

TOOLS FOR ENGAGING LANDOWNERS EFFECTIVELY

Case Study: Call Before You Cut (CBYC)



CBYC is a six-state initiative aimed at improving the quality of harvest plans and logging so that forests can be sustained and environmental problems can be prevented. CBYC believes that if more landowners consult professional foresters before harvesting, the quality of logging will improve.

CBYC used TELE's six-step planning process to develop a communications and outreach plan, as follows:

Step 1: SET OBJECTIVES

Overall Goal of the Campaign

Protect the interests of landowners and improve the quality of harvest planning and logging operations to maintain forest health.

Desired Behaviors

Landowners inform themselves about the different elements of a good cut and use the services of a professional forester to manage their harvests.

Communication Objective

Get landowners to call a toll-free number to request information and resources before harvesting their trees.

Step 2: DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE

The primary audience for the CBYC campaign is Working the Land (WTL) woodland owners in six states--Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, and West Virginia.

Step 3: PROFILE YOUR AUDIENCE

Most Prime Prospect landowners in the six campaign states fell into two groups--Working the Land (WTL) owners and Woodland Retreat (WR) owners. Of these two, WTL owners were more likely to harvest trees for timber and to believe in active management and productive use of their woodland. Therefore, they were the better prospects for this campaign.

Step 4: CLARIFY THE MESSAGE

CBYC developed a message that tapped into Working the Land owners' desire to maximize the long-term value of their woodland. For these owners, the term "value" includes the financial, recreational, and emotional benefits of owning woods.

"Your woods are a valuable asset. If you take care of them, they will serve you and your family well for many years to come. Good decisions at harvest time are crucial for getting the best from your woods now and preserving their value for the future. Call the CBYC campaign for information on how to plan your harvest to get the best value from your woods."

In print materials, the following was also used:

*"Your woods are valuable
... for your family's enjoyment
... as a nest egg for you and your family's future.
If you are considering a harvest, do right by your land, your finances, and your family. Assure the long term health of your woods by getting advice from a forester and by using a trained logger. You'll be glad you did."*

Step 5: CHANNELS & MATERIALS

Most woodland owners will harvest trees only once or twice in their lifetime. The challenge for this campaign is to make information available to woodland owners when they need it, i.e., when they are thinking of selling their trees. At other times, landowners are not likely to pay enough attention to campaign messages or to the informational materials provided by the campaign.

With this in mind, the CBYC campaign had two components.

First, publicize the availability of informational materials and position the CBYC campaign as the most comprehensive and reliable source of information and resources to help woodland owners harvest trees to maximize value from their woods.

This publicity was designed to generate qualified leads for the campaign—i.e. woodland owners would call the toll-free number or go to the website when they were planning a harvest and the information was relevant for them. Then, CBYC could provide appropriate guidance when people called.

Partners add credibility and stature to the campaign, help establish the brand and help disseminate the messages more widely. Each state put together a group of partners. For example, in Ohio, the campaign was coordinated by the Ohio Division of Forestry and Ohio State University Extension, with support from:

- The Nature Conservancy
- the Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- the Better Business Bureau
- the Society of American Foresters
- Rural Action
- American Tree Farm System

State campaigns employed a folder of printed materials, as well as an easy-to-remember website (www.callb4ucut.com) and a 1-800 number. The tone and feel of the printed materials was simple. Good color photographs and limited text balanced conveyed the message “Call Before You Cut” without overwhelming the reader with excessive details.

Step 6: EVALUATION

Each state assesses the cumulative impact of its outreach by monitoring the number of people who call the campaign hot-line to request additional information about timber harvesting.

Evaluation ideas for this project included:

- Tracking calls to record basic information about callers (including demographics, attitudinal segment, where they heard about CBYC)
- A follow-up survey to ask landowners:
 - What did they do differently?
 - Were materials useful?
 - Did they do a timber sale? If yes, did they do something different than they would have otherwise?
 - Have a contract?
 - Get multiple bids?
 - Get advice from a professional forester?
 - Require BMPs?
 - Is there something else they needed that was not in the package?
 - Did they tell others about CBYC? Recommend that others call?

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“One thing I gleaned from Call Before You Cut is that many landowners don't know that there are foresters out there that can help them sell their timber. Even though we're in the infancy of the program, the folks we are reaching really express a lack of knowledge of who to turn to in advance of a timber sale. It's great to hear that we are fulfilling a need.”

*Brian Schweiss
Forestry Field Program
Supervisor - Private Land
Missouri Department of
Conservation*

Call Before You Cut: Missouri

Call Before You Cut in Missouri launched a big outreach push in late summer of 2011, focused on Working the Land Owners.

Some of the most successful outreach techniques have included:

- Posting an ad in the state's deer hunting regulations booklet: *“Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information”*.
- Placing ads in statewide and local newspapers, especially in areas that are heavily forested.

Other efforts that have generated some response have been:

- Putting out a news release via the state's magazine.

In 2012, plans include:

- Placing posters on the bulletin boards of deer processing facilities at the beginning of deer-hunting season.
- Conducting a follow-up survey with the individuals and groups who have used the CBYC materials.
- Comparing the response rate of various tactics in spring 2012 to the fall 2011 response rates.

Success is measured by the counts of individuals calling to request a packet of information; the numbers of requests are tallied on a monthly basis.

In Missouri, 198,000 landowners own more than 10 acres, and 12% of landowners plan for a timber sale within five years, so there's a potential for about 24,000 landowners in Missouri to plan a timber sale within 5 years. The CBYC: Missouri ambition is to reach 10% of those individuals per year, or about 1,200 individuals.

