

SAMPLE PLAN

**CALL
BEFORE YOU
CUT**

TOOLS FOR ENGAGING LANDOWNERS EFFECTIVELY

Sample Plan: Call Before You Cut

Step 1: Objective

To arrive at your communication objective, answer the question: What would you like your audience to do as a result of this communication effort?

Also consider these questions:

- How does this communication objective advance your program goal?
- Is your communication objective matched to the scope of the effort?

Write your communication objective here and say how it relates to your program/conservation goals:

The Call Before You Cut (CYBC) team developed this communication objective for the campaign: *More landowners will consult a professional forester before cutting trees.*

CBYC's broad program goal is to improve the quality of 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. This assumption ties the program objective (i.e., improve quality of logging) to the CBYC's communication objective (i.e., get landowners to consult professional foresters before logging).

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Step 2: Define Your Audience

First determine your primary target audience--i.e., the people you most want to reach and influence through this effort.

Then answer the following:

- Why have you chosen this audience as your primary target?
- What other groups will also be influenced by your message, even though they are not your primary target?
- Will you design materials for intermediary or influencer audiences?

Identify your primary target audience. Be as specific as possible:

The primary target audience for the CBYC campaign is Working the Land (WTL) woodland owners in six states--Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, and West Virginia. The selection of Working the Land Owners was based on:

- The prevalence of different SFFI segments in the campaign states; and
- The relevance of the communication objective.

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.

List other audiences that will also be reached. Identify important intermediary or influencer audiences (if any):

Campaign materials are relevant to all landowners who are planning harvests and are willing to invest time and effort into harvesting trees in the best possible way. This includes many Supplemental Income (SI) landowners and a few Woodland Retreat Owners (WROs).

No materials will be designed for intermediary or influencer audiences.

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Step 3: Profile Your Audience

Develop your audience profile here, drawing upon SFFI segment descriptions, profiles of landowner segments in your state, and your own knowledge of landowners in your area.

Try to find information in these categories:

- General orientation toward woodland
- General orientation toward land management and use
- Beliefs and attitudes about the target behavior and its consequences
- Knowledge and capacity to implement the target behavior
- Main motivations and incentives for performing the behavior
- Main barriers to performing the behavior (including competing behaviors and beliefs, resource constraints, etc.)
- Demographic attributes and other useful information about their lifestyle and media use

Describe primary audience members' general orientation towards woods and woodland management:

• Working the Land (WTL) owners see their woods as among their main assets and want to get the best from their land. They use the land intensively—for timber, firewood, nontimber forest products, hunting and fishing, and other recreation—and value both recreational and commercial uses of woodland equally. They tend to be farmers.

Describe their beliefs about the target behavior and capacity to take action:

WTL owners are comfortable with their local state foresters and aware of consulting foresters and other service providers (such as timber sales consultants). Not many landowners have used their services, but these consultants are generally thought to be better informed about the timber market than service foresters.

Describe their reasons for taking action and the main barriers to acting:

WTL owners are somewhat intimidated by the timber market. Because timber prices vary so much and pricing mechanisms are not transparent, it is hard for them to know what their trees are worth and whether they are getting fair market value for their timber. They believe that having insider knowledge and/or access is important for negotiating this market. They do see that consulting foresters could help them get a better price for their trees, but they balk at paying for this assistance. Cost is a major concern for them.

Describe their demographic make-up, cultural values, lifestyle, and media preferences:

Like other landowner segments, WTL owners are overwhelmingly Caucasian and tend to skew older than the general population. More than half are retired. WTL owners have a very local outlook. They value information from local sources because they feel it is better tailored to their needs. They also trust it more.

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Step 4: Clarify the Message

In this section, first write 2-3 sentences that summarize the argument that you will make to persuade your target audience to take the actions that you're recommending.

Also explain: What audience needs, values, or perceived problems you're addressing through your argument.

Write your basic message argument here:

This is what the CBYC campaign "said" to its target audience:

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.

Say what audience needs, values or concerns your message speaks to:

This argument taps into Working the Land owners' desire to maximize the long-term value of their woodland, where the term "value" is used broadly to include financial, recreational, and emotional benefits of owning woods.

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Step 5: Channels & Materials

To develop this section of your plan, answer the following questions:

- What are your primary channels and materials?
- What are your supporting channels and materials?
- What style and tone do you want these materials to have?

List the primary channels and materials:

The primary materials for the CBYC campaign are a Web site and information packet that give landowners information about the elements of a good harvest and how they can ensure that their cut is good for their pockets and their land.

Each participating CBYC state will develop customized supporting materials and outreach activities to promote the availability of these sources of information. These materials will direct qualified landowners (i.e., people who are looking to harvest their timber in the near future) to a phone line or to the campaign's Web site to request additional information.

They include:

- A poster for use at community sites and events
- A brochure for people to read more about the campaign, what it provides, and whom it is designed to help
- A contact card for people to keep (so they can call the campaign whenever they need information on timber harvests)
- A presentation for use in community setting

List secondary channels and materials:

n/a

Describe the style of the text and visuals:

CBYC materials will be designed with the following attributes:

- Peer-to-peer, non-preachy, respectful tone
- Simple and direct style; common-sense, practical ideas
- Truthful and authentic--no exaggeration, hype or fear-mongering
- Use of folklore, idioms, examples, and testimonials to persuade or make a point (preferred to arguments based on expertise, scientific explanations, and statistics)
- Project caution and thoughtfulness
- Visuals reflect audience members' love of the land and the various ways in which they enjoy their woods with their families

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Step 6: Evaluation

To clarify how you will evaluate this effort, answer the following questions:

- What are your primary outcome indicators and how will you track them? (In other words, how will you know whether your target audience is taking the actions you intended?)
- What process or intermediate indicators will you monitor to get early feedback on how well the campaign is working?
- How will you measure the long-term impact of this communication on your overall program objectives?

Also consider: The time frame over which you expect change to occur.

As you develop evaluation activities, consider the time frame over which you expect change to occur and set up processes to measure those changes.

List primary outcome indicators:

The primary outcome indicator for the campaign is the number of landowners who are using foresters to help plan and/or manage their timber harvests. Depending upon availability of funds, the campaign plans to conduct a one-year follow-up survey with a random sample of the people who requested the informational packet to see whether they used a forester or did anything differently as a result.

List process indicators and intermediate outcomes:

Each state will assess 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. Additionally, they will also monitor:

- How the number of calls compares with similar requests before the campaign?
- What proportion of these calls are from people who are actually thinking about harvesting their trees in the near future?
- How many packets of information about timber harvesting were mailed out to callers?

In addition, each of the CBYC implementing states will monitor process indicators that are tailored to their specific outreach activities, e.g., attendance at meetings, media impressions, etc.

List indicators of long-term (program) impact:

The CBYC currently has no defined plans to monitor this, but good indicators that are being considered include: a reduction in the number of "bad" cuts; increase in use of consulting forester services; and a reduction in the number of people who call state foresters to complain about poor harvesting practices.