

Extension Marketing: Campaign Planning and Audience Analysis¹

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

Campaign Planning

A **campaign** is a strategic and structured plan consisting of media, marketing, communications, and public relations or promotional messages with a consistent theme that has been developed through an analysis of the current situation. This analysis includes assessments of the client, the competition, target audiences, and the marketing or media mix. These concepts will be explained throughout this and subsequent EDIS publications in this series.

One of the most important aspects of a campaign—and, really, where a campaign should start—is determining what your message will be. A **message** is the key information or main idea that marketing attempts to get across to the audience. More time should be devoted to developing your message and, in turn, identifying your target audience than just about any other component of the campaign. Without a well-defined message, your campaign will become a muddled mess very quickly. Simple messages usually are better to articulate and easier to define. Bullet-pointed

messages are easier to remember than long, drawn-out messages.

Another of the goals of the campaign should be to create a consistent **brand** in the minds of the audience. **Brands** are products, goods, and services that have an identifiable image and have communicated impressions to a targeted audience. Usually, these marketing materials incorporate the same coloring, text, and logo to achieve a consistent message so that audiences can identify, even at a glance, the brand. Likewise, UF/IFAS Extension can be thought of as a brand. It is an educational outreach organization that provides a consistent set of services and programs and has an identifiable image with its clientele and stakeholders. Recently, Extension has begun to communicate a consistent message using the *Solutions for Your Life* theme that helps target audiences easily recognize the public value of what Extension does.

Marketing is more than designing a consistent message. It is also a matter of reaching the correct publics. **Publics**, a term common in the field of public relations, are groups of people. In marketing, these groups are often referred to as **audiences**. Specific audiences, or publics, are usually defined as having something in common—like living in the same area or working similar jobs—and they tend to receive messages through similar means.

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The most important aspect of audiences is that they are both **internal** and **external**. While communicating with people outside of an organization—external audiences—is often the goal, keeping internal audiences, such as other Extension agents and specialists, informed is just as important.

Audience Analysis

But what do these marketing methods mean if you do not know who the audience should be? Every marketing campaign has to start with an audience analysis. The goal of an **audience analysis** is twofold:

1. To gain an understanding of who could potentially receive the message; and then,
2. To define a specific target audience.

Knowing who the desired audience is will make getting the message to the audience members easier and more effective. An audience analysis breaks down the general public into different categories to make people easier to place into groups of similar individuals. These groupings of categories are usually defined by using **demographics, psychographics, usage patterns, and prior knowledge**. Falling into one or more of these categories makes people part of a particular public that can be approached as a group of similar individuals.

Demographics are the broad physical categories that people fit into and that are difficult to change, such as age, gender, race, marital status, and income. People in different demographic groupings receive messages differently and may not necessarily be interested in the same topics, based on their demographic characteristics. Older adults may not be interested in topics that young adults would be interested in because of their differing age and life experiences. Also, different demographics may get their messages differently. Younger adults and teens are receiving more of their information through online methods than older adults. If you are targeting young adults and teens, you may need to consider more online, digital media approaches to communication, rather than the more traditional mass media approach of emphasizing television, radio, and newspapers. Messages and media will have to be targeted specifically to various demographic segments.

As opposed to physical attributes, such as age or gender, **psychographics** address beliefs, values, and attitudes. Groups are differentiated according to their views on a subject or their attitudes toward a particular event or

circumstance. An example would be two groups with differing attitudes toward an agricultural land policy. Farmers may want to be protected from urban sprawl, while developers may want farmland to be zoned for development. Target messages can be focused by psychographics, as well. You can ascertain the psychographics of a particular audience through conducting “formative” research, using surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gauge its members’ beliefs, values, and attitudes.

Usage patterns focus on how people usually receive messages and the ones to which they respond. Knowing what captures a person’s interest allows messages to be tailored to increase their effectiveness and reduce wasted efforts. For example, using a newspaper column or advertisement to reach an audience that is not likely to have a newspaper subscription is not a good marketing strategy, because it ignores usage patterns.

