

Extension Marketing: Creative and Media Strategies¹

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This EDIS publication, focusing on creative and media strategies, is the fourth of a five-part EDIS publications series on developing marketing campaigns for your local UF/IFAS Extension program. This series includes publications on campaign planning and audience analysis development, integrated marketing, budgets, and evaluation. [Click here](#) to navigate the series.

Creative Strategy

In order to prepare the message, the campaign needs a **creative strategy**, which explains the benefit of the product or program (**what**), the composition of the target audience (**who**), and why they should believe the message (**why**). A creative strategy is often developed by using a **creative strategy statement**. In a creative strategy statement, you put the **who**, **what**, and **why** of the strategy into one statement to help you clearly define your plan. Figure 1 illustrates how.

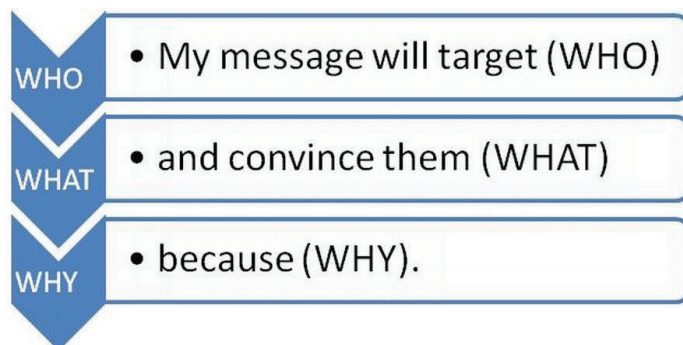


Figure 1. My message will target (WHO), and convince them that (WHAT) because (WHY).

A **consumer-oriented strategy** promotes the brand image, describes the lifestyle associated with the product or service, or appeals to the attitudes and values of the audience. A consumer-oriented strategy could explain that people who use information from the Master Gardeners program enjoy the lifestyle of having a beautiful landscape around their homes.

Media Strategy

Once the audience has been identified and the message has been prepared, the campaign needs to focus on **media strategies**. Media strategy includes the media used to communicate the message, the frequency the message is communicated, and the continuity of the message and media.

The campaign needs to have an effective reach, usually best achieved by using multiple forms of media to communicate, in order to get information to the members of the audience. The message needs to be sent often enough that there is a good chance that most members of the target audience received the information. The best way to achieve effective reach and frequency is to send several messages through more than one medium.

Media strategies must also consider **continuity**. Because each type of media has different characteristics – such as size, length, and a unique schedule—different methods of sending out marketing messages must be used. Examples include seasonality, pulsing, and saturation.

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- **Seasonality** refers to only sending messages at certain times of the year because they are not relevant at other times. For example, a series of educational courses that are only offered in the summer would not require marketing attention in fall or winter.
- **Pulsing** is a method where marketing alternates between a period of time in which a large number of messages are sent out and a period in which few or no messages are sent. An example would be that large events may send “mark your calendar” messages, take a break to plan and organize, send tentative schedules and registration information, wait to finalize information, and send welcome packets with detailed information about the event.
- **Saturation** is simply flooding the audience with the message, sending the message as often and through as many channels as possible.

Media strategies must also consider the length, size, and number of advertisements. The media budget can significantly change the size or length of an ad because larger or longer ads can cost considerably more. The competitive environment must also be taken into account. The message has to be prominent enough for the audience to notice it.

As for what medium or communication method “works” best, you would need to investigate this with your target audiences. Here—in descending order—are the media and communication methods that Florida Extension agents said were most effective in promoting their local programs and activities (Hurst, 2005):

- Word of mouth
- Direct mailings
- Newsletters/brochures/pamphlets
- Demonstrations
- Signs/posters that the agent designed
- Press releases
- Newspaper columns the agent wrote
- Online methods
- Pre-produced UF/IFAS materials
- Television interviews
- Radio interviews
- Public service announcements
- Print materials provided at retail outlets
- Paid newspaper advertisement

Another consideration for communicating your message is the **location of your communication media**. Using flyers at grocery stores, community bulletin boards, libraries, schools, or locations that your target audience frequents can help increase the number of people that are exposed to the message.

Finally, a great way to advertise effectively and inexpensively is to have a well-maintained Web site. Some Extension agents have their own Web sites where they post important information and upcoming events. Another benefit of a personal Web site is that it can be incorporated into the other marketing methods being used. A short or small advertisement or flyer can refer people to the Web site for more information.

Placing your message via social media platforms can afford you opportunities to narrowly target your message for specific audiences. For example, Facebook allows you to purchase ads using demographics like age, gender and current cities to connect with people. You can also use criteria like interests, devices or past actions. You can also tailor the format of your message to incorporate text, images and videos.

Quick Reference Guide

Develop Creative Strategy

- Who, What, and Why

CONSUMER-ORIENTED STRATEGY

- Brand image
- Lifestyle
- Attitude
- Values

Media Strategies

REACH AND FREQUENCY

- Effective frequency
- Effective reach

CONTINUITY

- Continuous scheduling (steady stream of messages)
- Seasonality (only sending messages at certain times of the year)
- Pulsing (alternate between periods of many messages and few or none)
- Saturation (flooding the market with the message)

LENGTH OR SIZE OF ADS

- Creative requirements
- Media budget
- Competitive environment

MEDIA LOCATION

- Flyers at grocery stores, community bulletin boards, libraries, schools, or locations the target audience frequents
- Community calendars in newspapers, on television, on radio, and on the Internet
- Word of mouth to opinion leaders

WEBSITE

- Effective and inexpensive
- Post important information and upcoming events
- Can be incorporated into the other marketing methods - refer people to the website

Applying the Concepts

Develop Creative Strategy

Think of a creative strategy for one of your upcoming programs and write out a creative strategy statement.

- Should it be product-oriented or consumer-oriented? Why?
- What is the most important part of your advertisement? Is your attention drawn there?
- For an upcoming Extension program, would a product-oriented or consumer-oriented strategy work best for your program?

Define Marketing Messages

Think of two or three marketing messages for one of your upcoming programs.

- What medium would be the best way to get those messages to your audience? What would be a good alternate medium to use?
- What would be the most common media continuity that you would use considering the size and schedule of your programs? Why? Would the others work? What is a common size or length for your messages? Do you believe that needs to be changed? Why or why not?

Define Your Target Audience

Remember the **who**, **what**, and **why** design of the creative strategy. Consider the following questions.

- Who will be the target audience of your advertisement? Why?
- What will you use to grab the audience's attention?
- What information will you include in such a small space? Why?
- Where or to whom will you direct the audience?

Designate Your Media Strategies

Once the audience has been identified and the message has been prepared, the campaign must focus on media strategies. The best way to achieve effective reach and frequency is to send several messages through more than one medium. For your audience, determine which media should be used and how often they are needed. Table 1 will help you visualize the effectiveness of your available options. For each medium you check in the “usually” or “always” columns below, come up with two or three specific vehicles your audience uses.

Reference

Hurst, A. (2005). *Local marketing and promotional efforts of Florida Cooperative Extension agents*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of Florida: Gainesville, FL.

Table 1. Media options and target audience usage.

Medium	Usage		
	Seldom	Usually	Always
Newspaper			
Magazine			
Television			
Radio			
Internet/Web			
Flyers/posters			
Newsletter			
Direct mail			
Facebook			
Twitter			
Instagram			
Snapchat			
YouTube			
Pinterest			