Opinion editorial (*op-ed*): An article stating the opinion of a person or organization on current issues, which is submitted to a print news outlet. Op-eds allow to publish and share their views on a particular subject with the community. You can use health observances to offer a timely platform for The length of your op-ed will

communications glossary

Updated November 2008

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Contents

General Communications Terms

Communications training	Hands-on skills building to enhance communication. Communications training may include counsel on developing strategic communications plans, identifying core messages, conducting media outreach and any other components that make up communications. (See **Media training** as one example.)
Message development	Condensing key information about your program or organization into clear, concise talking points. Umbrella messages should be persuasive to the intended audience(s), underscore the benefits, and refer and relate to some reward that will be gained in the future and the necessity for it to be backed today. Your core message should be supported with credible, scientific facts, where possible, and with literal, economic, or dramatic public health demonstrations of value of its end benefits.
Research	Systematic investigative process that provides answers to questions and serves as the basis of all good strategic communications. Research can and should be conducted throughout your communications planning, execution and evaluation. Research typically falls into two categories: quantitative (gathering objective information from representative, random samples of respondents used to make generalizations about the target audience) and qualitative (gathering subjective information about feelings, attitudes, and impressions from a smaller pool of respondents).
Stakeholders or third-party organizations	Any people or groups that can affect or are affected by an organization's behavior. Examples include potential funders, hospitals and health systems, community stakeholders, public health and policy leaders, local and regional philanthropies, academia and schools of nursing, local businesses, local chambers of commerce, and community and civic organizations.

Strategic communications	The passing of information, exchange of ideas, or process of establishing shared meaning between a sender and a receiver. A strategic communications plan is a written statement that provides direction for all communications activities. The plan should include the goal, objectives, target audience(s), understanding of the needs and perceptions of the target population, action steps that should be taken, reasons why your target audiences should be compelled to act, and the benefits to be gained. The plan provides the direction and consistency for all messages and materials that follow. It often calls for the implementation of tactics such as research, message concepts, materials creation, traditional media (e.g., TV, newspapers, radio), new media (see **Web 2.0**) and stakeholder outreach, and evaluation and tracking.

Media Outreach Terms

Audio news release	A brief script formatted to be read on radio stations. Audio news releases are typically one minute or less and can include either a professional announcer reading the script or a sound bite from a spokesperson associated with the organization.
Backgrounder	Information about an organization, a problem, a situation, an event or a major development compiled in an easy-to-read (usually one-page) document. A backgrounder can be given to the media, often as part of a press kit, to provide a factual basis for news to be covered. It also can be given to key stakeholders to provide an overview of your organization or the situation (for example, the nursing shortage and what your organization is doing to address it). A backgrounder tends to include more extensive information than a press release.
Boilerplate language	A unit of writing that can be reused over and over without change, such as the statement of purpose of an organization usually placed at the end of a news release or announcement. The term derives from steel manufacturing, where boilerplate is steel rolled into large plates for use in steam boilers. The implication is either that boilerplate writing has been time-tested and is therefore "strong as steel," or possibly that it has been rolled out into something strong enough for repeated reuse. Some typical boilerplates include mission statements, safety warnings, commonly used installation procedures, copyright statements and responsibility disclaimers.
Columnist	A journalist who produces a recurring piece for a publication, called a column. Columns appear in newspapers, magazines, and on the Internet and generally include the reporter's opinion, unlike a news article, which is strictly based on facts.

Deskside briefing	Another name for an editorial board meeting where a company or program executive goes to newsrooms to pitch a story or to provide background information on the organization or issue. The meeting occurs at the reporter's office, hence "deskside briefing." The briefing provides an ideal forum for creating relationships with reporters and asserting yourself as a go-to source.
Earned media	Story placements garnered through proactive pitching to media outlets.
Fact sheet	An easy-to-reference document that summarizes basic facts about an event, product, organization or service, usually presented in bullet or outline form.
Letter to the editor	A letter sent to a newspaper or magazine and intended for publication to present an opinion or position, make a correction, or respond to a recent story or letter.
Media	Categories of communication vehicles, such as newspapers, magazines, the Internet, and radio and TV stations. The media provide a critical channel for disseminating information about your organization, program, or issue and help to reach key audiences. The media can tell audiences what to think about and can influence how they think about it. The media also help to establish awareness and knowledge of an issue or organization and can stimulate information-seeking behaviors and overcome misperceptions.
Media advisory	An announcement used to notify the media of an upcoming event. A media advisory is essentially an easy-to-read reminder that gives reporters the main information needed to attend or cover the event: • A brief overview of the purpose of the event • The five "Ws"—who, what, when, where and why—of the event • Contact information for any media inquiries

