hearing them speak will "humanize" the organization and enhance the branding process.

Urgent information: The format will allow for the release of urgent, time sensitive information through special broadcasts produced quickly and aired as necessary outside of the weekly schedule. All web sites carrying the web code or link will also serve as distribution outlets for urgent information.

Engage Media: A link will be provided specifically for the media. This link will go to a free registration page where editors and reporters can sign up for password protected access to audio downloads of the shows and all interview clips. High quality photos could also be placed in this special section for use by the print media. This component provides your organization with a

database of "active users" in the media. While you may have media lists now, this database has the added advantage of letting you know exactly which media representatives are interested in your organization. A tracking system in the database will reveal what content is being accessed by the media.

Control over the message: The newscast is "controlled" media which means your organization does not need to rely on outside media to get out its messages to target audience members and the public. The difficulty with relying on the traditional media is that it can often get information wrong which hurts your cause.

Push Technology: For members who are technically adventurous, the newscast will include an RSS feed (real simple syndication). By copying and pasting a web address into free podcast software (iTunes is the most popular), the user is "subscribing" to the newscast. This means that each time the newscast is updated, it automatically downloads and appears in a list within the software. The user can then click on the file to listen on their computer or transfer the file to an iPOD for on-the-go listening.

Since RSS does not require a person to submit their personal information (subscribing involves just copying a web address), we will not know who is using this. However, the RSS code will be able to reveal how many people are taking advantage of the feed.

NOTE: Any content can be syndicated with RSS including text-based press releases and video clips from webcasts. As part of this proposal, GC will create RSS feeds for any content you choose.

The RSS system complements the media database. They are not the same. RSS is meant more for members and the general public while the media registration and database system will provide content specifically for use by accredited media. Audio files in the media registration system will be of much higher quality for on-air broadcasting (128 KBPS).

Measurement: All aspects of the newscast will be closely measured with detailed reports sent monthly. The web code will reveal how many web sites are using the program and how many people are listening.

Cost recovery, partnership and revenue generation

Unlike many other communication vehicles, the newscast has strong potential for cost recovery and ultimately, revenue generation. Once the show has established an audience base, it becomes attractive to advertisers, most of which will be your existing sponsors and partners looking for other promotional vehicles.

The other way in which costs can be recovered is by inviting other like-minded organizations to share the production costs and become part of the newscast. This scenario is possible for organizations in the same sector, sharing similar values and goals (for example, organizations promoting renewable energy). Not only are costs reduced, but partnership and unity are demonstrated.

Deliverables are as follows.

- Interviews, writing and production for your newscast, including the weekly audio program of three minutes in length and all accompanying text transcripts with follow-up web links.
- Development and maintenance of the text transcript database and audio archive list.
- Development and maintenance of the media password protected section.
- Development and maintenance of RSS feeds.
- Development of the audio player web code for use on other web sites (Windows Media and Flash).
- Promotion of the web code and the media system in collaboration with your organization.
- Monthly measurement reporting

For more information, contact Galbraith Communications at 1-877-580-9915. GC has 30 years experience in broadcast journalism and media relations.