



Electoral Campaign Communications Guide


A good communication plan will develop specific messages to ensure you are targeting the voters you're trying to reach where they get their information. This plan should include all earned media (for example, newspaper op-eds) and paid media (for example, social media ads).

Research & Targeting

- Research can help inform your messaging platform. There are many different types of research including candidate, issue, election rules, donor and voter opinion.
- Not all voters will receive the same treatment from your campaign. Targeting helps you choose the voters who are most likely to vote based on their history.
- Targeting can also determine who needs to be persuaded in your direction for both turnout and for your issue.
- Your message should include what you are saying to voters, which issues you want to highlight or which issues you want to highlight about the opposition. This is essentially what we want people to know and say about us.
- A Tully Box is a useful tool to help you develop your campaign message.

Tully Box

The Tully Message Box is a tool that campaigns have used for years to outline their overall communication strategy. Review each quadrant.

 THE TULLY BOX	
What we're saying about us	What our opponent is saying about us
What we're saying about our opponent	What our opponent is saying about her/himself

- Top left: Lists what you are going to say about your candidate. What is your message? What are the positive things you will say about your candidate?
- Bottom left: Lists what you will say about your opponent. What did your opposition research reveal that you want voters to know?
- Right side: Perhaps even more important is the right side, where you think about what your opponents will say about your candidate and themselves. This gives you a chance to be honest about what the dynamics of the campaign will be, helps you anticipate attacks and helps you form proactive messages to blunt the impact of the attacks.

Campaign Theme

- After using the Tully Box, a campaign theme usually emerges. Your campaign theme should be what you want your campaign to be about.
- You should know where your campaign messages come from and why you're using them.
- Is the campaign about you or your opponent? How will you define the choice?

When developing your communications plan, strongly consider various platforms to communicate your message with your voter universe.

Methods of Communication

There are several ways to communicate with voters. Your campaign budget should include how you will communicate with voters and how much you will spend. Remember, there is always a limited amount of time, people and money so be strategic with the budget to identify which methods of communications to use.

Know the rules of communicating for each of these methods. Some disclaimers will be required. The key is to target your voters where they are.

Paid Media and Direct Mail

- What messages will you drive with paid advertising?
- Using the voter file, which voters are you targeting and over which communication methods?
- How much do these ads or mailers cost? How many times are your voters going to receive these types of media?
 - » TV/cable
 - » Online video advertising
 - » Radio

- » Direct mail
- » Banner ads

- When are you executing the paid communication and why then?

Online Communication

- What social media channels will the campaign utilize? (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube)
- Which groups will the campaign target on social media?
- How will the campaign grow its lists of connections on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.?
- How will the campaign make use of connections developed online?

Earned Media

- What are the best ways to communicate through earned media, i.e., newspapers, TV, radio, podcasts?
- What are the message points for each of these mediums?
- When is the best time to communicate on these platforms and why?

Know Your Audience

Once your message is crafted, figure out the best way to get that message to your voters (also commonly referred to as “audience”). You should be able to obtain this information from your prior research. Here are some questions to get you started:

- Who are they and where are they from? Rural, city, old, young, etc.?
- How do they obtain daily information? Are millennials listening to the radio? Are seniors using social media? Consider your audience demographics before laying out your communication plan.
- What are their current perceptions, knowledge, needs, wants, behaviors and preferences in relation to your issue or brand?

Some audiences in the campaign might include: voters, media, IAFF members, members’ family and friends, other labor unions and policy makers/elected leaders. The message may be different for each group and should only target those who live and can vote in your area.

Your data from communicating with voters, e.g., canvassing, phone banking, mailers, should be collected and help inform how you continue to target and communicate with your audience.

Writing Your Communication Plan

Now that you have collected all this information about who you are communicating with and how you will be reaching them, it's time to write it all down into your communications plan which should align with your campaign plan. Your plan should:

- Establish goals
- Map proactive messages
- Define audiences
- Delegate responsibilities and roles
- Coordinate communications tools
- Communicate a timeline

Make sure to work backwards with deadlines such as design and approval of copy for mailers and ads, drop dates with the post office, etc. It's a good practice to have a communications calendar that has the following identified:

- The messages you want to deliver with specific dates and times.
- The means of delivery.
- The audience you are targeting with each delivery.

Don't Forget

Effective campaigns take the time to:

- Do the research.
- Develop the campaign message and theme.
- Write that message and theme into the campaign plan.
- And then base all campaign communications on that message.

Questions or Need Assistance?

If you have any questions or need help with your campaign, please reach out to the IAFF Political Department and request assistance [online](#) or email politics@iaff.org.