Media list	A compilation of contact information and other data about the news media. A media list should be created and maintained to be used when pitching the media. Information for each media contact should include: • Name • Beat (a reporter's area of focus) • Contact information including phone number, fax number, and e-mail address.
Media monitoring	Scanning local media outlets to discover proactive media opportunities. Media monitoring can keep you abreast of what's being said in the media about your particular topic or issue and can lead to proactive opportunities such as a letter to the editor. It also can help to determine which reporters are interested in your topic and provide new insights to any news surrounding your topic.
Media relations	Communicating with the media and disseminating information through media outlets to reach key audiences. What your key audiences read in newspapers, scan online, see on television, or hear on the radio can have a profound influence on their understanding of an issue or the actions they take. Media relations are a key component to any communications outreach.
Media tracking	Scanning local news outlets after a media outreach effort to see what coverage has occurred. Media tracking helps you to evaluate the success of a media outreach campaign. The information gained will help you determine what the media are saying about your program and will give credibility to your organization.
Media training	A communications training session that is specific to preparing a spokesperson for media interviews. The session often includes tips for answering questions and staying on message as well as reporter/interviewee role-playing.

Opinion editorial (op-ed)	An article stating the opinion of a person or organization on current issues, which is submitted to a print news outlet. Op-eds allow organizations to publish and share their views on a particular subject with the community. You can use special health observances to offer a timely platform for placement of these pieces. The length of your op-ed will depend on the particular paper you are submitting to, but they typically run around 400 to 700 words.
Paid media	Story placements garnered through tactics such as radio media tours, satellite media tours and paid advertising.
Pitch	To offer or suggest a story idea or news angle to reporters. Typically, a pitch letter is sent via e-mail to a predetermined media list on a Tuesday or Wednesday between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. An e-mail pitch is then followed up by a phone call to the reporter.
Press kit	A prepackaged folder of materials used to provide background information and inform the media about an organization and its key programs and initiatives. Press kits are often distributed to inform the media about a press announcement or event with the goal of generating news stories. Press kits can contain the following items: • News releases • Media advisories • Feature stories • Photographs • PowerPoint slides • Backgrounders • Biographies • Fact sheets • Position papers

Press release (or news release)	An announcement written for distribution to the media about a newsworthy event or action by an organization. News releases should be written in inverted-pyramid style—beginning with the most important information and ending with the least important details. They should contain a strong, succinct lead in which the first one or two sentences summarize the news with the five "Ws"—who, what, when, where and why.
Radio media tour	A media relations tactic used to promote and publicize a specific topic or event on national radio networks, nationally syndicated radio shows, statewide radio networks, regional radio networks or local radio stations. A block of radio interviews are booked for a designated spokesperson, who can be interviewed in a sophisticated radio studio using radio satellite uplinks or simply by telephone in his or her home or office.
Reporter/beat reporter	A journalist who generates news stories or segments for publication in media outlets such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio and, increasingly, the Web. Reporters sometimes have a specific topic they cover, called a "beat." Sometimes reporters are "general assignment" and cover news stories on a variety of topics.
Satellite media tour	A media relations tactic used to promote and publicize a specific topic or event on national or local television news programs. A block of television interviews are booked for a designated spokesperson, who can be interviewed in a studio, on location, or at his or her home or office. The spokesperson listens to the interviewer through an earpiece and answers the questions to a camera via satellite.
Talking points	A set of predetermined statements or key message points about your issue or organization. Talking points can be used in stakeholder outreach or media interviews.