Prior knowledge refers to the knowledge and experiences audience members have about a particular topic or idea related to your message. Prior knowledge could be good or bad for new messages, depending on whether the person had a positive or negative prior experience. If people had a positive past experience with something related to the new message, they are more likely to be interested or want to be involved. For example, people might be more likely to be volunteer 4-H leaders if they were 4-H members when they were younger. Former members would have a better understanding of the program and likely had positive experiences with it. The benefit of having audience members with prior knowledge is that they might be more inclined to involve others because they already have a basic understanding of the message and its intent. Conversely, a negative experience in something related to your message could be a hurdle to an audience accepting your marketing message.

The final step in an audience analysis is **choosing the target audience and determining the methods of communication** that are most likely to be effective. Pivotal to this process is **knowing your message** and understanding whether or not it is appropriate for the selected target audience. You may need to **test the message** on persons in your target audience to see if the message resonates positively with them. You want the message—the key points—to produce the desired result of people participating in your local Extension program.

Once the message and the audience issues have been resolved, the **final challenge** is finding an appropriate way to get the message to the people who need it. An example

would be advertising a workshop on environmentally friendly farming practices through a newsletter that many farmers in the area receive. Selecting media channels and integrating your marketing campaign are the focus of other publications in this series.

Quick Reference Guide Campaign Planning

Campaign

- Strategic, structured plan
- Based on analyzing the situation

Brand

- Product, good, or service
- Identifiable image

Message

- Main idea
- Key information

Publics/Audiences

- Various groups of people who must be reached with your message
- Internal and external

Audience Analysis

- Understand who could receive the message
- Define the target audience
- Determine the best methods of reaching the audience

Demographics

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Marital status
- Income

- Education
- Occupation
- Geography

Psychographics

- Attitudes
- Values
- Lifestyles

Usage Patterns

- Most-used media channels
- Tendency to be interested in a particular subject

Prior Knowledge

- People have experience with the message
- Knowledge can make people either more or less likely to be interested

Finding the Right Target and Reaching It

- Know the message
- Determine who needs the message
- Determine the most effective methods of communication

Applying the Concepts Campaign Planning

Think about a local Extension program you have conducted in the past year. Now consider these questions:

- Did you utilize a specific brand, idea, or message? If so, was this brand, idea, or message successful? Why or why not? What could be improved?
- Define a specific audience that you attempted to reach. Were you successful? Could you improve your methods? If so, how?
- Who are internal and external audiences involved in this specific local Extension program?

Think of a program you are planning to conduct and to promote in the next few months.

- Identify a few demographics and psychographics of your target audience. Does everyone fit into one group, or will you be marketing to more than one public?
- Using the audience you just identified, list three ways you can get information to this group.
- Think of an event you have attended where you had either a very positive or very negative experience. Did you want to go back? Did you recommend it to others? Why or why not?
- Using what you have learned, write an audience analysis for people interested in your Extension subject matter area and another audience analysis for people living in your geographic area. Are there similarities or differences between these audience analyses? What messages would work for these groups? Would you have to prepare the same or different messages to market your program?

Brand/Product Evaluation

In order to offer the best services to the public, an Extension agent must become familiar with Extension as a brand and with the programs the organization offers. This information can be gathered by trying a product or service first-hand (in this case, an Extension educational program), talking to someone who knows a great deal about it, or talking to someone who has used the product or service previously.

- List three ways your Extension program—your “brand”—is different from other similar programs (others’ “brands”).
- List three ways your brand is promoted.
- List three ways you can incorporate the state Extension brand in your attempts to market an individual program.
- List a few of your more successful programs around which you could build a successful promotional campaign.

Audience Analysis for Marketing Your Local Extension Program

You may wish to integrate all of the following points in your audience analysis in the development of a marketing campaign plan for your local Extension program. Consider the importance of knowing what audience to approach

and how to go about it. For this exercise, think about your marketing efforts for your last two or three educational Extension programs. Describe the target audiences in the following ways:

Demographics

- Age
- Gender
- Marital Status
- Occupation
- Other key demographics

Psychographics

- Attitudes
- Values
- Lifestyles

Usage patterns

Where did your audience members go to get their information (TV, newspaper, magazine, newsletter, others)?

- Most-used media channels?
- Tendency to be interested in a particular subject?

Prior knowledge

What prior knowledge do you believe your audience had about your message or related topic?