



The Golden Rules of Outreach

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The Golden Rules of Outreach

There is a science and an art to delivering your message effectively and sparking the interest of your community and its key members. Keep the following tips in mind during your outreach efforts.

Know Your Target

- Be familiar with the needs and values of your target audience. To gather information, you can attend meetings where the target group talks about what matters to them, pick up local or internal newsletters, visit websites, read professional publications, special interest magazines and other materials aimed at that particular audience. It's a great starting place.
- *ASK*. Ask members of your target group to tell you who they are and what is important to them. Most of all be prepared to listen, listen, listen.
- Learn what motivates people in the group -- leaders and followers.
- Consider the norms and patterns of behavior of the community you want to approach.
 - How does this community discuss end-of-life issues? Do they discuss the issues at all?
 - What words and language do they use when talking about the issues? Pay attention to their language and 'talk their talk'.
 - What is the decision-making style of this community? Does a leader make decisions? Do people vote? Do they make decisions quickly, or with great consideration?
 - How does this community learn – from faith? Experience? Evidence?
 - How does this community build relationships? How might they build a relationship with you?
- Talk to people about what you've learned through your information gathering, and ask if you are on target.
- Approach the community with questions, not with answers. Remember that the community is *always* the expert on how they deal with end-of-life issues. Let the information you've collected guide your questions.
- Pay attention to timing – is there a special event, an anniversary, a crisis in the community? Be aware that timing can either help or hinder your efforts.
- Be responsive. Respond to what is happening in the community and ask if there is any way you can help. Respond to requests immediately, even if your answer is, "I'll find out and get back to you." This can help build relationships.

- Find out how end-of-life issues have impacted this particular community, in their own words.
- Learn about similar community issues – does this community work to improve services for sick children or the elderly? Is nursing home care a concern? If they are already working on similar issues, you can introduce your message as relevant to the established agenda.

Know Yourself

- Always know the answer to the question, “Why is my coalition interested in targeting this particular community?”
- Recruit diverse talent and diverse people in your coalition to add to your expertise and perspective. Consider your coalition’s representation in terms of cultures, age range, professions, roles, etc... Consider how you “look” to your audience.
- Explore your coalition members’ connections and relationships in the target community. Someone may be willing to be your “ambassador” and introduce you and your message to the community.
- Exposure is a big part of successful outreach. Invite stakeholders who can give your group exposure to be members of your coalition.
- Join and support established groups in the community. Sometimes relationships can be built through groups that are already known, and that already feel safe to your target audience. The introduction to *your* message will be more natural.

Know Your Stuff

- Be prepared to talk about your coalition’s vision and mission and WHY you are there. Emphasize what you can do for the community to whom you are reaching out.
- Show the target community how end-of-life issues affect them, and how you can enhance, support, learn from, and share with others the work they are already doing.
- Know what you can offer that is of interest or value to the target audience. Be ready to communicate this message in the way it will be best received.
- Convey your passion and excitement for the work you are doing! Let people know why the work is important to you.
- Pay attention to your outreach materials. If you have a limited budget, develop materials in the most “generic” way possible so they can be used with multiple communities. If possible, develop flyers or materials to suit the specific target audience.
- Always be prepared with outreach materials, and have enough to go around.
- Pay fantastic attention to detail. Remember names, requests, events, history, and relationships.
- Always give them more than they ask for. Meet any specific requests and then supplement with more, keeping it relevant. If they want elephants, bring peanuts, too.