Video news release (VNR)	News stories produced so that television stations may air them as news, often considered the video version of a press release. VNRs are distributed via satellite to TV stations nationwide, and news programs may incorporate a VNR in whole or in part as part of its regular broadcasts.
Wire service	Any syndicated news service (e.g., Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters, Dow Jones) used to post news stories to multiple media outlets. Many major newspapers and other media outlets pick up content and story ideas from news received over the wire.

Creative Design Terms

Creative brief	A written statement developed before graphic design work begins to help guide the design process by delineating the purpose of the "piece," key audiences, format and distribution mechanisms. The creative brief also may contain a promotion or dissemination plan that outlines the print quantity of the final product as well as how the product will be promoted and distributed (e.g., postal mail, e-mail, conferences) to specific target audiences.
Design and production (also known as graphic design)	Visual communications that reflect your core messages using typography, visual arts, and page layout creatively to produce a final product such as a brochure, flyer, or newsletter.
Video production	Includes videotaping, editing, and distributing a finished video product that reflects core messages in a creative execution.

Internet Terms

Blog	A Web site or "Web log" usually maintained by an individual or group, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, and other materials such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. Many blogs provide commentary on a particular subject; others function as personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to Web pages and other media related to its topic. An important part of many blogs is the capability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format.
Discussion forum	A special Web site in which one person creates a conversation topic and others respond. Typically, unregistered visitors can view the site content, but only registered members can submit topics for discussion (known as threads) and communicate with each other using publicly visible messages (referred to as posts) or private messaging.
Extranet	A private network used to securely share part of an organization's information or operations with external stakeholders or members who do not physically work at the organization, such as suppliers, vendors, partners, customers or other businesses. An extranet also can be viewed as part of an organization's intranet that is extended to users outside the organization.
Intranet	A privately maintained Web site that can be accessed only by authorized persons, typically members or employees of the organization that owns it. Intranets are used to share announcements, documents, tasks and coordination activities.
Listserv or e-mail list	A computer system that allows users to send an e-mail to one address for delivery to all other subscribers to the listserv or e-mail list. These lists can be one-way (i.e., only the list owner can send messages) or two-way (i.e., members can send messages to all other members).

RSS (really simple syndication)	A family of Web feed formats used to syndicate frequently updated works, such as blog entries, news headlines audio, and video. An RSS feed includes full or summarized text, plus additional information about the content such as publishing dates and authorship. Web feeds benefit publishers by letting them syndicate content quickly and automatically. They benefit readers who want to subscribe to timely updates from favored Web sites or to aggregate feeds from many sites into one place. RSS feeds can be read using software called an RSS reader or aggregator, which can be Web-based or desktop-based. Every modern Web browser—including Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox and Apple Safari—include the ability to access RSS feeds.
Social networking Web site	A Web site that connects people, groups and organizations to each other based on shared interests, shared knowledge or traditional social relationships. Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn are among the most popular social networks today.
Subsite	A Web site within a Web site, essentially a collection of Web pages that live under an umbrella Web site. Usually the subsite pages share a common design and a shared navigation mechanism with the parent site.
Web 2.0 (also known as new media)	Changing trends in the use of Internet technology and Web design that aim to enhance creativity, secure information sharing, and improve collaboration and functionality of the Web. Web 2.0 concepts have led to the development and evolution of Web-based communities and hosted services, such as social-networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis and blogs. User-contributed content is a common aspect of sites that exemplify this trend.
Web site	A collection of Web pages, images, videos or other digital assets accessible via the Internet. A Web page is a resource of information that is suitable for the Internet.

Web site content development	The process of researching, writing, collecting, organizing and editing content for publication on Web sites. Web content may include text, graphics and images, video and audio recordings, and other Web media assets.
Web site design	The interdisciplinary process pertaining to the planning and production of Web sites, which includes conceptualization, technical development, information architecture and visual design.
Web site maintenance	Activities involved in keeping current Web site content updated and accurate, as well as functioning efficiently. Web site maintenance might include checking for broken links, updating contact information and posting new information.
Wiki	A Web site that allows visitors to make changes, contributions or corrections. The collaborative encyclopedia Wikipedia is one of the best-known wikis.