Rural Marketing & Communications on a Shoestring Budget

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Today, more than ever before, organizations have more tools at their disposal that allow them to reach their audiences at little-to-no cost.

Organizations are limited only by their ability to imagine, conceive, plan and execute.

You must decide what you can do in-house; what you can automate; and what should be outsourced.

If you don’t track and measure your efforts - and adjust as necessary – you are wasting your time, your target’s time, and what little money you have.

With the proliferation of digital and social technologies, you can look as “big” as you want to look.
Know What You Have to Offer

- What is your product?
- Do you have a clear view of your assets?
  - “Woe is me”
  - “We will never be like…”
- Are you thinking regionally?
- Research – what can you demonstrate, prove?
- What are you hiding under the rug?
- Rifle vs. shotgun approach – get focused!
- Think like business...not like government
- Understand your competition, but don’t be intimidated by it. Effectively set yourself apart!
Know Your Audience(s)

- Who benefits from what you have to offer?
  - “Everyone will want what we have here…”
  - Someone wants what you have
- Who can make or influence decisions about locating in your area?
- Know your local businesses; their needs and opportunities
- Speak to targeted audiences in their own language
- How can you find these elusive critters?
What is your unique story?

- Each community, region has something that sets it apart from others – FIND IT!
  - A laundry-list of assets is not a story
  - Sometimes it may not be a business asset or characteristic, but it must appeal to business
  - Once you find it – let it permeate all that you do
- Articulate your benefits clearly
- How can you connect with your audiences in a meaningful way?
- Who or what best communicates your story?
  - Get others on board
  - Visually tell your story
Marketing Intelligence – Data is Your Friend

- Effectively use your own data to promote your compelling points.
  - How familiar are you with existing studies made in your area?
- Use data and guided fact-finding to gain insight into what businesses think
  - Note: Business decisions don’t happen by accident and few happen overnight
- If you are not reading, viewing, or in some way following business news each day, you are getting left behind
- Pick a card...any card
- Key inexpensive sources of data, studies, business intel and useful gossip
Beyond Advertising

- If you are going to pay for it – make it count!
  - Unless you are an expert – get help
  - Advertising and other promotions should communicate a benefit or solution
  - Most economic development ads look the same
- Advertising will never bring you a project
  - No amount advertising can take the place of relationship building and professional sales activities – but it can effectively create awareness
- Think of ways to get you, your organization in front of your key audiences to tell your story
- Have you considered doing this?
If a Picture is Worth a 1000 Words – What’s 1000 Words Worth?

- Individuals will always believe what they read in editorial form or that which is positioned as “news” far more than advertising
  - This is why well-crafted communications as a strategy is worth its weight in gold
- Working effectively with local, state and national media
- Getting published – publishing yourself
- Effective positioning you and your organization through social media
- Other low-cost, high-return strategies
“Nothing’s New Under the Sun”

- Either be incredibly creative and original – or leverage old ideas in a new way
- Launch tried and true tactics from a new platform
- You really can teach an old dog new tricks
- Millions of amazing ideas – you only need one or two good ones!

Q&A • Idea Sharing!
Thank You!

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