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“All of the states in Call Before You Cut have fairly active Farm Bureau organizations. Reaching out to them is something to consider, because ads were inexpensive, considering how big a chunk of forestland many farmers have. We are pretty happy with those results.”

*David Apsley
Natural Resources Specialist
Ohio Division of Forestry*

“If public agencies who deal with forest landowners will take the advice and the information available at the TELE site, they will save untold taxpayer dollars from being wasted and misdirected. When I worked in the Division of Forestry...the response that came in was overwhelming. We shut down the campaign early, because we had signed up more than enough people for the available spots. We were extremely pleased with those results.”

*Andy Ware
former Assistant Chief
Ohio Division of Forestry*

Call Before You Cut: Ohio

Call Before You Cut in Ohio started in the mid-2000s as a brochure targeting landowners in southern Ohio, but grew to become a statewide program. Eventually the Ohio website and outreach materials became the inspiration for a six-state landowner outreach program.

Some of the most successful outreach techniques have included:

- Educators writing a column about Call Before You Cut for a local newspaper.
- Taking out ads and writing two sets of feature articles for CBYC to be featured in Farm Bureau member publications.
- Writing two feature pieces for the Ohio Woodland Journal.
- Buying billboard ad space for CBYC.
- Setting up poster displays during the State Tree Farm tour.
- Speaking at conferences and trainings about timber harvesting and CBYC.

Other efforts that have also generated some response have been:

- Sending CBYC business cards and business card holders to service foresters as well as every Extension office and every Soil and Water Conservation District Office in the state.
- Creating radio ads to run via large networks operating out of Columbus, Ohio.

Many of the successful outreach tools have focused on getting the CBYC story out in the media, using ads and articles in newspapers and magazines. One of the campaign strategies is to personalize media articles. For example, one of the articles for the Ohio Woodland Journal was written by Lee Crocker from the ODNR Division of Forestry. Rather than being technical in nature, Crocker described how his own father, a farmer, made informed decisions about harvesting from their family's woods.

CBYC: Ohio evaluates success by using Google analytics to track website visits and the amount of time visitors spend on the individual pages.

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“So far *Call Before You Cut* has been well-received with the partners, landowners, and foresters. Everyone invites us to put up posters. Landowners are really excited to get the information and to get the full value out of their woods.”

Paul Deizman
Program Manager
Forest Management Programs
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Call Before You Cut (CBYC): Illinois

Of the four major landowner types, CBYC: Illinois chose its primary audience as farmers from the Working the Land Owners. Secondary audiences include Uninvolved and Supplemental Income landowners.

Some of the most successful outreach techniques for farmers (Working the Land Owners) have included:

- Printing 17 by 24 inch posters for display at state and local fairs.
- Distributing 600 of the same posters through the field network of foresters in Illinois. About six posters were provided for each county, and the foresters placed posters in NRCS state offices, Farm Bureau offices, and Soil and Water Conservation District Offices. In addition, foresters were encouraged to hang posters at the types of locations where farmers gather locally, such as grain elevators, or Hardee's and McDonald's restaurants.
- Advertising on-site at Farm Progress Show events and other major events targeted at farmers and Working the Land owners.
- Working with the Brownfield network, a radio network which reports on agricultural news, to run an ad campaign using a short narrative skit on CBYC for 1,560 total local messages on 41 radio stations across rural Illinois.
- Partnering with the University of Illinois to maintain the consulting foresters list to use for CBYC.

Other efforts that have also generated some response have been:

- Reprinting the Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the state with the CBYC logo on the back page alongside a note from the state forester about how to seek professional assistance before moving forward with a harvest.

In 2012, plans include:

- Posting the information on additional state websites, such as the DNR website.
- Reprinting and distributing another round of posters.

Success is measured by tracking the number of calls to the 1-800 number and the number of packets requested by landowners.

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“We’ve found that it’s best to target new property owners. New property owners, particularly folks in their twenties and thirties, seem to be more open to professional expertise. From lessons learned in the first phase of the Call Before You Cut project we decided to help support a new initiative, the ‘Welcome Wagon’ approach which specifically targets new property owners. After receiving information on Call Before You Cut, 37% of landowners indicated during a call-back that they were planning to hire a private forester or work with a state forester to plan a harvest.”

Jeremy McGill
Assistant State Forester, LSCA & Water Quality, West Virginia Division of Forestry

Call Before You Cut: West Virginia

Call Before You Cut in West Virginia began with an outreach campaign targeting Working the Land Owners. Later, the campaign shifted to a “Woodlands Welcome Wagon” strategy, focusing on new on-site and absentee landowners, which was deemed to be more successful.

Some of the most successful outreach techniques have included:

- Placing ads in print newspapers.
- Placing ads in the state’s Department of Agriculture monthly bulletin.
- Coordinating booths at fairs and using posters to drive traffic to those booths.

Other efforts that have generated some response have been:

- Billboards.

In 2012, plans include:

- Continuing to reach out to new landowners via the Woodlands Welcome Wagon approach. New landowners receive a postcard welcoming them to the area and asking if they would like to receive more information on sustainable harvests and woodland health. If they mark yes, they receive a CBYC packet in the mail.

Success is measured by the counts of individuals requesting a CBYC packet.

CBYC: West Virginia has evaluated the effectiveness of the program by doing call-backs, where people who have requested a packet are called and asked if they found the packet helpful, if they are planning a harvest, and if they intend to hire a state or private consultant to assist in that process.