

Connecting With the Audience Roundtable Notes

Roundtable Group 1:

Audience needs to connect – don't make assumptions about where audience starting point is. Identify upfront what their "language is"
Show your vulnerability is ok to figure out how to explain what the problem is.
Doctors are another audience. They hear so much from parents – don't respond right away. Explain to doctors that we understand their time constraints and how Easter Seals can be a resource. Finding a way to offer something helpful to make their lives helpful. What do they need so they can do the action that we need?

Identifying how we need to change the story to appeal to each of the audiences.
Emotional connection is key. Don't be condescending, don't take advantage, find the pain point that everyone can relate to. Compelling photos, message with beginning, middle, and end are the most helpful.

Struggle to keep things short and sweet – not to make it too wordy.
Social media is a struggle as parents, community, donors all see same post. Might need to segment the posts – parent vs. donor. Perhaps keep professional posts to LinkedIn.
Parent/client posts are better used on Facebook.
Challenge with families/parents is to not exploit clients. "Anonymous" posts may be helpful. It is a fine line to get too vulnerable. Don't want to offend. Best to showcase small victories – successes, wins, growth.

Sharing in a closed group is "safer" – share in therapeutic way is different than for advocacy.
Grant writing: usually they are filled with facts. Storytelling element is not in there. How can we balance the facts with the story?
Facts vs. impact of the facts is key. Know the audience – if it is a committee vs staff doing a review it will be a different grant. Find out program officer – google them and figure out their background.

Balance between mission, programs, to make them each compelling to keep reading.
Talking to donors most difficult – stakes feel very high. Most difficult storytelling. Making sure to do explain to "professionals" as they may not know the ins and outs.

Roundtable Group 2

Funders/Donors: they want to hear about personal stories about the clients. In person meetings on your site helps tell the story. Very difficult as trying to give the facts while also wanting to tell the story/pull on heartstrings. Can you bring in a reliable family to tell the story? Bring in a video to do the story telling.

Start with a question – level setting: Ask straight out “What do you know about Giant Steps?”
First time donors: important to start with the story on the kids impacted. Tie together the facts with the stories. Give a fact, then follow up with a specific story.
Give data/facts to show why we are here– then bring in story to show “hope” and why it matters. Nothing vague, need true experiences. Stay away from anecdotes. Needs to be real and relatable.

Some of the challenges are finding new people to support the program. How can we get people not already connected to the community to get involved? Lead with a story, then follow up with the facts. True and factual on one child. Not a mixed-up version of many children. Give dessert first!

Segment your donors – i.e. if you have a new horse program (Call your people that are also animal lovers)

Let your donors tell your story. Especially those that don’t have a connection – very telling and a good way to hook non-connected donors.

Directly address the people you are talking to? What brought you here? Why is our organization important to you? How did you hear about us? Have your 2 min. elevator speech for galas.

Have your wish list ready. Know how their money will help specifically (especially at galas). Don’t assume the community know exactly what you do or how your organization can help. Clients carry “community cards” – can pass out a quick card to explain situation and educate the community when something happens on a field trip.

Another challenge: Getting exposure to more than one family member at a time. Professional association to teach at the same time as marketing and recruiting.

Challenge to get families that receive services to give money. We know that some can’t give, but there are many that can give, but don’t. Making specific asks may help. It can be non-financial or financial support. Get people to be advocates. Time, talent, or treasure. Giving Tuesday campaigns. Show them how much more we can do, if we get their support. A struggle to raise funds when we work at a “fancy hospital” – but we must beg, borrow and steal in our division.