



COMMUNIQUE 4:

When Media Works

Traditional earned media is often the most effective way to reach campaign goals; however, there are times when strategies outside the media can be more effective. Grassroots outreach can give your College Goal Sunday campaign an edge by communicating information on your event in a direct, personal way. Grassroots outreach strategies work at the local level, allowing you to focus on tactics that reach the exact audiences that will make your event a success. With strong grassroots strategies in place, traditional earned media tactics, such as press releases to local newspapers, can serve as a strong complement to your grassroots efforts. The following communiqué walks through the some of the most effective grassroots outreach tactics, as well as tips for making the most of strategic media efforts.

Recommendations for Grassroots Outreach

Many grassroots tactics are effective in reaching teen audiences. In order to make the most of grassroots strategies, get to know the teens in your state to further understand where they get information and what they care about. For instance, your target teen population might be religious and spend time after school in local faith-based programs. You may have a number of latch-key kids that spend time at the mall. If teen audiences live in an urban environment, many may own cell phones.

Each piece of information gathered on your target audience can help you develop targeted grassroots tactics. Keep in mind that no matter the tactics you choose to focus on, person-to-person contact in your grassroots outreach works best. Since each College Goal Sunday program will have slightly different audiences, select the grassroots strategies and tactics that will be most effective in your state. Below are examples of efforts to consider.

- *Direct Snail Mail:* Many teens communicate primarily through electronic methods, so a traditional direct mail piece addressed to a teen will stand out and can be a great way to get a teen's attention.
- *Community Events:* Identify events in your state that will attract your target audiences *and* provide opportunities to promote College Goal Sunday. Consider local street festivals, events held at malls and community centers, sports events and concerts to create buzz.

- *“Coming Attraction” Spots:* For audiences that frequent movie theatres, inquire about donated ad space. Several College Goal Sunday programs reported that movie theatres have been willing to donate spots or reduce costs for screen time before movies begin. Check out the possibilities in your communities and place ads before movies that your audience is likely to see. Print/poster ads in the lobby of theatres might also be another good opportunity to promote College Goal Sunday.
- *Cell Phone Marketing:* Daily cell phone usage has more than doubled in the last year, with teen girls leading the way. Consider marketing College Goal Sunday through cell phone stores in your community.
- *Community Partnerships:* To reach key audiences, work with community organizations that have existing relationships with those you want to talk to. Think about Boys and Girls Clubs, religious organizations, after-school programs, or ethnic clubs.
- *Brown Bag Lunches:* Hold lunch meetings at major employers in your state to introduce College Goal Sunday to employers. (Audience targets: parents, adult learners, other teen influencers.)
- *Business Partnerships:* Business owners may be willing to promote the College Goal Sunday event through their store by posting flyers or posters. This can be a great way to reach audiences that have relationships with local businesses.

As with media outreach, make sure you are recruiting effective messengers to reach various audience groups. For person-to-person contact, you will likely have greater results if student leaders are messengers for their peers. Go beyond reaching out to teens directly by talking to their influencers, such as parents and community leaders.

Challenges

We heard your questions on grassroots tactics and here are some recommendations.

1. *How do you contact and work with local businesses and faith-based organizations?*
Reach out to an adult or youth minister at faith-based organizations and owners or managers at local businesses. Introduce them to College Goal Sunday and stress the importance of the event to the community, who are their members or customers. Gauge their interest in working to promote the event in their establishments and make it as easy as possible for them to participate by personally delivering and posting the materials for them.
2. *How do I measure the success of my campaign’s outreach techniques?*
Before launching your campaign, put measurements in place to test how well different tactics are motivating target audiences. This can be as simple as tracking hits to your Web site, or asking attendees at your event how they heard about College Goal Sunday. You can then evaluate the most successful tactics to use for next year’s campaign.
3. *How do you prioritize outreach efforts?*
You can’t do everything, so prioritize based on what worked last year or based on recommendations from your colleagues. Be strategic in picking tactics that will likely resonate with your target audiences. If you have a youth advisory board in

place, ask the board to recommend the outreach efforts that will resonate best with their peers. Then examine the cost and potential benefit of each effort and select tactics that best utilize the resources that you have. Test the results and use these to lead your priorities next year.

Interested in Learning More? Check Out These Resources

The College Access Marketing Toolkit provides tips, resources and templates you can use when planning outreach efforts.

- Outreach Guides: Reaching Parents (Tab #5) – Provides more details on grassroots tactics for talking to adult audiences, including teen influencers and adult learners.
- Outreach Guides: Creating a Database (Tab #5) – Outlines tips for developing a database for College Goal Sunday that can bolster outreach efforts by adding students, potential partner organizations and influencers to your contacts to help you drive attendance to your events.
- Media Tips (Tab #6) – Gives media tips to supplement grassroots tactics. Consider strategic media opportunities, like radio, to reach target audiences.
- Research Report (Tab #2) – Includes up-to-date research on the core concerns for target audiences. Use this research to determine the best ways to reach audiences through grassroots strategies. (Pages 24 – 28 list strategic recommendations based on the research, organized by recommended priority.)

If you don't already have the College Access Marketing Toolkit, visit the College Goal Sunday Web site (www.collegegoalsundayusa.org/support/presentations.asp) to download a copy.