

Extension Marketing: Building a Successful Local Extension Marketing Campaign¹

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

Foundations for Building a Successful Extension Marketing Campaign

Due in part to a national trend toward urbanization, many members of the general public have become disconnected from the agriculture industry and the Cooperative Extension Service (Alberts, Wirth, Gilmore, Jones, & McWater, 2004; King & Boehlje, 2000; Warner, Christenson, Dillman, & Salant, 1996). Therefore, Extension agents must use effective communication and distribution methods in order to best inform, motivate, and service their clients (Hogan, 1994).

However, with the change in the diversity of the clientele and with the proliferation of readily accessible online information, finding the most effective communication vehicle is becoming increasingly difficult. Researchers have pointed out that the days of Extension as a sole-source

provider of information are gone (King & Boehlje, 2000). As a result, Extension professionals are being encouraged to **market** their programs, to let target audiences know about important educational activities and events (Chappell, 1994). The success of an Extension program not only includes communicating interesting and relevant content, but also relies on communicating with the public in a way that creates awareness, stimulates interest, and, in the end, engages involvement by targeted clientele. But if you have never marketed an Extension program before, *how* do you do it?

That is where this series of EDIS publications comes in. The **purpose** of these EDIS publications is to provide you with the tools you will need to tailor messages, media, and methods to best market and promote your local Extension programs.

The idea for this EDIS publications series grew from the results of a 2005 master's thesis in the University of Florida Department of Agricultural Education and Communication (Telg, Irani, Hurst, & Kistler, 2007). The study investigated what Florida Extension agents do to promote and market programs in their counties. A total of 175 people responded in this study, for an overall response rate of 54.18%. Specific results pertaining directly to these EDIS publications include the following:

1. This document is AEC396, one of a series of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date November 2008. Reviewed August 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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- A majority of respondents used **word of mouth** 16 times or more in a year to market their programs and activities, especially to current “traditional” Extension clientele. With the general public, however, Extension agents were most likely to use **news releases**.
- Overall, respondents believed marketing Extension programs was a necessary part of their job, and found it to be rewarding. But respondents also found the marketing process to be difficult.
- Finally, respondents noted that they were confident in such tasks as writing and designing a newsletter, writing a newspaper column, and writing a news release, but felt much less confident in establishing a marketing and promotional program. In other words, agents knew how to develop individual marketing/communication “pieces” (news release, posters), but did not have the knowledge or skills to put the pieces together into a marketing “whole.”

In these publications, you will walk through the marketing/promotion planning stages from audience analysis through evaluation. The major topics covered in these publications will help you market your local Extension program:

- [Campaign planning and audience analysis](#)
- [Integrated marketing](#)
- [Creative and media strategies](#)
- [Budget and evaluation](#)

A “quick reference guide” of major points is provided at the end of each publication. You will also be able to reflect on these topics by answering the “Applying the Concepts” questions.

References

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